

Toward a World Without Nuclear Weapons



Nagasaki National Peace Memorial Hall for the Atomic Bomb Victims

2017 Report of the Joint Media Project



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This Report of the Joint Media Project of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and the International Press Syndicate (INPS) Group is a compilation of independent and indepth news and analyses by IDN from April 2016 to March 2017.

IDN-InDepthNews, online since 2009, is a flagship agency of the INPS Group and its partner, the Global Cooperation Council established in February 1983.

The articles in this compilation appeared on www.indepthnews.net/ in the category nuclear weapons and on the INPS Group's thematic website 'Toward A Nuclear Free World' – www.nuclearabolition.info. These can be accessed free of charge 365 days a year.

2016-2017 is the first year of the INPS Group's media project with the SGI, a lay Buddhist organization with headquarters in Tokyo. But IDN has been a party to the joint project, first launched in 2009 in the wake of an agreement between the precursor of the International Press Syndicate (INPS) Japan and the SGI.

We are pleased that at the time of writing these lines, we are already in the second year of the INPS Group's joint media project with the SGI.

This compilation comprises of 44 articles analyzing developments related to proliferation and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons at multiple levels – governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental. Some of the articles have been translated into different languages, including Arabic, Bahasa, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Malay, Norwegian, Persian, Spanish, Thai and Urdu.

The articles written in the run-up to the Presidential elections and since Donald Trump being installed as the President of the United States reflect the tension between relentless efforts to do away with nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon States' insistence in holding on to the atomic arsenal.

In 'UN Takes First Major Step Towards a Nuclear Ban Treaty' (March 31), Rodney Reynolds writes: "Despite an organized boycott by over 40 countries, including four major nuclear powers, a UN conference aimed at negotiating an international treaty to ban nuclear weapons made a significant breakthrough in its first-ever attempt at a legally-binding instrument to eliminate one of the world's deadliest weapons of mass destruction (WMDs)."

This was the result of the deliberations, which took place March 27-31 in New York, and were backed by 132 out of 193 UN member states, and the active participation of over 220 civil society organizations as well as by more than 3,000 scientists from 80 countries, including 28 Nobel Laureates, who expressed their support to "ban the bomb," in an open letter to the UN.

In 'Faith Communities Call For Banning Nuclear Weapons' (March 29), Jaya Ramachandran reported: "Faith communities have called for heeding the voices of the world's Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) and stressed the need for the five-day United Nations Conference at the UN headquarters in New York to negotiate "a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination".

"A statement on March 28, second day of the conference, endorsed by more than 20 organizations and individuals, pleaded for developing "a treaty text that clearly and explicitly" prohibits the use, possession, development, production, acquisition, transfer and deployment of nuclear weapons, as well as any inducement, encouragement, investment or assistance with those prohibited acts."

These two reports underline the culmination of efforts before and after Trump occupied the Presidential Chair in Washington, D.C.

I would like to express my gratitude to our network of correspondents for their insightful contributions, the Project Director INPS Japan President Katsuhiro Asagiri for his valuable support in implementing the project, and the SGI for the trusted and professional partnership. Sincere thanks also to Tilman Ruff and Kimiaki Kawai for taking the time to send their messages.



Credit: CBTO

Ramesh Jaura
Director-General of the INPS Group and Editor-in-Chief of its flagship agency IDN



Tilman Ruff

Co-President of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and founding Australian and international chair of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)

We are on the cusp of a historic achievement that will change the world. Agreed text for an international treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons and provide for their elimination is very likely to emerge on 7 July 2017. This is the concluding day of negotiations mandated late last year by the UN General Assembly by an overwhelming majority of more than three to one nations.

Since the late 19th century, declarations and treaties have emerged from the horror and carnage of successive wars

fought with ever more destructive weapons. These have sought to progressively delegitimise, prohibit and eliminate successive types of unacceptable weapons: expanding bullets, biological and toxin weapons, chemical weapons, antipersonnel landmines, cluster munitions and blinding laser weapons. In each case, the decisive factor has been the indiscriminate and inhumane consequences which inevitably follow any use of a weapon. If a weapon can only be used in ways which violate international law, including international humanitarian law, then such a weapon has no place in a civilised world. As Ban Ki-moon said in relation to nuclear weapons: There are no right hands for the wrong weapons.”

Nuclear weapons, the only weapons which pose an existential threat to humankind and the richness of life on Earth, are the only weapon of mass destruction not explicitly prohibited under international law. These heinous and unusable weapons remain central to the power politics of a number of the largest and most powerful states. A number of developments have contributed to the humanitarian initiative on nuclear weapons over the past decade which have led us to the imminent conclusion of a treaty banning nuclear weapons. One is the launch in 2007 of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Another is the intensified commitment of the world’s largest humanitarian organisation, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement, to the humanitarian imperative to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. A third is the recognition in the outcome document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. A fourth is the remarkable succession of well-attended intergovernmental conferences in Norway, Mexico and Austria over 2013 and 2014, the first-ever dedicated to the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons, whether any meaningful response other than prevention is possible to nuclear detonations, the growing risks of nuclear war, and the legal context for nuclear weapons. A fifth is the Austrian and then Humanitarian Pledge, signed by 127 nations committing to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. A sixth development is the UN Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament last year, which “recommended with widespread support that the General Assembly convene a conference in 2017, open to all states, with the participation and contribution of international organisations and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.”

In the wider global context, the current negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons are the only beacon of light in an increasingly alarming situation, where the risks of nuclear war are increasing, the hands of the Doomsday Clock have yet again been moved closer to midnight, and barely a week goes by without a leader of a nuclear-armed state explicitly threatening to use these global suicide bombs.

Because the negotiations are taking place under General Assembly rules, consensus, while desirable, is not required, and no state or group of states can veto decisions made by a two to one majority of voting states in the room. With 132 states participating in an extremely positive and productive first negotiating week in March, a growing concern among many governments about the increasing dangers of nuclear war, and sense of urgency to seize the historic opportunity to fulfil the General Assembly mandate, there seems every likelihood that agreed text for a new treaty will emerge by 7 July. A draft treaty text to be released by Conference President Ambassador Elayne Whyte of Costa Rica on 22 May 2017 will provide the basis for the second and likely final 3 week negotiating session commencing on 15 June 2017.

Not surprisingly, the negotiations have been opposed at every step and are being boycotted by nuclear-armed states and those which deludedly claim protection from US nuclear weapons. These states disingenuously argue, inter alia, that a ban treaty would be ineffective, ignores national security needs, risks undermining the NPT and ‘strategic stability’, will deepen divisions between states with and without nuclear weapons; and even that it will increase the danger of nuclear war.

However, the real reason they oppose this treaty, as revealed by a US letter to NATO members, is that a ban will delegitimise nuclear weapons and preparedness and plans to use them. They know that this treaty is a game-changer.

Achieving a strong treaty that comprehensively and unequivocally bans nuclear weapons will not by itself achieve disarmament. But it is an essential step to advance elimination. It will change the world. We desperately need it.



Kimiaki Kawai

Director, Peace and Human Rights, Soka Gakkai International (SGI)

A historic United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, was held at UN Headquarters in New York in March 2017. Established by UN General Assembly Resolution 71/258 in 2016, the conference was attended by more than 120 states with the participation of international organizations and civil society representatives. The second session will take place between June 15 and July 7 where the final text of the treaty is expected to be

adopted.

This conference makes one significant step forward toward the elimination of nuclear arsenals. This is an effort to stipulate their prohibition in writing in international law in order to counteract the contradiction that nuclear weapons appear to be allowed while other, less indiscriminate and inhumane weapons such as biological and chemical weapons have been expressly prohibited. It is a concrete implementation of the obligation under Article 6 of the NPT that requires states to pursue in good faith and to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.

Civil society input enriched the discussions in the first-round negotiation conference in March. The work of civil society is an indispensable part of the conference, as it can help give a human face to problems that might otherwise be discussed only in national and governmental contexts. Pertaining to the role of civil society, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda posits in his 2017 peace proposal that contributions from the full spectrum of civil society actors would “constitute a people’s declaration for a world without nuclear weapons and serve as a popular basis for a treaty prohibiting them.”

SGI is one of the actors speaking out on the moral and ethical unacceptability of nuclear weapons. During the course of the first negotiation conference, SGI representatives worked together with other faith groups to deliver an interfaith statement calling for action at the historic conference. The statement stresses that nuclear weapons manifest a total disregard for the shared ethical values of religious faiths, stating: “We reject the immorality of holding whole populations hostage, threatened with a cruel and miserable death. We applaud the world’s political leaders that have demonstrated the courage to begin these negotiations.”

SGI also submitted its own working paper to the conference, circulated as A/CONF.229/2017/NGO/WP.8. In the paper, SGI argues that the goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons should be understood as integral to the larger effort to demilitarize international relations and develop nonviolent conceptions of the state. It also urges the negotiation conference to “[c]ontinue to heed the voices of civil society, especially those of the world’s hibakusha, so that the process of the negotiations will have a consistently human focus; to declare that the treaty manifests the shared commitment of the world’s people that the suffering endured by the hibakusha must never

be repeated.”

At this critical juncture in history, this year, SGI marks the 60th anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Made in September 1957, this declaration is regarded as the starting point for the SGI’s peace movement. In it he stated that he wanted to “expose and rip out the claws that lie hidden in the very depths of such weapons,” emphasizing that what we need to challenge is the complete disregard for people’s inviolable right to live that lies at the root of nuclear weapons.

SGI believes that the challenge of nuclear disarmament is not something that concerns only the nuclear-weapon states; it must be a truly global enterprise involving all states and fully engaging civil society.

Aiming toward the goal of a nuclear-free world, SGI will continue to work to expand the solidarity of concerned citizens around the world.

I believe this SGI/INPS media project will continue to help strengthen solidarity among citizens by providing in-depth news that contributes to increasing their awareness and boosting their confidence toward our shared future.

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Kazakhstan Aims at a Global Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) - Both Japan and Kazakhstan have suffered from nuclear weapons: Japan through the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and Kazakhstan through the fallout from 456 nuclear test explosions conducted at the Semipalatinsk, the former Soviet nuclear test site near what is now the village of Semey.

The two countries are therefore committed to realizing a world free of nuclear weapons— for example through entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) – and consider it a main goal of humanity in the 21st century. This was reaffirmed during the first session of the UN conference to negotiate a nuclear weapons prohibition treaty, from March 27 to 31 at the UN headquarters in New York. The second session is scheduled for June 15 through July 7.

Addressing the Conference on March 27, Ambassador-at-Large of the Foreign Ministry of Kazakhstan Yerbolat Sembayev recalled President Nursultan Nazarbayev's plea that the international community's collective ambition should be to have the world completely free from nuclear weapons by the 100th anniversary of the UN.

In this context, Sembayev drew attention to the Manifesto "The world. 21st century", proposed by President Nazarbayev at the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C. This document and its program "21st Century: A world without wars" warns against lethargy and indifference.

The international community has, of course, taken steps to nuclear disarmament, Ambassador Sembayev said. Many UNGA resolutions call for a nuclear weapons-free world. One of these is the Universal Declaration on a nuclear weapons-free world initiated by Kazakhstan. It was supported by a majority of UN member states and was an important step towards a legally binding international instrument for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Kazakhstan, as a leading advocate of this important global cause, also strongly supported the final document of the open-ended Working group on nuclear disarmament and the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/71/258 on the convening of UN Conference.

The convening was made possible mainly due to the process begun by the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo (March 4-5, 2013), Nayarit (February 13-14, 2014) and Vienna (December 8-9, 2014).

As a country that continues to experience the consequences of nuclear explosions, Kazakhstan strongly believes that in the UN Conference document on the prohibition of nuclear weapons the principle of responsibility for the humanitarian consequences of their use would be taken into account.

Kazakhstan also hopes that, along with all the elements around the prohibition of nuclear weapons, the draft document would have provisions for some form of verification of their possession by countries. Kazakhstan has consistently supported the de-legitimization of nuclear weapons and repeatedly called for complete nuclear disarmament.

"We regard the future Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty as an interim measure in this process," Ambassador Sembayev said, adding that Kazakhstan advocates the launch of negotiations for concluding the Comprehensive Nuclear Weapon Convention with the provisions on the irreversible and verifiable liquidation of nuclear weapons within a specific timeframe.

Furthermore, it believes the Comprehensive Convention would only be considered at the Conference on Disarmament (CD), involving all concerned states. "We consider that, despite its existing difficulties, this forum has a huge potential and can make a significant contribution to the disarmament process."

At the same time, the global de-legitimization process should not be stopped due to the forced inactivity of the Conference on Disarmament because of its existing procedural contradictions, Ambassador Sembayev added.

"We believe the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains a cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. We hope that a new treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons will supplement and strengthen the NPT, filling its existing gaps."

Kazakhstan was the leading mover in the Semipalatinsk treaty, which established a nuclear-free weapons zone in Central Asia. Today 116 States, the majority of UN members, are parties to nuclear weapon-free zones, which cover most of the territory of our planet.

"The purpose of (the) Conference should be to accelerate the transition of these zones from the regional to the global level, freeing our world from fear of nuclear threat," the Kazakh envoy said.

Ambassador Nobushige Takamizawa of Japan and Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva said, Japan has a mission, as the only country, which has experienced the devastation of the war-time use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to raise awareness on the reality of atomic bombings and clear recognition of its humanitarian consequences across borders and generations.

He added, a ban treaty, if it does not lead to an actual reduction of a single nuclear warhead, would be of little significance. "In fact, efforts to make such a treaty without the involvement of nuclear-weapon states will only deepen the schism and division not only between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states, but also among non-nuclear-weapon states, which

will further divide the international community.”

Subsequently, the common goal of reaching a world free of nuclear weapons would be pushed away. “Even if such a ban treaty is agreed upon, we don’t think that it would lead to the solution of real security issues, such as the threat by North Korea. This is why we voted against the UN General Assembly resolution 711258 last year.”

From discussions and considerations so far, the Japanese envoy said, it had become clear that the ban treaty concept was unable to obtain understanding and involvement of nuclear-weapon states. Furthermore, negotiation had not been formulated to pursue nuclear disarmament measures that would actually lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons, in cooperation with the nuclear weapon states.

“Regrettably, given the present circumstances, we must say that it would be difficult for Japan to participate in this Conference in a constructive manner and in good faith,” Ambassador Takamizawa added. What is essential, he stressed, is to pursue practical and effective measures with the engagement of both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, as Japan has consistently maintained.

“As we sincerely aspire to see a world free of nuclear weapons, we will continue

to pursue realistic and effective disarmament measures, and will work to create a security environment conducive to the elimination of nuclear weapons.”

In closing, the Japanese envoy said, Japan will continue to place great value on constructive dialogue and cooperation within the international community. “To advance effective and inclusive efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, we will demonstrate our initiatives, such as providing a venue for interactive exchanges of views among countries that hold varied approaches on nuclear disarmament.”

Both Kazakhstan and Japan appear to be aiming at a global nuclear-weapon-free zone, which would be a logical consequence of a nuclear ban treaty if achieved – perhaps in a distant future – with the participation of nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states. [IDN-InDepthNews – 31 March 2017]

Image: ICAN



UN Takes First Major Step Towards a Nuclear Ban Treaty

By Rodney Reynolds

NEW YORK (IDN) – Despite an organized boycott by over 40 countries, including four major nuclear powers, a UN conference aimed at negotiating an international treaty to ban nuclear weapons made a significant breakthrough in its first-ever attempt at a legally-binding instrument to eliminate one of the world's deadliest weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

Even without the participation of nuclear states, the ban treaty will have a powerful impact, predicted the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

“Treaties often change the behavior of non-party States, including the ban on WMDs and Law of the Sea”.

The international community adopted treaties banning biological weapons back in 1972 and chemical weapons in 1992, both WMDs, followed by the elimination of indiscriminate killer weapons such as anti-personnel landmines in 1997 and cluster munitions in 2008.

The President of the Conference, Ambassador Elayne Whyte of Costa Rica, told reporters on March 30 she was hopeful that nuclear states will eventually get onboard once the treaty is in place, with final negotiations scheduled to take place in New York, June 15 through July 7.

The meeting, which took place March 27-31, was a remarkable success in terms of numbers. It was attended by 132 out of 193 UN member states, plus the active participation of over 220 civil society organizations (CSOs) – and was backed by more than 3,000 scientists from 80 countries, including 28 Nobel Laureates, who expressed their support to “ban the bomb,” in an open letter to the UN.

“Scientists bear a special responsibility for nuclear weapons, since it was scientists who invented them and discovered that their effects are even more horrific than first thought,” said the letter, which was handed over to Ambassador Whyte.

Professor Wolfgang Ketterle of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a 2001 Nobel Laureate in Physics, said: “I see nuclear weapons as a real threat to the human race and we need an international consensus to reduce this threat.”

Currently, the U.S. and Russia have about 14,000 nuclear weapons combined, many on hair-trigger alert and ready to be launched on minutes notice.

Joseph Gerson, Director of the Peace & Economic Security Program at the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and Co-Convener of the International Peace & Planet Network, told IDN “the can-do spirit and depth of governmental-civil society collaboration was remarkable and the result of decades of peace movement advocacy and organizing.” “But, the world is being driven by forces pressing in opposite directions,” he cautioned.

From South Korea and Japan to the Netherlands and Germany, Gerson pointed



out, “political forces in the nuclear umbrella states will need to press their governments to opt for the Ban and Prohibition Treaty instead of continued collaboration with those who would end all life as we understand it.”

Should some NATO member states or U.S. Asian allies desert the nuclear powers, there will be important momentum toward a nuclear weapons free future, he noted.

Gerson also called for clear-eyed sobriety. “There is no expectation that once the treaty is negotiated, signed and enters into force it will immediately result in the nuclear powers opting to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.”

“The Nuclear-Nine, who are spending unimaginable amounts to build new generations of nuclear weapons and their delivery system for the 21st century, will tell us that treaties that they haven’t signed or ratified don’t apply to them.” The United States has “all options on the table” – including a first strike attack – in its confrontation with North Korea.

With NATO’s expansion to Russia’s borders and the Ukraine crisis, the U.S. and Russia have returned to an approximation of their Cold War nuclear confrontation. India and Pakistan continue to exchange threats, and the Brookings Institution warns us that an accident or miscalculation during provocative military exercises could all too easily escalate beyond control, he warned.

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Washington-based Arms Control

Association said that although the world's nuclear-armed states are boycotting the negotiations, "this unprecedented new process could help to further delegitimize nuclear weapons and strengthen the legal and political norm against their use."

"This is a worthy goal that is consistent with the goal of a world without nuclear weapons and the requirement established by Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which requires all states to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament."

All 132 countries participating in the session shared a single vision: a world without nuclear weapons. And while some disagreement was expected, there was broad agreement among many countries on most elements of the proposed treaty, said ICAN, one of the CSOs leading the effort at formulating the treaty, in a statement released March 31.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Beatrice Fihn, ICAN's Executive Director, said: "We made exciting progress this week in our campaign to close the gap in international law and ban nuclear weapons. No one was distracted by the opposition. We look forward to closely reviewing the draft text." Ambassador Whyte is expected to produce a text in the coming weeks which will be discussed during the final round of negotiations in June-July.

The just-concluded meeting focused on the proposed goals, objectives, and preamble of the treaty, which will include a prohibition on the possession, development, testing, and use of nuclear weapons and assisting other countries with them.

The opposition to the proposed treaty, led by the United States, also included Russia, UK, and France, four of the major nuclear powers, who are also permanent members of the UN Security Council. The other dissenters included Israel, Australia, Japan, and South Korea.

When the General Assembly took a decision in October 2016 to launch negotiations on the proposed treaty, three other nuclear powers, namely China, India and Pakistan, abstained on the vote while North Korea voted for the ban treaty.

Surprisingly, Ambassador Nobushige Takamizawa of Japan and Permanent Representative to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva said an international treaty "without the involvement of nuclear weapon states [would] only deepen the schism and division" in the international community.

"We will continue to pursue realistic and effective disarmament measures and will work to create a security environment conducive to the elimination of nuclear weapons," said the envoy, who comes from the only country that suffered the devastation after-effects of nuclear destruction.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed hopes that the proposed instrument will also strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and advance the world closer to the total elimination of nuclear weapons and that it would make important contribution to nuclear disarmament and to "our ultimate

objective of general and complete disarmament."

"We need to find a new way to inspire and motivate the public in support of disarmament, in the same way that they have been energized to respond to the challenge of climate change, an existential threat facing humanity," he stated.

Pointing out that the major nuclear powers have continued to reduce the size of their arsenals, Ambassador Matthew Rycroft of UK told reporters he will not be participating in the talks "because we do not believe that those negotiations will lead to effective progress on global nuclear disarmament."

The United States was equally adamant about the boycott. UN Ambassador Nikki Haley told reporters: "There is nothing I want more for my family than a world with no nuclear weapons. But we have to be realistic." "Is there anyone that believes that North Korea would agree to a ban on nuclear weapons?" she asked.

Responding to Haley's comments, Rick Wayman, Director of Programs at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, said: "In an epic role reversal, we saw U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley protesting outside the UN General Assembly Hall while the majority of the world's nations, supported by NGOs from around the world, began negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons."

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation will continue to support the good faith efforts of those negotiating a nuclear ban treaty and oppose the nuclear weapons states' efforts to keep nuclear weapons in perpetuity, he declared.

According to the Foundation, the proposed treaty is expected to: legally bind parties from using, possessing and developing nuclear weapons, and assisting others in those activities; work in concert with the existing regime of nonproliferation and disarmament agreements; and strengthen the norm against indiscriminate weapons and provide countries a method to meet disarmament obligations.

Projecting into the future, the Arms Control Association said if the treaty is to be effective it should (a) specify which activities related to nuclear weapons possession, nuclear sharing planning, development, production, and testing are prohibited; (b) be consistent with existing treaties that prohibit or limit certain nuclear weapons-related activities, including the NPT; and (c) provide for pathways by which states that now possess nuclear weapons, or are part of alliances with nuclear-armed states, can support the new nuclear weapons prohibition treaty before they become a full-fledged member of new instrument. [IDN-InDepthNews – 31 March 2017]

Image: UN General Assembly | Wikimedia Commons

Faith Communities Call for Banning Nuclear Weapons

By Jaya Ramachandran

NEW YORK (IDN) – Faith communities have called for heeding the voices of the world’s Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) and stressed the need for the five-day United Nations Conference at the UN headquarters in New York to negotiate “a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.

A statement on March 28, second day of the conference, endorsed by more than 20 organizations and individuals, pleaded for developing “a treaty text that clearly and explicitly” prohibits the use, possession, development, production, acquisition, transfer and deployment of nuclear weapons, as well as any inducement, encouragement, investment or assistance with those prohibited acts. “The new instrument should also provide for an obligation for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and a framework to achieve it.”

The statement explained that “the fundamental justification for this new legal instrument is the prevention of the humanitarian harm caused by any use of nuclear weapons”. “The clear justification” for this new legal instrument is to ensure that suffering experienced by people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki “is never visited on any other individual, family or society”.

The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons remains at the core of all nuclear disarmament efforts, the statement declared.

Faith communities further stressed the need of continuing to call upon all states to participate in the UN negotiations “in order to fulfil their obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament”.

While 120 countries are participating in the conference, President Donald Trump’s UN envoy, Nikki Haley, held on March 27 a protest together with two of the five permanent (P5) veto-wielding members of the Security Council – the UK and France – and a number of Eastern European allies who feel threatened by Russia.

The other P5 Security Council members, Russia and China, did not join the protest group. But they are not participating in the talks first announced in October 2016 under the leadership of Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, South Africa and Sweden. Disarmament groups strongly support the effort.

A statement titled ‘Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons’ said: “Since the first attack with atomic weapons, in August 1945, when the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed, the terrible consequences of nuclear weapons have demanded their abolition. Since 1945 humankind has been forced to live in the shadow of apocalyptic destruction. Any use of nuclear weapons would not only destroy the past fruits of human civilization, it would disfigure the present and consign future generations to a grim fate.”



The faith communities endorsing the statement include: Pax Christi organisations from around the world, World Council of Churches, Christian Council of Norway; Soka Gakkai International, Muslim Peace Fellowship, Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Franciscan Action Network, Quakers in Britain, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and World Bosniak Congress, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Nations Office, Mennonite Central Committee, Sound Vision, and Religions for Peace.

“Our respective faith traditions advocate for the right of people to live in security and dignity. We believe in the commands of conscience and justice; we seek to honour our duty to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard the planet for future generations,” the statement said.

Faith communities are convinced that nuclear weapons manifest a total disregard for all these values and commitments. There is no countervailing imperative – whether of national security, stability in international power relations, or the difficulty of overcoming political inertia – that justifies their continued existence, much less their use. Their catastrophic humanitarian consequences demand that nuclear weapons never be used again, under any circumstances.

Faith communities are raising their voices in the name of sanity and the shared values of humanity. They welcome the negotiations, necessary to prohibit the worst weapon ever invented. They reject the immorality of holding whole populations hostage, threatened with a cruel and miserable death. They applaud the world’s political leaders that have demonstrated the courage to begin these negotiations. And, they urge those not present to re-examine their positions and, at the very least, make a commitment to join the second session of the conference from June 15 to July 7, 2017. [IDN-InDepthNews – 29 March 2017]

Photo: Jasmin Nario-Galace of Pax Christi Philippines at a United Nations meeting on nuclear weapons | Soka Gakkai

Nuclear Disarmament, Trump and the Nordic Countries

By *Lowana Veal*

REYKJAVIK (IDN) – When asked what Sweden thought the Trump Administration should do by way of contributing to nuclear disarmament, the Swedish ambassador in Iceland, Bosse Hedberg, replied: “At this point in time, I am not aware of any common Nordic position being prepared in response to the new U.S. administration’s view on this issue. As one can gather from the media, the new president seems rather inclined to invest more in U.S. nuclear capacities than in scrapping part of U.S. weapons.”

Sweden was the only Nordic country to attend the UNOG Conference on Disarmament held March 21-22 in Geneva, although Finland and Norway are also members.

On March 27, historic negotiations will begin at the United Nations in New York on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, with the ultimate goal of eliminating them. These are the result of previous meetings of the UN General Assembly First Committee (Disarmament and International Security), including one on October 27, 2016, at which a number of texts relating to nuclear disarmament were approved.

Of the Nordic countries, only neutral Sweden voted Yes to resolution L.41, the key text calling for the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons globally.

Speaking at the Geneva disarmament conference, Sweden’s Foreign Affairs Minister Margot Wallström, pointed out that a new review cycle of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) starts in May. “No doubt, this treaty is the cornerstone for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. But it has not lived up to its full potential. There are serious flaws in the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments, and the responsibility falls heavily on the nuclear powers. They cannot continue to ignore the promise to disarm their nuclear arsenals. Russia and the United States must take the lead in restarting

the reduction of nuclear weapons,” she said.

“There are also many other important measures the nuclear weapon states could commit to in connection with the NPT Review Conference. Measures such as legally binding negative security guarantees, a ban on nuclear-armed cruise missiles, negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons. And maybe more important, risk reduction including de-alerting,” the Swedish Foreign Affairs added.

“I strongly encourage the nuclear weapon states to abandon hair trigger launch procedures, which are potentially destabilising. Reduced operational readiness to avoid accidental nuclear use is in everybody’s interest,” Wallström said.

According to Pia Nordberg, a counsellor with the Unit for Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation at the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “... the Nordic countries discuss regularly about arms control and disarmament questions, including nuclear disarmament. We have been delivering common statements, for example in the UN First Committee. We share the same goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. For Finland, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is a cornerstone in international security and nuclear disarmament.”

Nordberg says that Finland also wants to underline the role of the nuclear weapon states in promoting concrete nuclear disarmament, adding: “The New START Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States is a good example of this. We urge both countries to continue implementing this and to go even further and seek for further reductions.”

“When it comes to the United States, it is important that our good and constructive dialogue and practical cooperation continues. We need to respect and implement the existing arms control and disarmament framework and agreements, and to build confidence for further cooperation. No one

wants a new arms race. Ensuring the viability of the NPT is of utmost importance. Even small steps in nuclear disarmament increase security globally,” Nordberg adds.

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Norway has not yet addressed the issue. “To my knowledge there have not been any discussions in the Norwegian Parliament on the Trump Administration’s nuclear policies, probably because it is still early days in terms of what they will be,” says Bård Ludvig Thorheim, political adviser to Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The situation in Denmark is similar. “I’m not aware of the Danish Parliament having discussed the Trump administration’s contribution to nuclear disarmament. ... the Defence Committee had summoned the foreign minister and the defence minister to discuss the Trump administration’s views on torture and water boarding but nuclear disarmament was not discussed,” says Jesper Thinghuus, Secretary of the Defence Committee.

Iceland had a change of government in January 2017, not long before Donald Trump was inaugurated as U.S. president. “The issue hasn’t been discussed,” according to Foreign Affairs official Urdar Gunnarsdottir.

Left-Green MP Steinunn Thora Arnadottir, who is also on the foreign affairs parliamentary committee, has been trying to bring up the subject since January in a question to Foreign Affairs Minister Gudlaugur

Thor Thordarson on whether Iceland would take part in UN negotiations about banning nuclear weapons. “I know that NATO countries want to boycott these negotiations,” she says. “But the Minister is never available,” she adds in a despairing tone. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen is a former Foreign Affairs Minister from Denmark and is still active and vocal in public affairs. Speaking “strictly on a personal level”, he says: “I’m worried because Trump has made the nuclear deterrence conditional – and it is only valid when it is unconditional. At the same time he has suggested that some non-nuclear countries should develop their own nuclear deterrence. The best he [Trump] could do is to try his best to eliminate any doubt that the security guarantee the United States has been giving Europe through NATO is totally unconditional – and that the treaties on limitations in nuclear weapons should be defended.”

In a Reuters interview in February, Trump was quoted as saying: “I am the first one that would like to see ... nobody have nukes, but we’re never going to fall behind any country even if it’s a friendly country ... It would be wonderful, a dream would be that no country would have nukes, but if countries are going to have nukes, we’re going to be at the top of the pack.”

In his proposed budget announced March 16, Trump assigned an 11 percent increase in spending on nuclear weapons and an 8 percent increase in defence in general, while spending on environmental matters and foreign affairs will be

slashed. The nuclear disarmament programme will be scrapped.

However, Icelander Magnus Sveinn Helgason, adjunct lecturer in economic history and American politics at the University of Bifrost, believes that the budget is unlikely to be approved. “There’s a difference between what he says and what he does. It’s not Trump who makes the decisions, it’s Congress,” he says.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defence Minister James Mattis could both be involved in decisions regarding nuclear disarmament. Tillerson mentioned the importance of nuclear non-proliferation when interrogated by Senators on his nomination hearing and Mattis told the Senate Armed Services Committee: “The nuclear stockpile must be tended to and fundamental questions must be asked and answered.”

But Helgason does not agree, saying “Tillerson is probably the weakest Secretary of State in modern American history. I would not pay much attention to either him or Mattis. Study Steve Bannon [Trump’s chief political strategist] instead – he’s the brains behind Trump.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 23 March 2017]

Image: Foreign Minister Margot Wallström of Sweden addressing the UN General Assembly’s seventy-first session in September 2016
| UN Photo | Manuel Elias



Nuclear Disarmament is Humanity's Common Cause

By Dr. J. Enkhsaikhan

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia (IDN-INPS) - Some believe that those that do not possess nuclear weapons have no basis to demand that those that do possess alter their nuclear policies. However, as the three recent international conferences on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons vividly demonstrated yet again, the detonation of a nuclear weapon, intentionally or otherwise, will have catastrophic consequences with far-reaching climatic, genetic and other devastating effects.

This, of course, will surely trigger a chain reaction of its own as well. Therefore global nuclear disarmament cannot be the exclusive domain of nuclear weapon states and their allies. Moreover, Article VI of the NPT commits all of its states parties to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament". The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones is one of the concrete regional measures of promoting nuclear non-proliferation and contributing to greater confidence.

Though in the post-cold war period nuclear weapons have been reduced to around 15,000 worldwide, the number of nuclear weapons possessors has increased. The race to modernize such weapons, to "perfect" the means of their delivery and to regulate their destructive capacity is making them more "useable," thus making deterrence doctrines even more dangerous.

That is why in response to a lack of tangible progress in nuclear disarmament, the non-nuclear-weapon states and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have launched a campaign aimed at starting without delay international negotiations to prohibit and abolish such weapons. This has found reflection in the recently adopted resolution of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) "Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations".

Mongolia's case

As in other cases, Mongolia's policies are connected with its geographical location and is a microcosm of the major events of a particular time period. In many cases, its policies are reflections of or reactions to the events happening in its immediate neighborhood, i.e. in Russia and China, in their mutual relations as well as with other major powers.

From the point of view of nuclear risks, Mongolia's geographical and geopolitical location is unenviable. However that does not mean that it has to be a prisoner of geography and doomed to geographical determinism. On the contrary, its location demands that it be more creative so as not to be harmed or used to harm others.

Hence Mongolia tries, to the extent possible, to influence events in order to reduce possible unforeseen risks for itself. It could choose either to be passively



affected by the perils of the nuclear age or try to play a somewhat active role by promoting its national interests and, mindful of the past history, by contributing to shaping its own future. Mongolia chose the latter.

Reminder of the recent risky past

During the cold war Mongolia was a Soviet satellite and closely followed pro-soviet policies. Thus, though Mongolia was against nuclear weapon tests in general, it condemned all such tests except for those of the Soviets, which had been conducted not far from the Mongolian territory. At that time it was considered politically incorrect to condemn Soviet tests since, Mongolia believed, Soviet nuclear weapons balanced the US, NATO and Chinese forces, and served as a "guarantee of world peace and stability".

In the 1960s, during the Sino-Soviet dispute, Mongolia found itself involuntarily involved in it and, by implication, in their military standoff. When China developed nuclear weapons and the Sino-Soviet dispute turned into border clashes in 1969, the Soviets briefly entertained the idea or, at least made believe, of contemplating a preemptive strike against China's fledgling nuclear weapons facilities and communicated their thoughts to its Warsaw Pact allies. The Soviets also approached the US for its possible reaction.

A preemptive strike would surely have had a devastating effect on international relations, especially on Mongolia since the Chinese side was well aware of the Soviet bases in Mongolia and the dual use weapons placed therein, and surely had plans to take counter measures. Mongolia's role was that of a pawn that was to support the Soviet forces and their military activities. The US arsenal was also targeted at the Soviet bases in Mongolia.

The US response to the Soviets was that it would not idly sit by was perhaps decisive in avoiding a possible catastrophe. Had the conflict occurred, it would have made the 1962 Caribbean missile crisis a mere footnote in the annals of XX century history. This was an important lesson for Mongolia not to blindly side with one of the belligerent nuclear powers.

New security environment

The end of the cold war in early 1990s, normalization of Sino-Russian relations and withdrawal of Russian military bases and troops from Mongolia have radically changed the country's external security environment. Mongolia was no longer a junior partner of a nuclear weapon state.

Moreover, its two neighbors have committed not to use territories or airspace of their neighboring third states against each other. Mongolia, in its turn, declared that henceforth it would pursue balanced relations with its neighbors and maintain neutrality in possible bilateral disputes between Russia and China that did not directly affect Mongolia's vital interests.

Mongolia takes a stand

Mindful of the lessons of the cold war period, in September 1992 Mongolia declared itself a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone (SS-NWFZ) and pledged to work to have that status internationally guaranteed. The gist was to underline that it did not have nuclear weapons on its territory and that no country near or far would be allowed to place such weapons on its territory. In practice this meant that no nuclear weapon threat would emanate from the Mongolian territory, which in size is as large as the territories of UK, France, Germany and Italy taken together. Thus Mongolia intended to serve as a positive contributor to the common cause of promoting greater confidence, predictability and stability.

Selection of path to achieve the goal

Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the most pressing international issues and can only be achieved by joint efforts and with the participation of the nuclear weapon states. In Mongolia's case it was the first time that due to its geopolitical location a country decided to establish a SS-NWFZ despite the somewhat reluctance of the P5 to accept the novelty of this status in international relations. They saw it as precedent-setting for other small or island states to follow suit and declare their territories SS-NWFZs and expect security assurances from the P5 (five permanent members of the Security Council: USA, Russia, China, Britain and France).

To achieve its aim and contribute to the common efforts, Mongolia chose to follow the path of engagement, dialogue, 'strategic patience' and search for compromise. Working in that spirit with the P5 and other members of the United Nations, it was able to have the UNGA adopt in 1998 a resolution entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status" that welcomed its policy as contributing to stability and predictability in the region and even inscribed the issue on its agenda.

On its part, in February 2000 the State Great Hural (parliament) adopted a law that criminalized acts that would violate the nuclear-weapon-free status. It also

formally outlawed the stationing and transit through its territory of nuclear weapons by any means. Mindful of the importance of the issue for the society as a whole, the law empowered NGOs and even individual persons, within the mandate provided by the legislation, to exercise public oversight of the implementation of the law and submit suggestions or proposals thereon to relevant state authorities.

Blue Banner NGO, established in 2005 for the purpose of promoting the country's nuclear-weapon-free status, has three times initiated consideration by the Mongolian authorities on the implementation of the legislation and has submitted recommendations to the Government regarding the needed follow-up measures.

Numerous bilateral, trilateral and P5+Mongolia meetings were held to find a common ground and agreement on the issue. As a result of these meetings, Mongolia agreed to not insist on a legally-binding treaty that would define its unique status provided that the P5 would pledge to respect Mongolia's status and refrain from any act that would contribute to its violation. In September 2012 the P5 and Mongolia signed parallel declarations on the understandings reached, underlining the utility of pursuing interests of all involved through dialogue, by political and diplomatic means.

In practical terms the P5 joint declaration meant that Mongolia would be an area of stability and predictability since none of the P5 would involve the country in their future nuclear rivalries, including in possible regional defense system(s), or counter defense system(s). In that sense the joint P5 declaration did not only serve the national interests of Mongolia, but also, in an age when time and space have become important strategic military assets, served the interests of regional stability and predictability; through the joint declaration the P5 and Mongolia also reassured each other that Mongolia and its vast territory would not be used against one other.

At present Mongolia is working to make the SS-NWFZ status an organic part of the East Asian security arrangement. As a Mongolian proverb says, a duck is calm when the lake is calm. This provides the country with the opportunity to spend less on its defenses (less than 1 percent of the state's budget) and more on addressing the country's developmental challenges, promoting human development and furthering human security for every member of the society, as prescribed in the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the regional level, Mongolian NGO Blue Banner is working with the like-minded NGOs and think tanks of Northeast Asia to promote the idea and elaborate the basic elements of a possible regional NWFZ, mindful, of course, of the region's specific needs and challenges. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 March 2017]

Image: Dr. J. Enkhsaikhan, Chairman of Blue Banner NGO and former Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations in New York and Vienna.

A Dark Shadow Looms Large Over UN Talks On Abolishing Nukes

By Rodney Reynolds

WASHINGTON DC (IDN) – The 193-member UN General Assembly is to hold two key sessions – in March and in June – in what is expected to be a do-or-die attempt towards the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

“Whether 2017 will be the year that sees nuclear weapons being banned or whether the effort to achieve this gets turned into a form of “fake news” remains to be seen?,” says a sceptical Tariq Rauf, Director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The dark shadow that looms large over the upcoming General Assembly sessions will be the imposing figure of US President Donald Trump – whose trigger-finger is dangerously close to over 7,000 nuclear weapons, and whose views on nuclear disarmament appear consistently inconsistent, ranging from proliferation to strengthening existing arsenals.

The primary aim of the two sessions – scheduled for March 27-31 and June 15-July 7 – is to negotiate “a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.

But how realistic and feasible is this – considering the strong opposition it is expected to evoke, specifically from some of the major nuclear powers, including the US, Britain, France, and Russia, who are reportedly lobbying behind-the-scenes to scuttle the conference or cause disarray among non-nuclear states?

In an interview with IDN, Rauf said all signs indicate that the negotiations will be fraught with deeply-held differences amongst the participating non-nuclear-weapon States.

“There are fears that those NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and allied non-nuclear-weapon States who might participate will run interference and complicate the discussions on behalf of their

nuclear-armed masters,” he warned. Another fault line could be among those non-nuclear-weapon States that want a quick short norm establishing treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons and those that might prefer a more detailed treaty with provisions on verification, said Rauf, former Head of Verification and Security Policy Coordination at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

He said civil society participation could be a prominent feature for the first time in multilateral negotiations on a nuclear weapons treaty, and some member states already have given indications of curtailing the influence or involvement of civil society.

John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy (LCNP), told IDN that judging by the organizational meeting held February 16 at UN Headquarters, and attended by over 100 countries, there is considerable momentum toward negotiation of a “treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, leading to their elimination” – a ban treaty.

The process arises out of the frustration of most non-nuclear weapon states with the failure of the nuclear-armed states to move rapidly and decisively on nuclear disarmament, pursuant to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament in good faith and UN General Assembly resolutions going back to the very first one, he noted.

For several years, he pointed out, the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Russia, all possessing nuclear weapons, have made clear their opposition to this process. They will not be participating, nor will most states in military alliances with the US.

“In an interesting development, however, China and India were both present at the organizational meeting, and apparently will participate in the negotiations. It would seem they want to

demonstrate their commitment to multilateral negotiation of nuclear disarmament, though it is unlikely that they would join a ban treaty at the outset.”

The Netherlands was also present at the meeting, and press reports indicate that Japan, while not at the meeting, is still deciding whether to participate, said Burroughs, who is also Director, UN Office of International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA).

Rauf told IDN this push by a large majority of non-nuclear-weapon States has opened up stark differences not only with States possessing nuclear weapons, but also within the ranks of the non-nuclear-weapon States.

States in nuclear-armed alliances such as NATO and US’ Pacific allies, plus Russia, vehemently oppose any negotiations on a multilateral treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, while paying lip service to achieving a world without nuclear weapons through an undefined “step-by-step” or “phased” approach with no defined time line.

Three international conferences (Oslo 2013, Nayarit 2014, and Vienna 2015) drew global attention to the deep concern over the pervasive threat to humanity posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any detonation of a nuclear explosive.

Given these risks, the majority of non-nuclear-weapon States stressed the need for urgent action by all States towards achieving a world without nuclear weapons and noted that progress to date towards nuclear disarmament had been very slow.

These States, said Rauf, also highlighted that the NPT had obligated nuclear-weapon States to disarm, but in nearly 50 years of the Treaty this obligation had not been met and there were no signs of it being

met.

These States also noted that there was a legal gap regarding the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, as there was no nuclear disarmament treaty along the lines of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention along the lines of the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention that respectively prohibited biological and chemical

weapons and mandated their total elimination.

Accordingly, these States proposed a menu of four distinct approaches for the pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons, including: a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention; a nuclear weapon ban treaty; a framework agreement; and a progressive approach based upon building blocks.

Some NATO States on the other hand responded that there was no such legal gap and that the NPT provided an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

They stressed that the international security environment, current geopolitical situation, and role of nuclear weapons in existing security doctrines should be taken into account in the pursuit of any effective measures for nuclear disarmament; and as such, a nuclear weapon ban treaty was not in their national security interest.

These States also maintained that a nuclear weapon ban treaty would create confusion as regards implementation of the NPT and complicate fulfilment of the NPT's nuclear disarmament obligations.

"In fact, a nuclear weapon ban treaty would not affect the NPT," said Rauf. Those States that are parties to the NPT would still be bound by it and obligated to its full implementation.

A nuclear ban treaty could go beyond the NPT and prohibit possession of nuclear weapons and deployment of nuclear weapons (including in foreign States, as for example in Belgium, Italy, Netherlands and Turkey that host US nuclear weapons under NATO auspices; or as in Japan and South Korea in earlier times).

Just as the 1963 Partial-Test-Ban Treaty banning nuclear test explosions in the atmosphere, outer space and under water does not conflict with the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty banning all nuclear test explosions; similarly the 1968 NPT could not be in conflict with a nuclear weapon ban treaty, declared Rauf.

Burroughs said a ban treaty, as now envisaged, would prohibit the possession and use of nuclear weapons, but not contain detailed provisions regarding such matters as verified dismantlement of nuclear weapons and governance of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The thought is that it does not make sense to negotiate on issues directly affecting states with nuclear weapons without their participation; their expertise, views, and commitment would be needed to satisfactorily resolve the issues.

A ban treaty in this approach would reinforce existing norms as to non-use of



nuclear weapons – codifying the incompatibility of use with international humanitarian law governing the conduct of warfare. It would also reinforce existing norms as to non-acquisition of nuclear weapons under the NPT and regional nuclear weapon free zones, he added.

Burroughs said a ban treaty would also build upon, and in a sense unite, the treaties establishing the nuclear weapon free zones. The first of those treaties, the Treaty of Tlatelolco establishing the Latin American and Caribbean zone, celebrated its 50th anniversary on February 14 in Mexico City.

"The significance of a ban treaty may be above all political, a powerful and definitive statement that the status quo as to nuclear weapons is unacceptable, that nuclear weapons must never be used again, and that there must be no more delays in fulfilling the promises of nuclear disarmament made in the NPT and in the UN context, notably the 1978 General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament".

But depending on the content of the treaty, he pointed out, there will also be specific legal consequences. For example, there may be a prohibition on financing of nuclear weapons which could significantly affect investment in companies making nuclear weapons, and for states joining the ban treaty, there will likely be a requirement not to assist or cooperate in any way with preparation for use of nuclear weapons by states outside the treaty, said Burroughs. [IDN-InDepthNews – 25 February 2017]

Image: Montage of an inert test of a United States Trident SLBM (submarine launched ballistic missile), from submerged to the terminal, or re-entry phase, of the multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle | Wikimedia Commons

Japan's Largest Ever Voluntary Contribution to the CTBTO

By Jamshed Baruah

BERLIN | VIENNA (IDN) – Japan, by far the only country to experience atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has decided to make the largest ever extra-budgetary contribution to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

The funds amounting to about USD 2.43 million will support a range of verification related activities to improve the detection capabilities of the Organisation – and thus pave the way for a world free of nuclear weapons. A voluntary contribution of this size must be recognized as a strong signal of Japan's commitment to 'finish what we started' – getting the Treaty into force and finalizing the International Monitoring System, said CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo.

At a ceremony in Vienna on February 23, Zerbo thanked the Permanent Representative of Japan, Ambassador Mitsuru Kitano, for his country's largest ever voluntary contribution to the CTBTO. "This generous contribution will further build-up the International Monitoring System's capacity to improve our radionuclide monitoring technology, which can conclusively establish whether a nuclear test explosion has occurred," Zerbo said.

"The verification regime of the CTBTO proved its effectiveness and great service to the international community when it detected the successive nuclear test by North Korea in January and September last year," Ambassador Kitano said. "In fact the verification regime has been able to detect all five nuclear tests by North Korea so far," he added.

Hydroacoustic monitoring is a component of the CTBTO verification system. Japan is one of the few experts on hydroacoustic station development and some of the funds will be also dedicated to improve the organization's ability to master this technology.

Specifically the contribution will be used to: procure and deploy a mobile noble gas detection system; conduct measurement of background level of radio-xenon; and contribute to software development through testing and integration.

Japan signed the CTBT the day it opened for signature on September 24, 1996, and ratified it less than a year later, on July 8, 1997. Japan was the fourth State to ratify the CTBT and the first of the nuclear-capable Annex 2 States to do so.

As part of the CTBTO's International Monitoring System (IMS) to ensure no nuclear test goes undetected, Japan hosts six seismic, one infrasound and two radionuclide stations, as well as a radionuclide laboratory.

In addition to Japan's substantial voluntary contributions over the years, the country is also the second largest contributor to the CTBTO's regular budget, after the United States, CTBTO said on its website.

In early 2014, Japan made a voluntary contribution of USD 455,000 towards the

enhancement of the verification system and to support activities of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEM). Weeks earlier Japan also made a voluntary contribution of USD 737,000 for the acquisition of high-performance computing hardware, enabling the CTBTO to track airborne radioactivity more accurately.

Spearheading international efforts in support of the Treaty's entry into force, Japan, along with Kazakhstan, are the Co-Coordinator of the Article XIV process for the biennium 2015-2017.

According to the CTBTO, 183 states have signed and 166 have ratified the treaty, which U.S. President Bill Clinton called "the longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in the history of arms control".

In spite of what since has become a global norm against explosive nuclear testing, the CTBT itself does not enter into force until it is ratified by eight holdout states listed in Annex 2 of the treaty: China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the U.S. have signed but not ratified. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to even sign. All the same, the accord is a well-established pillar of the international security system.

The UN Security Council in September 23, 2016 marked the treaty's 20th anniversary by adopting Resolution 2310, which recognizes international support for it, reinforces the global norm against nuclear test explosions created by the treaty, underscores the value of the international monitoring system to verify treaty compliance, and calls on all remaining states to sign and ratify to facilitate its "early entry" into force.

Speaking to the press shortly after the Council voted on the resolution, Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Vienna-based CTBTO, said the Organisation welcomed any initiative that serves to strengthen the norm against nuclear testing. He however noted that the first step towards that world, is an end to nuclear testing.

"A world free of nuclear weapons goes by stopping testing too, and then taking steps that will reinforce the agreements that are already here, and then leading us towards what we all want: a world free of nuclear weapons; a world free of any attempt of modernisation that some are talking about today," Zerbo said. Designed to detect any nuclear explosion conducted on Earth, whether underground, underwater or in the atmosphere, the CTBT verification regime comprises 337 monitoring facilities around the world.

This value, in fact, goes even beyond verification of State's undertaking not to test, Zerbo said instatement at the XXV Session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) in Mexico City on February 14, 2017. Member States have identified a wide range of civil, scientific and industrial applications of CTBT data

in areas such as disaster risk reduction and environmental monitoring, he added.

Whether it is to detect earthquakes and provide real time warnings of tsunamis, track severe storm systems or radiation dispersal from nuclear accidents, or advance the study of meteorology, climate change and ocean life, CTBT data potentially offers a unique and invaluable contribution to the development of human well-being, Zerbo said. [IDN-InDepthNews – 23 February 2017]

Image: Third On-Site Inspection Training Cycle Health, Safety and Security Training Course | CTBTO



Forthcoming UN Conference Underlines Resistance to Nukes

By Samantha Sen

LONDON (IDN) - Now that the new world order some of us were talking about threatens to collapse into a new world disorder, the emerging fear is what the U.S and Russia could agree on, rather than what they disagree about. U.S President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin have discovered one another as political twins looking in the same direction from opposite sides – what were thought to be opposing sides anyhow. Nowhere does this union of vision appear more deadly than in the business of nuclear armament, and business it is.

Both leaders have said yes to all the weapons they have, and nodded in the direction of yet more. Both have spoken of “strengthening” their nuclear capabilities. Strengthen how much more to what end? Dire arithmetic abounds on how many times over each can destroy the world. Skip the count; once would be enough.

The UN General Assembly resolved pre-Trump to hold a conference in March and later in June and July of this year to build a legally binding agreement to erase nuclear weaponry. Few hope that the two leaders will see the light before any nuclear flash. The UN conference will be a timely move to strengthen global politics that could pull those political twins, together with some of their cousins, back to the path of sense – and survival.

Some cynical foresight appears obvious, that the UN meeting would end up as little more than a talking platform to echo agreement among the converted, with the rest who matter somewhere far outside the hall. Who, if anyone among the haves and the will-haves might convert to disarmament? Could that hope, unlikely as it may seem, rest with Britain? The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) certainly seems to think so, and not only because it is itself based in Britain. Britain is tied most closely, and historically, to U.S. nuclear policy and into its very weapons system; but also, resistance to nukes within Britain is high and rising.

“There is some speculation that Britain is the weakest link – given that opposition here is so strong – and that if we can bring a change in policy here it can have a knock-on effect with other nuclear weapons states,” Kate Hudson from CND tells IDN. “That is certainly the end to which we are working.” It is not clear “by what exact mechanism the small number of global leaders that currently support these weapons will come to their nuclear senses, but it has to happen if we are to have a future for the human race,” says Hudson.

The workings of such a mechanism do not seem clear in Britain either but it is easy to spot where the weakest chain of that mechanism lies – up in Scotland where Britain’s Trident nuclear submarine system is based. That system needs a near 300 billion dollar revamp, and public voice is pushing political voices against a renewal that appears to the vast majority within Scotland to be dangerous, unaffordable and probably unworkable.

The very likely, if not imminent, departure of Scotland from Britain post-Brexit clouds the nuclear picture further. Scenic English coastal villages that live in tradition and off tourists will not exactly welcome a nuclear sub parked in the bay across from their breakfast rooms. The vast majority of the British have shown they can see plain sense that their leaders seem to miss. Nobody has forgotten that Iraq invasion over those publicly projected hallucinations over ‘Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction’? A million marched past 10 Downing Street against that invasion, a few hundred thousand children among them. Every kid on that street then was right, the government wrong.

Kids and the rest are right again, this time about nuclear disarmament. A survey by Bristol University found that only 3 percent of those surveyed said nuclear weapons make them feel safer. Precedents for such sense abound around the globe.

“The global trend is away from nuclear weapons, both in terms of numbers of warheads – which have reduced significantly since the end of the cold war – and in terms of opinion at both state and civil society level,” says Hudson. “The number of countries involved in nuclear weapons-free zones has increased, covering almost the entire southern hemisphere and parts of the northern, and many leading statespeople now recognise that nuclear weapons are just too dangerous to possess.”

Can just a handful of leaders veto survival of the world? And now that fundamentally moral – and political – question will be put to the test at the General Assembly conference. Belief in the capacity to act is itself limited; the UN Security Council enshrines after all the power of the few to decide. Within those limits, and well short of any dramatic ban on nuclear weapons by July of this year, some limited positivity is certain. After two decades on the back burner, nuclear disarmament will return to the formal international agenda and that is already some steps forward, if not the sought destination. A groundswell of popular opposition to nuclear weapons is rising now that look set to amplify a popular resistance to nuclear weapons.

“No world leader can block the establishment of a global nuclear ban treaty but the process of getting them to sign up may well be a difficult one,” says Hudson. The difficulty lies in getting a few leaders to see what is right for them and their people. “Nuclear disarmament is in their interests too,” she adds. “No more waste of national resources on useless WMD, no perpetual threat of annihilation to their countries to which they would not be immune. It is our job to bring them to the table, to back the ban, and that needs to happen before a nuclear detonation, either by accident or design.”

That logic will be flashed firmly in the faces of Trump and Putin primarily.



They are not the only ones, though. As CND points out, some – though not all - of the other nuclear weapons states, UK, France and Israel, oppose the ban. North Korea supports the ban, and China, India and Pakistan abstained. Other opponents are largely those tied into military alliances with the U.S., like the NATO states and Japan, South Korea and Australia.

“The UN negotiations have been backed by the vast majority of members of the UN General Assembly,” says Hudson. “The international desire for global nuclear disarmament has been articulated by many states, for decades and has been obstructed by a very small number of nuclear weapons states, standing in opposition to international law, as enshrined in the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.”

The UN conference will not snap this inner chain of nuclear weaponry straightaway, it’s fair to fear. But given the colossal task, it will be something if that chain can be weakened at some of its vulnerable points. That weakening will

come only through the force of public opinion, and not just in Britain. The force of public opinion has been overwhelmingly strong across the world already, and led to policy decisions when leaders themselves might not always have generated them. Those few remaining leaders can now be led by their people. The UN meeting comes as a signal to people, beyond the stuff of diplomatic channels that are prone to choking. [IDN-InDepthNews – 09 February 2017]

Image: A Trident missile-armed Vanguard-class ballistic missile submarine leaving its base at HMNB Clyde | Wikimedia Commons

The Rapidly Increasing Urgency of Nuclear Zero

By Rick Wayman

SANTA BARBARA, CA, USA (IDN) - October 24-25, 2016, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation brought together a small group of academics, activists and thought leaders to discuss how to shift the global discourse toward nuclear disarmament.

The symposium, entitled “The Fierce Urgency of Nuclear Zero: Changing the Discourse,” discussed the current state of nuclear threats, geopolitical and psychological obstacles to nuclear zero, and the path forward.

The symposium’s final statement was delayed in order to incorporate the new political realities following the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, which took place just two weeks after the symposium.

Catastrophic nuclear threats abound. The most destructive threat comes from the United States and Russia, which together possess 93% of the world’s 14,900 nuclear weapons. The use of these arsenals would undoubtedly result in a nuclear winter, putting the future of human civilization into serious jeopardy. A nuclear exchange between other nuclear powers – India and Pakistan, for example – would very likely result in significant global cooling, leading to widespread famine and the deaths of two billion people worldwide.

The symposium’s final statement points out numerous highly volatile situations, including the multi-sided conflict in Syria, the U.S. military’s pivot to the Pacific, NATO’s war games, U.S. missile defense in Eastern Europe, and continued tensions with North Korea. Since the publication of the statement on January 21, 2017, the urgency of nuclear zero has become even clearer.

After Iran tested a medium-range ballistic missile in late January, President Trump announced on twitter that “Iran has been formally PUT ON NOTICE.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) has scheduled a test of its Minuteman III Intercontinental Ballistic Missile for February 7. The U.S. deploys around 400 nuclear-armed Minuteman III missiles in silos scattered across five states. Following U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile tests, USAF officials regularly boast of “the messages we send to our allies who seek protection from aggression and to adversaries who threaten peace.” The double standard of this week’s launch not be lost on the rest of the world.

The Clock Is Ticking

On January 26, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved its Doomsday Clock to two-and-a-half minutes to midnight – the closest it has been since the 1950s. Despite this, and the many terrifying situations described above, there are positive efforts that require public support in order to bring us back from the brink. Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Representative Ted Lieu of California have introduced legislation in the U.S. Congress to restrict the President’s power to unilaterally order the first use of nuclear weapons. The bills are insufficient because, even if they are adopted, the U.S. could still use nuclear

weapons first if Congress declared war against an adversary.

The fact that President Trump behaves erratically and is prone to irrational retribution, however, makes it clear that the legislation is necessary.

Nuclear weapons have always been incompatible with democracy. From Truman to Trump, every U.S. President has held this vast, unaccountable power to himself.

On March 15, the U.S. Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals will hear oral arguments in the lawsuit filed by the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) against the United States. The RMI is seeking U.S. compliance with Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which states: Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Specifically, the Marshall Islands believes that the U.S. must “call for and pursue the negotiations that have never begun – namely negotiations in good faith relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament.” While the lawsuit against the United States was originally filed in 2014 against the Obama administration, the process continues in U.S. court, now against the Trump administration.

Then, on March 27, historic negotiations will begin at the United Nations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. This effort, supported by 113 nations at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2016, will likely lead to a treaty prohibiting “a range of activities relating to nuclear weapons, including their use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer, as well as assistance, encouragement or inducement of anyone to engage in any of these prohibited activities.”

On December 22, 2016, then-President-elect Donald Trump tweeted, “The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes.” In reality, the majority of the world’s countries have indeed come to their senses about the urgent need to achieve nuclear zero. Meanwhile, the world’s nine nuclear-armed nations and their enablers continue to threaten us all.

As the final statement of the NAPF symposium said: “There exists an ethical imperative to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The survival of the human species and other forms of complex life requires acting upon this imperative.”

Rick Wayman is Director of Programs & Operations at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (www.wagingpeace.org). [IDN-InDepthNews – 05 February 2017]

An Eminent Buddhist Leader Urges Nuke Disarmament Summit

By Ramesh Jaura and Katsuhiro Asagiri



BERLIN | TOKYO (IDN) - Japanese Buddhist philosopher and peace builder Daisaku Ikeda has urged the U.S. and Russian leaders to come together for a summit meeting as soon as possible to pledge a global drift toward nuclear disarmament. The two countries together hold more than 90% of the world's nuclear arsenal.

The advice by Ikeda, who is the President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist association, is contained in his 35th annual peace proposal titled "The Global Solidarity of Youth: Ushering in a New Era of Hope" issued on January 26, 2017.

It comes at a point in time when former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has warned: "it all looks as if the world is preparing for war". Writing in the Time, he says: "The world today is overwhelmed with problems. Policymakers seem to be confused and at a loss. But no problem is more urgent today than the militarization of politics and the new arms race. Stopping and reversing this

ruinous race must be our top priority. The current situation is too dangerous." He urges a meeting of UN Security Council "at the level of heads of state to adopt a resolution stating that nuclear war is unacceptable and must never be fought".

Ikeda's proposal also comes at a point in time when analysts are far from certain whether U.S. President Donald Trump would take to policies that reduce nuclear dangers or resort to actions resulting in a suicidal arms race.

Five days before Trump's inauguration on January 20 as 45th President of the United States, the Sunday Times reported that his aides had told British officials that Trump planned to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin on his first foreign trip, possibly in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland. The paper, citing unidentified sources, reported that Trump planned to begin working out a deal to limit nuclear weapons and that Moscow agreed to the meeting.

According to the newspaper, Trump sought to emulate former President Ronald Reagan's meeting with the Soviet Union's Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986 that took

place in the capital of Iceland. The two met in an effort to work on a major nuclear disarmament treaty at the height of the Cold War. However, Trump Administration's incoming press secretary Sean Spicer denied the report, describing it in a Twitter message "100 percent false".

In his peace proposal, Ikeda recalls the call for the abolition of nuclear weapons issued by his mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, 60 years ago in 1957. Toda sought to reveal the illusory nature of nuclear deterrence and forcefully stated that the use of nuclear weapons can never be justified.

Ikeda welcomes the adoption of a UN General Assembly resolution on December 23. The vote followed a decision on October 27 by the General Assembly's First Committee – which deals with disarmament and international security matters – to begin work on the new treaty despite fervent opposition from some nuclear-armed nations.

The General Assembly has confirmed that beginning March 2017, it would hold a conference open to all member states, to negotiate a "legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination". The conference to be held at UN headquarters in New York will be divided into two sessions: from March 27 to 31 and from June 15 to July 7.

Aware of the difficulty of convincing nuclear-weapon states to participate in these negotiations, Ikeda stresses that Japan, as the only country to have experienced nuclear bombings in war, has a moral responsibility to work to gain the participation of as many states as possible.

The SGI president stresses that the establishment of such a legal instrument would embody a global enterprise with the goal of preventing the horrors of nuclear war from ever being visited upon any country. He emphasizes that this initiative is fully congruent with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Its Article VI requires each state party to pursue good faith negotiations toward complete nuclear disarmament. Ikeda is of the view that the actions of civil society during the negotiation process will help build momentum toward the treaty being a form of "people-driven international law."

A profound significance of the SGI's 35th annual peace proposal is that it coincides with a report on January 26 that "for the first time in the 70-year history of the Doomsday Clock, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Science and Security Board has moved the hands of the iconic clock 30 seconds closer to midnight". The decision to move the hands of the Doomsday Clock is made by the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in consultation with the Bulletin's Board of Sponsors, which includes 15 Nobel Laureates. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists adds: "In another first, the Board has decided to act, in part, based on the words of a single person: Donald Trump, the new President of the United States."

The Science and Security Board's full statement about the Clock points out that in January 2016, the Doomsday Clock's minute hand did not change, remaining at three minutes before midnight. The Clock was changed in 2015 from five to three minutes to midnight, the closest it had been since the arms race of the 1980s.

The Board adds: "Over the course of 2016, the global security landscape darkened as the international community failed to come effectively to grips with humanity's most pressing existential threats, nuclear weapons and climate change ..." This already-threatening world situation was the backdrop for a rise in strident nationalism worldwide in 2016, including in a U.S. presidential campaign during which the eventual victor, Donald Trump, made disturbing comments about the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and expressed disbelief in the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change ..." The board's decision to move the clock less than a full minute — something it has never before done — reflects a simple reality: As this statement is issued, Donald Trump has been the U.S. president only a matter of days ...

This backdrop puts an additional spotlight on Ikeda's repeated call for establishing a global trend toward nuclear disarmament as a crucial step to prohibiting nuclear weapons and ushering in a world free of nuclear weapons.

In doing so, he is joining forces among others with the new United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, who has pledged to "actively pursue the abolition of all weapons of mass destruction and the strict regulation of conventional weapons", arguing that disarmament can play an important role in ending existing conflicts and preventing the outbreak of new. "I am committed to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons," Guterres declared in a video message to the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, which opened the first segment of its three-part 2017 session on January 23. [IDN-InDepthNews – 27January 2017]

Image: Demonstration in Lyon, France in the 1980s against nuclear weapons tests
| Wikimedia Commons

Iran's Nuke Agreement Survives Without a Shot Being Fired

By Rodney Reynolds

WASHINGTON, DC (IDN) – During the height of the U.S. presidential election campaign last year, Republican candidate Donald Trump threatened to tear up the 159-page Iran nuclear agreement on live television.

In characteristic “Trumpism”, he dismissed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), as the agreement was formally known, as “stupid”, “a lopsided disgrace” and “the worst deal ever negotiated.”

With Trump moving into the White House on January 20, will he abide by his threats and swear by his rhetoric? Or was it all political bluster? Or, as he is prone to say, on Twitter: “all talk and no action.”

On the one-year anniversary of the JCPOA on January 16, outgoing U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, one of the key negotiators of the agreement, was unyielding in his absolute faith on the Iranian deal.

The JCPOA, he said, resolved a major nuclear threat without firing a shot or sending a single soldier into combat. Moreover, “it was endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council and earned the support of more than 100 countries across the globe.”

“We still have serious differences with the Government of Iran, and will continue to push back on its support for terrorism, disregard for human rights, and destabilizing regional activities. But the United States, our partners and allies in the Middle East, and the entire international community are safer today because of the JCPOA,” he declared.

Contrary to a misconception in the U.S., the Iran nuclear agreement was not a bilateral agreement between Iran and the U.S. Rather, it involved the world's five major powers: the U.S., Britain, France, Russia and China, all permanent members of the UN Security Council (P-5), plus Germany and the European Union.

Tariq Rauf, Director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN that by all rational and reasoned, as well as technical grounds, the JCPOA has stood up well.

He said Iran has implemented its part of the nuclear measures and continues to do so, as regularly confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its quarterly reports.

“There is no rational alternative to the JCPOA,” he said, pointing out that no one in a right frame of mind can make the case of getting a “better deal”.

“Even the Israeli military-intelligence establishment, the Saudi Prince Turki al Faisal (former head of Saudi intelligence), and others are now supportive of continuation of the JCPOA – as they can see that the restraints on Iran's nuclear programme are effective and are demonstrably working,” said Rauf, a former

senior official at the IAEA (2002-2012) dealing with nuclear verification, non-proliferation and disarmament.

In his statement released by the State Department on January 16, Kerry said with the JCPOA, “we mark an historic understanding that prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and demonstrated the power of sustained, principled, multilateral diplomacy to address major international challenges.”

Implementing this highly technical deal has required diligent efforts by all participants -- the P5+1, the European Union, and Iran, he noted.

As the IAEA continues to verify the deal through intensive access and monitoring provisions, there is no doubt that the deal is working and all participants are keeping their commitments, Kerry assured.

He also pointed out some of the specifics in the implementation of the agreement. Iran, he said, has shipped out 98 percent of its enriched uranium, dismantled two-thirds of its centrifuges, filled its plutonium reactor with concrete and implemented the most rigorous nuclear inspection regime ever negotiated.

On January 16, the IAEA confirmed that Iran has removed equipment from the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant before the agreed one year deadline in order to meet another commitment under the JCPOA.

“The United States and our partners have also fully implemented our commitments to lift nuclear-related sanctions, and we will continue to uphold our commitments as long as Iran continues to abide by the deal,” Kerry declared.

SIPRI's Rauf told IDN that domestic opposition, however, in hard line factions to the JCPOA in both the U.S. and Iran remains strong. With the election of Donald J Trump, he argued, the ideological Republican faction in the U.S. Congress and the hardline conservative clergy and revolutionary guard factions in Iran, are restive and would like to create obstacles with regard to the JCPOA.

“It is imperative that the Rouhani administration in Iran make extra effort to ensure that Iran is scrupulously and faithfully implementing the JCPOA both in letter and spirit so as not to offer any provocation to the pro-Israeli Republican faction in the U.S.,” he noted.

It is likely this Republican faction will take steps on human rights, regional security, oil exports etc. to provoke a reaction from Iran leading to a collapse of the JCPOA.

Hopefully, the Rouhani-Zarif administration will remain calm, not fall for retaliation to provocations, implement the JCPOA fully and let the international community be the judge in condemning any negative actions or provocations from the Republican hardliner ideologues in the US, said Rauf. [IDN-InDepth-News – 17 January 2017]

Trumps' Nuclear Twitter Menacing Ahead of UN Talks in March

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) – Ahead of the inauguration of Donald Trump as 45th President of the United States on January 20, analysts are far from certain whether he would take to policies that reduce nuclear dangers or resort to actions resulting in a suicidal arms race.

The guessing game is taking place against the backdrop of the United Nations General Assembly having confirmed that beginning March 2017, it would hold a conference open to all member states, to negotiate a “legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”. The conference to be held at UN headquarters in New York will be divided into two sessions: from March 27 to 31 and from June 15 to July 7.

Adding to the uncertainty surrounding the prospects of a nuclear-weapons free world is the fact that the new UN Secretary-General António Guterres is not known to ever have directly challenged the nuclear weapons policies of the P5 (five permanent members of the Security Council: USA, Russia, China, UK and France) during his term as Prime Minister of Portugal (1995-2002).

This, according to Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, might also have been an influential factor in him getting the Security Council endorsement ahead of the other candidates in October. The P5 are all nuclear-armed, and are the ones most responsible for a continued lack of progress in achieving multilateral nuclear disarmament.

In contrast to Guterres, Ban Ki-moon, whose second five-year term as Secretary-General expired on December 31, was persistently championing – though with little success – the cause of a nuclear-weapons free world on the basis of a Five-Point Proposal for Nuclear Disarmament released on United Nations Day October 24, 2009.

However, as head of the UN Refugee Agency, Guterres participated in the first international Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in March 2013 on Oslo.

“How Guterres addresses nuclear disarmament as UN Secretary-General, will be a critical question,” according to Jonathan Granoff, President of the Global Security Institute.

“The objective to eliminate nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction was agreed by all UN members in the very first resolution of the UN General Assembly. The unconditional obligation to achieve this goal was unanimously affirmed by the World Court. But so far this objective has not been met and humanity still lives under the existential threat of nuclear annihilation. The UN Secretary-General has a responsibility and mandate to act on this core global issue,” Granoff stated.

In an Open Letter to Trump on January 3, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation recalls: “You have suggested that more nations – such as Japan, South Korea and even Saudi Arabia – may need to develop their own nuclear arsenals because the U.S. spends too much money protecting other countries. This nuclear proliferation would make for a far more dangerous world.”

The letter adds: “It is also worrisome that you have spoken of dismantling or reinterpreting the international agreement that places appropriate limitations on Iran’s nuclear program and has the support of all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany.”

David Krieger, President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, commented, “Mr. Trump does not seem to have a well-grounded understanding regarding threats to use the U.S. nuclear arsenal. This poses a dramatic danger to the whole world, including U.S. citizens. His presidency may constitute and the most dangerous period in human history.”

The Open Letter advises Trump of the U.S. obligation under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to negotiate in good faith for an end to the nuclear arms race and for nuclear disarmament. It explains that nuclear deterrence is based upon on the willingness of political leaders to act rationally under all circumstances, even those of extreme stress. It goes on to say that nuclear proliferation and a renewed nuclear arms race would both make for a far more dangerous world.

In Arms Control Today, Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association (ACA) wrote on January 6: Donald Trump has made some promising remarks about nuclear policy and some irresponsible comments. He reportedly told Kazakhstan’s President Nursultan Nazarbayev, “There is no more important issue than nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation to be addressed in a global context,” according to a Kazakhstan-issued statement on their November 30 phone call.

But weeks later, Trump strongly implied he is contemplating a radical break from decades of bipartisan U.S. policy to reduce nuclear stockpiles and avert global nuclear competition, wrote Kimball. On December 22, he launched a tweet declaring, “The United States must greatly strengthen and expand its nuclear capability until such time as the world comes to its senses regarding nukes.”

When asked by MSNBC to clarify, Trump reportedly said, “Let it be an arms race. We will outmatch them...and outlast them all.” According to Kimball, Incoming White House press secretary Sean Spicer offered an interpretation to NBC News that Trump is sending a “warning” to other countries “that this president’s going to take action”.

ACA's Executive Director rightly pointed out that if Trump and his advisers really believe nuclear "warnings" and calls for a global arms race are in the interest of the United States, they should think again. "History suggests that nuclear threats do not intimidate the likes of Russia, China, North Korea, or terrorist groups. Such bravado is reckless and dangerous. It confuses close allies, undermines global nonproliferation efforts, and motivates adversaries."

In its Open Letter, the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation reminds Trump that as President of the United States, he will have "the grave responsibility of assuring that nuclear weapons are not overtly threatened or used during your term of office".

It adds: The most certain way to fulfil this responsibility is to negotiate with the other possessors of nuclear weapons for their total elimination. The U.S. is obligated under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to engage in such negotiations in good faith for an end to the nuclear arms race and for nuclear disarmament.

"A nuclear war, any nuclear war, would be an act of insanity. Between nuclear weapons states, it would lead to the destruction of the attacking nation as well as the attacked. Between the U.S. and Russia, it would threaten the survival of humanity," the Open Letter warns.

It points out that there are still more than 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world, of which the United States possesses approximately 7,000. Some 1,000 of these remain on hair-trigger alert. A similar number remain on hair-trigger alert in Russia. "This is a catastrophe waiting to happen."

Even if nuclear weapons are not used intentionally, says the Open Letter, they could be used inadvertently by accident or miscalculation. "Nuclear weapons and human fallibility are a dangerous mix."

Nuclear deterrence presupposes a certain view of human behaviour, says the Letter. "It depends on the willingness of political leaders to act rationally under all circumstances, even those of extreme stress. It provides no guarantees or physical protection. It could fail spectacularly and tragically."

The Open Letter adds: "As other presidents have had, you will have at your disposal the power to end civilization, the human species and most other forms of complex life. You will also have the opportunity, should you choose, to lead in ending the nuclear weapons era and achieving nuclear zero through negotiations on a treaty for the phased, verifiable, irreversible and transparent elimination of nuclear weapons.

The letter, signed among others by Noam Chomsky, Richard Falk, David Ellsberg, advisors, board members and staff of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, and many others who view Trump's presidency as possibly the most dangerous period in human history, concludes: "We, the undersigned, urge you to choose the course of negotiations for a nuclear weapons-free world. It would be a great gift to all humanity and all future generations."

Kimball recalled that for decades, Republican and Democratic leaders have negotiated agreements to limit and cut nuclear arsenals, worked to curb the

spread of nuclear weapons, and sought to reduce the risk of miscalculation and catastrophe.

The ACA Executive Director wrote: "Since the administration of Ronald Reagan and the end of the Cold War, the United States has drastically reduced the size of its nuclear arsenal. In fact, Republican presidents have cut the arsenal far more aggressively than have their Democratic counterparts. Since 1992, presidents – regardless of political party – have observed a nuclear test moratorium."

He adds: "If Trump hopes to reduce and not increase nuclear dangers, he must maintain the previous bipartisan policy of engaging with Russia to cap and reduce the two nations' still enormous and deadly nuclear arsenals, strengthen the global taboo against nuclear testing, and bring the world closer to the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

[IDN-InDepthNews – 09 January 2017]

Image: An unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile is launched during a 2016 operational test at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California | Senior Airman Kyla Gifford | U.S. Air Force



UN Paves The Way for Conference on Treaty Eliminating Nukes

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA | NEW YORK (IDN) - The United Nations General Assembly has confirmed that beginning March 2017, it would hold a conference open to all member states, to negotiate a “legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”. The conference to be held at UN headquarters in New York will be divided into two sessions: from March 27 to 31 and from June 15 to July 7.

“This historic decision heralds an end to two decades of paralysis in multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts, and comes at a time when the two major nuclear-armed states are engaging in nuclear-sabre rattling,” noted the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

The civil society organisation was referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President-Elect Donald Trump have announcing their desire to “strengthen” their countries’ nuclear capacities.

“This reckless and aggressive behaviour by Russia and U.S. President-elect . . . leaves the rest of the world with a simple choice, silently watch the risk of nuclear war continue to rise or take action and prohibit these inhumane and unacceptable weapons of mass destruction” said ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn.

John Hallam of the People for Nuclear Disarmament pointed out that Russia and the U.S. each currently has some 7,000 nuclear weapons, a considerable diminution from the times of the last cold war, and each maintains just under 1000 land – based ICBMs in a status in which they can be launched in a few minutes.

“The use of even a fraction of these forces (most likely on each other) would end civilisation as we know it (something that could be achieved by the use of as few as 5 large nuclear weapons in space above continental landmasses),” said Hallam.

It is against this backdrop that the General Assembly approved a historic resolution on December 23. The vote followed a decision on October 27 by the General Assembly’s First Committee – which deals with disarmament and international security matters – to begin work on the new treaty despite fervent opposition from some nuclear-armed nations.

113 UN member states voted in favour of the October 27 resolution, 35 against and 13 abstained. AsICAN noted, support was strongest among the nations of Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

A cross-regional group comprising Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa initiated the resolution. They are likely to lead next year’s negotiations.

According to ICAN, at a UN budget committee meeting shortly before the General Assembly adopted the December 23 resolution, the United States objected to a funding request for the planned four weeks of negotiations on the treaty to ban nuclear weapons.

“But under intense pressure from supporters of nuclear disarmament, it eventually withdrew its objection, and the committee authorized the request,” stated ICAN, a civil society coalition active in 100 countries.

ICAN saw a leaked document distributed to all NATO members by the United States in October 2016 ahead of the First Committee decision. The U.S. – which possesses some 7,000 nuclear weapons – urged its allies to oppose the resolution and to boycott the negotiations.

The document warned that a treaty eliminating nuclear weapons would erode the perception that nuclear weapons are legitimate for certain nations and make it more difficult for NATO to engage in nuclear war planning.

According to ICAN, a number of close U.S. allies

that in October voted against the resolution or abstained have indicated their intention to participate in the negotiations anyway, in order to help shape the treaty.

The Netherlands, which hosts U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory and abstained from voting, has confirmed that it will take part. Despite opposing the resolution, Japan’s Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida wants his country to attend.

ICAN is urging all nations to take part in the conference next year. “Every nation has an interest in ensuring that nuclear weapons are never used again, which can only be guaranteed through their complete elimination. We are calling on all governments to join next year’s negotiations and work to achieve a strong and effective treaty,” Fihn said.

ICAN stressed that the negotiations should proceed whether or not nuclear-armed nations agree to participate. “As a matter of principle, weapons that are indiscriminate in nature and are intended to cause catastrophic humanitarian harm should be prohibited under international law. This new treaty will place nuclear weapons on the same legal footing as other weapons of mass destruction,” Fihn added.

She hopes that through its normative force, the nuclear weapon ban treaty will affect the behaviour of nuclear-armed nations even if they refuse to join it. It will also affect the behaviour of many of their allies that currently claim protection from nuclear weapons, including those in Europe that host nuclear weapons on their territory. “It will contribute significantly towards achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.”

The treaty is likely to include provisions similar to those found in existing treaties banning biological weapons, chemical weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. These include prohibitions on use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer, as

well as assistance, encouragement or inducement of anyone to engage in any of these prohibited activities.

Biological weapons, chemical weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions are all explicitly prohibited under international law.

Nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction not yet outlawed in a comprehensive and universal manner, despite their well-documented catastrophic humanitarian and environmental impacts. Recent studies have also demonstrated that the risks of accidental or intentional detonations of nuclear weapons have been dramatically underestimated or misunderstood.

Victims and survivors of nuclear weapon detonations, including nuclear testing, have contributed actively. Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing has been a leading proponent of a ban.

“This is a truly historic moment for the entire world,” she said following December 23 vote. “For those of us who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we know that nuclear weapons are inhumane, indiscriminate, and unacceptable. All nations should participate in the negotiations next year to outlaw them.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 26 December 2016]

Image: UN General Assembly approves historic resolution on December 23, 2016 | ICAN



Youth Campaign for a Nuke-Free World at Nagasaki Conference

By Katsuhiro Asagiri

NAGASAKI (IDN) – A Forum of Youth Communicators, launched by Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in 2013, has urged people around the world to realize that nuclear weapons do not only absorb huge amounts of money but also pose a serious threat to international peace and security, global environment, and the very survival of humankind.

The Youth Communicators met in the Japanese city of Nagasaki, which suffered atomic bombings along with Hiroshima seventy-one years ago. They pledged to communicate the pressing need to move toward a nuclear-weapons-free world, and proposed a series of steps to achieve the objective.

“We are convinced that human beings cannot peacefully coexist with nuclear weapons as they threaten people, cities and the environment. ‘Hibakusha’, who managed to survive the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki but suffered physically through aftereffects of radiation and mentally through discrimination, should serve as a warning for the whole world of the dangers of possessing nuclear weapons,” the Youth Communicators said in a statement.

The statement added: “Japan, as the sole nation attacked by nuclear bombs, should reject the ‘nuclear umbrella’, send a strong message to the international community about the horrifying effects and inhumanity of nuclear weapons, and contribute proactively to the negotiation of a legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.”

The meeting took place during an international conference that included two events: a Forum of Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons on December 11 and the 26th United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues from December 12 to 14.

“We recognize that nuclear weapon issues are at a crossroad. This year, G7 Foreign Ministers met in Hiroshima, and President Obama of the United States visited Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, where he delivered a historical speech. Next year, the negotiation of a legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons will start, following the adoption of a resolution at the United Nations General Assembly,” the statement added.

Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida launched the Forum with the aim of passing on the realities of atomic bombings to future generations at a time when A-Bomb survivors (Hibakushas) are aging. Since its launch, 174 young people have served as Youth Communicators. In March 2016, Japan held the 1st Youth forum in Hiroshima where Youth Communicators shared their experiences and exchanged their ideas.

The UN Conference on Disarmament Issues (UNCEDI) has been held almost every year since 1989 in various cities in Japan, with government officials and experts from around the world discussing ways towards a world free of

nuclear weapons. UNCEDI is co-organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) and the Government of Japan.

At the 25th UNCEDI, held in Hiroshima in August 2015, participants focussed on stocktaking of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, Nuclear-Weapons-Free-Zones, and the role of civil society. The conference contributed to revitalizing a global momentum for realizing a world free of nuclear weapons.

“The issue of nuclear ban treaty was taken up at every break out sessions showing the difficulties of dealing this issue in the international society. This conference provided us with a good opportunity to prepare for a NPT preparatory committee to be held next year,” Kazutoshi Aikawa, Director General for Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Science Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, said summing up the Nagasaki international conference.

Earlier, in opening remarks, Kim Won-soo, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs said: “This year . . . marks the seventieth anniversary of the first ever General Assembly resolution. As you know, it called for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons – the weapon to pose an existential danger to humanity. Seventy years later we have yet to achieve that goal. Worse, our efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons have faltered.”

The Youth Forum urged all states to “fully reaffirm” their commitments to nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, in particular promises specified in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and “strengthen the international legal framework to accelerate nuclear disarmament, including improving enforcement of the NPT and negotiating a legally-binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons”.

All states in possession of nuclear weapons, the statement said, should “reconsider the necessity to possess nuclear weapons from security, political, and economic perspectives, and to find other means of maintaining national security and international prestige”, and take “concrete actions to decrease the number of their nuclear weapons, thereby fulfilling their responsibilities under the NPT”.

The statement also urged nuclear states not party to the NPT to join the treaty, and at least one state with nuclear weapons to set an example by disbanding its nuclear program and by joining the efforts of a nuclear free world.

“Stop upgrading nuclear arsenals, as they will not stabilize global security environment,” said the statement, adding: “Take all warheads off hair trigger alert status, as it poses unnecessary risk and danger to the existence of the world, and will prevent an accidental launch.”

Nuclear weapon state should “further secure nuclear arsenals to decrease

nuclear mishaps by dispatching experienced personnel to monitor them and maintain weapon-usable materials out of reach of those who wish to obtain them, such as terrorists”, the statement added.

States without nuclear weapons, including states under “nuclear umbrella” should continue their commitment to remain a non-nuclear weapon state, and take a leadership role in achieving a world free from nuclear weapons.

States under the “nuclear umbrella” in particular should reject their policy, especially in light of risks, effectiveness and credibility, and make efforts to build a security scheme that does not rely on nuclear weapons, including establishing a nuclear weapon free zone.

The Forum called for enhancing unified efforts among non-nuclear weapon states to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons, especially through pressuring nuclear weapon states to accelerate their nuclear disarmament efforts and supporting a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, and expand efforts that involve the international community as a whole, including nuclear weapons states.

Commenting the deliberations of the Communicators Forum, Hiroyasu Tagawa (83) who lost his parents by an atom bombing in Nagasaki, said: “The time during which I can convey my experience as Hibakusha is increasingly limited. I

was touched to encounter thoughts of youth today. I have a high expectation on their activities.”

The average age of the surviving atomic bomb victims is now over 80. With that in view, Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue said it was important to find new ways to promote the anti-nuclear message without relying on survivors of the bombings.

The Hibakusha have launched a global appeal for a nuclear ban treaty arguing: “So that the people of future generations will not have to experience hell on earth, we want to realize a world free of nuclear weapons while we are still alive.” They have launched a signature campaign calling for an international treaty to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons, in the hope that no one will ever have to suffer as they have.

They plan to continue to collect signatures until a nuclear ban treaty is concluded. The first batch of 564,240 signatures collected in August and September 2016 was submitted to the chair of the United Nations General Assembly’s disarmament committee. [IDN-InDepthNews – 24 December 2016]

Image: UNRCPD



Australia's No to Prohibit Nukes Resolution Triggers Debate

By Neena Bhandari

SYDNEY (IDN) - As the curtain falls on 2016, the year that marked the fifth anniversary of Fukushima and the 30th anniversary of Chernobyl nuclear disasters, sending a sombre reminder of the devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences of these weapons of mass destruction, the resolve to free the world of nuclear weapons is stronger than ever before.

The United Nations Resolution A/C.1/71/L.41, which calls for negotiations on a “legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading toward their total elimination”, was adopted at the 71st session of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on October 27, 2016 with 123 members, including nuclear North Korea, voting in favour of taking forward the multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, 38 voted against and 16 abstained.

Australia, once a champion of nuclear disarmament, chose to oppose the Resolution even as the continent country's nearest 26 neighbours in the Asia-Pacific voted in favour alongside African, Latin American and Caribbean countries.

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia's Campaign Director, Tim Wright says, “If Australia continues to oppose this long-overdue treaty, it risks alienating other nations in the region. It is deeply regrettable that Australia, instead of standing up for what is morally right and necessary, chose to side with the small number of nuclear-armed nations and others that claim nuclear weapons are legitimate.”

He adds: “Australia's attempt to derail the UN working group on nuclear disarmament was an extraordinary move, and one that backfired spectacularly. It resulted in a clearer recommendation and strengthened the resolve of other nations to start negotiations in 2017 on a treaty outlawing nuclear weapons.”

The Resolution follows three intergovernmental conferences, examining the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which were held in Norway, Mexico and Austria during 2013 and 2014. These conferences paved the way for non-nuclear countries to play a more assertive role in disarmament.

Calling on Australia to immediately end its claimed reliance on U.S. nuclear weapons, Wright told IDN, “This dangerous policy of extended nuclear deterrence undermines disarmament and promotes proliferation. It sends a message to other nations that these weapons of mass destruction are legitimate, necessary and useful. There can be no justification whatsoever for this policy. No other country in our immediate region claims protection from nuclear weapons.”

Nuclear-armed states and countries that subscribe to the United States' extended nuclear deterrence for security, such as Australia, Japan and South Korea, had opposed the Resolution.

It is worth noting that New Zealand supported the Resolution, which is consistent with its last over three decades of social and legal history on the issue of nuclear arms. Wright says, “Australia, once a supporter of nuclear disarmament, has in recent years completely abandoned principle on this issue, seizing every opportunity to defend the continued possession and potential use of these worst weapons of mass destruction.”

New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are amongst countries in the region that are likely to play a key role at the negotiating conferences scheduled for March and June 2017 in New York.

Former Chair of the New Zealand Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), Maryan Street told IDN, “It is shocking that Australia opposed Resolution L41. There's no rational explanation for it except to state the obvious and that is that their allegiance to the



United States overtook all other considerations. Australia has never been in the forefront of the anti-nuclear movement and so it should come as no surprise that it voted the way it did. With a conservative Liberal government, there is clearly no appetite for courage on this issue.”

Out of the 34 Asia-Pacific countries, which voted on the issue, only four voted against it, namely Australia, Japan, the Federated States of Micronesia and South Korea, and four others – China, India, Pakistan and Vanuatu abstained.

“To be so out of step with your nearest neighbours on an issue of such strategic and potentially cataclysmic importance seems to be irresponsible. Australia needs to use its considerable weight to engage with Asia-Pacific fora, such as regional security discussions, not disengage from them,” says Street.

Australia has supported global bans on chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster munitions. “Australia is committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons pursued in an effective way. However, so long as the threat of nuclear attack exists, the United States' extended nuclear deterrence serves Australia's security interests”, a spokesperson for Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) told IDN.

According to the 2016 annual poll by the Sydney-based Lowy Institute for International Policy, support for the U.S. alliance has slipped nine points: 71 percent of Australians see the alliance as 'very' or 'fairly' important to Australia's security, the lowest level of support since 2007, but still eight points higher than the result that year.

Australia feels its efforts must be directed to strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which is the cornerstone of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and implementing its commitments, such as those agreed in the action plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

"A nuclear weapons' ban treaty without the participation of countries which possess nuclear arsenals, or without due regard for the international security environment, would be ineffective in eliminating nuclear weapons", the DFAT spokesperson added.

While the NPT remains essential for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and as the basis for disarmament negotiations, Wright says, "The treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons is a measure designed to implement Article VI of the NPT. The prohibition treaty will close the loopholes in the existing international legal regime governing nuclear weapons. It will make it clear beyond doubt that it is illegal for any nation to use, test, manufacture or stockpile nuclear weapons."

Wright adds: "It is deeply concerning that Australia and several other pro-nuclear weapon nations seem to have abandoned their support for the NPT. They are refusing to comply with their obligation under Article VI of the treaty to pursue negotiations for nuclear disarmament."

All 191 NPT state parties have committed in Article 6 to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament".

"In 1996 the International Court of Justice advised that they have an obligation to bring these negotiations to a conclusion. Resolution L.41 conforms to this obligation and attempts to give

practical expression to it," says Ramesh Thakur, Director of the Center for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University in Canberra.

Four of the five nuclear weapons' states who are signatory to the NPT, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, voted against the Resolution alongside Israel, a non-NPT nuclear power. China, which has about 260 nuclear warheads, India with between 100-120 warheads and Pakistan with between 110-130 warheads, abstained.

Thakur says, "A legal nuclear ban treaty by itself cannot deliver nuclear disarmament, but it can be a vital element to revive flagging momentum and re-energize efforts to move from a ban to total elimination of nuclear warheads and dismantlement of the nuclear weapons infrastructure."

He adds: "A legal ban will further reinforce the normative boundary between conventional and nuclear weapons, strengthen the norm of non-use of nuclear weapons, and reaffirm both the non-proliferation and disarmament norms.

Accordingly, a ban treaty will be complementary to the disarmament goal of the NPT and provide impetus to efforts toward an eventual Nuclear Weapons Convention that is universal, non-discriminatory and fully verifiable."

Since the ratification of the NPT in 1973, Australia has more or less had a bipartisan approach to global nuclear issues. As Labour Party senator and Shadow Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in a media release, "Labor supports effective and feasible action toward non-proliferation and disarmament, and will continue to actively pursue a path toward these objectives. Labor shares international frustrations with the pace of disarmament and we remain committed to the cause of eliminating nuclear weapons."

The Australian Greens have also called on Foreign Minister Julie Bishop to explain why Australia voted against the Resolution. "Australia should support moves in the UNGA for a convention to eliminate nuclear weapons. Australia should change its foreign policy to reflect changed circumstances and should

independently pursue Australia's interests before Mr Donald Trump takes over as President in January next year. These include complying with the non-aggression clauses of the UN Charter and the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-East Asia", former Australian diplomat, Dr Alison Broinowski told IDN.

A 2014 Nielsen poll showed that 84 per cent of Australians from a broad range of demographics want the government to support a ban.

Outreach Coordinator for ICAN Australia, Gem Romuld told IDN: "Our work in Australia tells us there is overwhelming public support for a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons, to clearly stigmatise and rule out any form of Australian involvement in these weapons of mass destruction, for example, by assisting the U.S with nuclear targeting via the Pine Gap Joint Defence Facility in the Northern Territory. Australia assists the U.S in its war-fighting efforts by hosting the Pine Gap Joint Defence Facility, a major communications base, which would help nuclear weapons reach their destination in the event of a nuclear war".

In recent years, the nuclear armed states have pursued costly programmes to modernise and increase their arsenals. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) 2016 annual nuclear forces data shows that while the overall number of nuclear weapons in the world continues to decline, none of the nuclear weapon-possessing states are prepared to give up their nuclear arsenals for the foreseeable future.

According to SIPRI, "At the beginning of 2016 nine states – the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea – possessed approximately 4,120 operationally deployed nuclear weapons. If all nuclear warheads are counted, these states together possessed a total of approximately 15,395 nuclear weapons compared with 15,850 in early 2015." [IDN-InDepthNews – 15 December 2016]

Image: UN General Assembly First Committee in session | ICAN

UN Chief Decries 'Chronic Stalemate' Over Disarmament

By Rodney Reynolds

NEW YORK (IDN) - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has been unwavering in his longstanding campaign to usher in "a world without nuclear weapons", has expressed strong disappointment over "a deep division" among the UN's 193 member states over the future of multilateral disarmament.

On the one hand, nuclear-weapon States, along with many of their allies, argue that they have taken steps to reduce their arsenals, he said. On the other hand, non-nuclear-weapon States point to the lack of disarmament negotiations; the persistence of thousands of nuclear weapons; and plans for modernizing existing nuclear arsenals decades into the future with costs that run well over \$1 trillion, said Ban in a November 22 keynote address before the New York University's School of Professional Studies.

In a farewell address, mostly to a gathering of academics, peace activists and anti-nuclear groups, Ban was critical of the Geneva-based UN Conference on Disarmament (CD), which has been grounded to a standstill for nearly 20 years, including during his 10-year tenure as Secretary-General, even as he steps down on December 31.

Since he took over as Secretary-General back in January 2007, Ban said he has been going to Geneva many times and addressing the Conference on Disarmament. (On United Nations Day Oct 24, 2009 he released a Five-Point Proposal for Nuclear Disarmament.)

The UN disarmament machinery is "locked in chronic stalemate", he lamented. "You would be surprised – [for] over two decades, they have not been able to adopt the programme of work. Can you believe it? Not to mention, let alone the lack of progress in the work."

He decried the CD has not been able to adopt even an agenda. "Twenty years, this has existed, and I have been warning them: If you behave this way, we will have to bring the discussions in the Conference on Disarmament, we will have to bring them to some other venue, but they don't listen... Because of the consensus system, just one country can block the whole 193 Member States. This is a totally unacceptable situation," he warned.

The costs of allowing this kind of a status quo, non-action – they are still persistent. This is very frustrating, Ban complained. Although he warned, "disarmament is facing a crisis", he diplomatically avoided responding directly to the harsh pro-nuclear rhetoric from the incoming U.S. President Donald Trump who hinted that countries such as South Korea and Japan should go nuclear to protect themselves rather than rely on the United States.

Asked for his observations on the current state of disarmament, Dr M. V. Ramana, who is with the Program on Science and Global Security at Princeton University, told IDN: "This is a strange time to be talking about disarmament,

given the many developments that make it unlikely that there will be progress on that front anytime soon."

The United States, he pointed out, has just elected Donald Trump who has even indicated that he would consider using nuclear weapons. He said relations between the United States and Russia have deteriorated and the future of bilateral arms control between them is bleak.

Most of the countries with nuclear weapons, in particular the United States, are in the process of modernizing or expanding their nuclear arsenals.

"With Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stepping down, the role of the United Nations is also uncertain. One of the few avenues for optimism that I see comes from the recent vote by a majority of the countries at the United Nations to start negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons," said Dr Ramana.

"Reading runes or chicken entrails would be as reliable predictors of what a President Trump might do on disarmament as sifting through his utterances," noted Dr. Rebecca Johnson, of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy.

"He's a maverick businessman, not a diplomat. His belief system, which now appears to have been reinforced by this election, is that success is what matters, whatever works to win the short term deal, no matter what else is sacrificed or what the longer term consequences might be."

Dr Johnson said Trump embodies narcissistic exceptionalism. As a businessman he clearly hated being required to obey environmental, tax or other regulations and legislation, so it should come as no surprise that he rejects collective security arrangements such as the UN and disarmament treaties whose primary purpose has been to constrain military freedom of action in order to protect vulnerable people from abusive violence and prevent mass destruction and humanitarian catastrophes.

Trump is a kind of "ends justify the means" pragmatist, but not necessarily a nuclear true-believer. Projecting positively, he might be willing to do further nuclear arms reduction deals with (Russian President Vladimir) Putin.

The objective wouldn't be disarmament, but to cut the costs of stockpiling excess and redundant nuclear weapons, and free up resources for 21st century weaponry. Projecting negatively, she noted: "Trump seems to think nuclear weapons are usable, and not only in traditional deterrent terms of reinforcing the nuclear taboo, and if he decides that the U.S. arsenal should pay its way, he could make terrible mistakes and unleash dangers he can't control."

"In any case, Trump demonstrates what the non-nuclear nations have long argued – that there are no safe hands for nuclear weapons." She said Trump is a talking walking justification of the need to change the nuclear regime and



prohibit the use, deployment, production, transporting, proliferation and financing of nuclear weapons. Yet it was not the prospect of a President Trump that caused over 120 governments to vote for UN negotiations. (On October 27, the Disarmament and International Security Committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a ground-breaking resolution Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. The resolution establishes a UN conference in 2017 ‘to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.’)

Dr. Johnson argued that Trump reinforces the humanitarian imperative for nuclear abolition, but over two-thirds of the world voted to negotiate a nuclear ban treaty in October because of Putin, Kim Jong Un, (Narendra) Modi, (Theresa) May and the rest, and in recognition of the vested interests in the nuclear club and the U.S. establishment that meant that even President Obama couldn’t make headway on disarmament after his high-sounding Prague speech of 2009.

“So Trump or no Trump, disarmament will happen when the majority of world peoples take responsibility, and when that happens he will no doubt claim credit!,” declared Dr Johnson. [IDN-InDepthNews – 23 November 2016]

Image: Ban Ki-moon (centre right) delivered a keynote address on ‘The Future of Multilateral Disarmament’ at an event hosted by the Centre for Global Affairs (CGA) of New York University (NYU) on 22 November.

From left: Dennis Di Lorenzo, Dean of NYU School of Professional Studies;
Andrew Hamilton, President of NYU;
Vera Jelinek, Divisional Dean and Associate Professor at NYU School of Professional Studies Center for Global Affairs
| UN Photo | Rick Bajornas

Kazakh President's Japan Visit Focuses on Nuke-Free World

By Katsuhiro Asagiri and Ramesh Jaura

TOKYO | HIROSHIMA (IDN) – Striving for a nuclear-weapons-free world holds a special place in Kazakh-Japan relations, according to President Nursultan Nazarbayev who on November 9 visited Hiroshima that suffered U.S. atomic bombings along with Nagasaki 71 years ago.

Nazarbayev was on a three-day official visit to Japan less than two months before it joins the UN Security Council in January as its non-permanent member for two-years until the end of 2018. In the first year it would be working closely with Japan before Tokyo's two-year term in the Council comes to a close at the end of 2017.

2017 will also mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kazakhstan.

While calling for "the consolidation of the forces of Kazakhstan and Japan and our joint initiatives", he urged "world leaders to renounce nuclear testing in order to prevent another nuclear tragedy".

Nazarbayev stated he had reached an agreement with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on undertaking "joint efforts for building a world free of the threat of weapons of mass destruction".

Nazarbayev, who was awarded the title of special honorary citizen of Hiroshima, said: "Visiting the Memorial Peace Park of Hiroshima once again reinforced my belief in the importance we place on the field of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation initiatives."

Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui thanked the Kazakh President, adding: "On August 29, 1991, you closed the Semipalatinsk (former Soviet) nuclear test site, based on the wishes of the people of Kazakhstan. You took the initiative to create a nuclear weapons-free zone in Central Asia and to announce August 29 as International Day against Nuclear Tests. You play a leading role in building a world without nuclear weapons."

Earlier during the meeting in Tokyo with Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, who hails from Hiroshima, Nazarbayev said: "Japan and Kazakhstan are leaders in the anti-nuclear movement. I am confident that we will jointly keep our work on this issue."

"We feel sincere respect for your leadership since Kazakhstan has gained independence. The fact that Kazakhstan was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018 indicates your successful leadership," Kishida noted.

Addressing Japan's Parliament on November 8 in Tokyo, the Kazakh President drew attention to his manifesto 'The World. The 21st Century' tabled on March 31, 2016 at the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington D.C.

Nazarbayev said: "The world creeps in a new nuclear age – potentially more dangerous and unpredictable. One of the most serious problems of the 21st century is the threat of nuclear terrorism, as well as illicit trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials."



He added: “An unprecedented crisis of confidence between the global players leads to the degradation of safeguards to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. Today, as never before, the political will of all leaders is required in order to reverse these negative trends.”

Nazarbayev pointed to steps taken by Kazakhstan to strengthen international security and stressed the importance of joint efforts to build a world free of the nuclear threat. “We see an important task in the establishment of a global anti-nuclear movement. That is exactly the goal promoted by The ATOM Project that was proposed by our country. I invite our Japanese friends to support this initiative,” he said.

The ATOM Project – ‘Abolish Testing. Our Mission’ – is an international campaign designed to do more than create awareness surrounding the human and environmental devastation caused by nuclear weapons testing. It hopes to affect real and lasting change by engaging millions of global citizens to permanently stop nuclear weapons testing by joining together to show the world’s leaders that the world’s citizens deserve and demand a world without nuclear weapons testing, says the project website.

During the meeting with Emperor Akihito of Japan, on November 7, Nazarbayev emphasized close cooperation between the two countries in various fields, highlighted regular participation of the Japanese side in the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions held in Astana, the capital. The first such congress was held in September 2003 and the fifth in June 2015.

The Kazakh President underlined Japan’s tremendous contribution in resolving global conflicts and facilitating sustainable regional development. He stressed that Kazakhstan will take measures aimed at building a nuclear- weapons-free world and solving the issues of energy, food and water security in the framework of its non-permanent membership on the UN Security Council 2017-2018.

Later, Nazarbayev and Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe discussed a wide range of bilateral cooperation, including political, trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian issues.

Nazarbayev noted that Japan was one of the first countries in the world to support Kazakhstan’s independence 25 years ago. Development of friendly partnership relations with Japan was on top of Kazakhstan’s agenda.

“We agreed to continue active political dialogue, increase contacts at all levels, ensure security of the region, facilitate trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian cooperation, as well as collectively work against challenges of the modern world,” Nazarbayev said at the meeting of the two delegations.

“Kazakhstan is the largest trade and economic partner of Japan in Central Asia. The volume of mutual trade turnover in 2015 amounted to \$1.5 billion. We have a potential to increase this figure and we will steadily expand the horizons of cooperation in the field of high technologies, agriculture, nuclear power, automotive and the steel industry,” the Kazakh President added.

Abe on his part emphasised that the two countries are closely working as co-chairmen of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the

Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) legally banning all nuclear tests. “I have an intention to continue to actively develop relations between Japan and Kazakhstan hand in hand with President Nazarbayev,” Abe said.

During the talks, the two countries signed documents, including the joint statement ‘On special strategic partnership between Kazakhstan and Japan in the age of Asia’s prosperity’, memorandum of understanding between the Kazakh Ministry of Investment and Development and the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

In addition, an agreement on Japan’s participation in EXPO 2017 and a memorandum of cooperation between Astana International Financial Centre and the Japan Securities Dealers Association were signed.

Later on, the Kazakh delegation headed by the President attended a meeting with members of the Kazakhstan-Japan Friendship Parliamentary League headed by Chairman Takeo Kawamura.

Nazarbayev noted that the Parliamentary League is making crucial contributions to strengthening the strategic partnership between the two nations. He expressed gratitude for the support given to Kazakhstan and the efforts being made to enhance cooperation, including the issues of nuclear disarmament. “Next year, we will celebrate 25 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Kazakhstan. In addition, the exhibition EXPO 2017 will take place in Astana. We would like to use these events to strengthen inter-parliamentary exchanges,” Kawamura said while thanking Nazarbayev for the fruitful meeting. [IDN-InDepthNews – 13 November 2016]

Image: Kazakh President Nazarbayev addressing Japan’s Parliament | Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Faith-Based Groups Make the Case for Disarmament

By T.K. Fernandes



NEW YORK (IDN) - Since the deadly use of atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the international community has been calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Despite slow progress, civil society has continued to tirelessly advocate for a nuclear-free world and is in fact one step closer to its realization in principle.

While speaking to IDN, Director of Peace and Human Rights at Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Kimiaki Kawai noted the importance of nuclear disarmament, stating: "We share common global challenges like climate change, poverty, hunger and disasters – so why don't we utilize our rich resources for more meaningful purposes?"

SGI's Executive Director of Peace and Global Affairs Kazuo Ishiwatari echoed similar sentiments, citing the consequences of depriving citizens of necessary resources. "When people are not provided with the necessary resources, this will lead to poverty...which would eventually lead to conflicts," he told IDN. In that sense, there cannot be genuine peace without disarmament, Ishiwatari continued.

SGI is a lay Buddhist organization that has been working towards the abolition of nuclear weapons for over 50 years.

In his remarks during the Fifth Humanitarian Disarmament Campaigns Forum, Ishiwatari discussed the importance of civil society in the disarmament processes. "It is because these processes need to be humanized...civil society actors are able to make significant and necessary contributions to bring such perspectives in," he stated.

Ishiwatari particularly highlighted the role of faith-based organisations like SGI in such efforts to IDN, saying that such groups help represent and convey voices from civil society.

Nuclear Disarmament Programme Manager for PAX Susi Snyder also weighed in on the subject, noting a shared respect for human dignity among the faith-based community.

"The faith community has rallied behind a prohibition on nuclear weapons because...nuclear weapons are incompatible with our common humanity," she told IDN, adding that the threat of

nuclear violence is a "painful attack" on human dignity.

PAX is a partnership between Catholic peace organisations Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) and Pax Christi.

In May, a coalition of faith-based organisations including both PAX and SGI came together to collectively convey their voices.

"We raise our voices in the name of sanity and the shared values of humanity. We reject the immorality of holding whole populations hostage, threatened with a cruel and miserable death. We urge the world's political leaders to muster the courage needed to break the deepening spirals of mistrust that undermine the viability of human societies and threaten our shared future," a joint statement said.

Despite a 1970 treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT), nuclear arms remain widespread.

According to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), approximately 15,000 nuclear weapons still exist and are owned by just

nine countries. The Arms Control Association (ACA) estimates a higher inventory of 15,500, 90 percent of which belong to Russia and the United States.

Almost 2000 of these warheads are on high alert and are ready to launch within minutes, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute found.

After intensive negotiations at the latest NPT review conference in 2015, member states including Russia and the U.S. failed to make any meaningful steps towards a nuclear weapon-free world.

Ishiwatari and Kawai expressed the need to shift the understanding of security from one that focuses on armament to a new concept of humanitarian security. Humanitarian security is a broader idea of human security that encompasses the protection of not only people, but also the environment, Founder of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy Rebecca Johnson explained to IDN.

“[Humanitarian security] carries the obligation not only to pursue disarmament and protect vulnerable people and their human rights and lives, but also to take positive actions to build peace and security and protect the environment from destructive military or economic activities,” she stated.

Though human security helped to “humanize” disarmament, both Kawai and Johnson noted that the idea was often used to justify military action under the guise of Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Humanitarian security instead highlights protective and nonviolent action, and obliges both states and citizens to act, Johnson stated.

In order to embrace this idea and move towards a nuclear-free world, many have looked to education. “Disarmament education needs to deal with two aspects: providing accurate information and at the same time, nurture a mindset... [to help] people interpret such information in a more meaningful way towards our common future,” Kawai told IDN.

Johnson noted the need to integrate disarmament education with education on human rights, conflict management and peace-building and to start at an early age. “Education needs to start young and continue throughout life and work, to enable people

and countries to resist the arms sellers and deter and defuse violent situations before they turn explosive,” she stated.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has also highlighted the importance of bringing the discussion of such critical issues to schools in a report to “inform and empower young people to become agents of peace.” Kawai said already more people are interested in the issue.

In 2014, SGI youth in Japan gathered over 5 million signatures for the Nuclear Zero campaign calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. The petition was presented to the Marshall Islands, whose government filed lawsuits against the nine nuclear-armed nations for failing to comply with their obligations under international law to pursue the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

The “Generation of Change” also made a pledge during the International Youth Summit for Nuclear Abolition in Hiroshima in 2015, stating: “Nuclear weapons are a symbol of a bygone age; a symbol that poses eminent threat to our present reality and has no place in the future we are creating...we, youth around the world, are mustering the courage to stand up and fulfill these decades-old promises of abolition.”

Though the International Court of Justice rejected the Marshall Islands’ bid, some hope for the prohibition of nuclear weapons has been reignited at the United Nations.

The Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) to Develop Proposals to Take forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations for the Achievement and Maintenance of a World without Nuclear Weapons proposed a resolution to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly to convene a conference in 2017 to negotiate a legally binding treaty prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons.

“71 years ago, we entered the atomic age and in that time we have not yet prohibited the most heinous weapon of all: the nuclear weapon. So for the first time in 71 years, there is an opportunity to address that, to negotiate a prohibition,” said Snyder to IDN.

She noted that there has been widespread,

overwhelming support for the resolution, “something that we have never seen.”

In a joint statement, other faith-based organisations also welcomed the resolution, stating: “In times of conflict and escalating tensions like the present - with nuclear weapons being brandished again – it is even more critical to denuclearise both international crises and international conflict resolution.”

“There now exists a historic opportunity to make substantive progress and for this General Assembly to fulfill its mandate as a truly global institution representing all states and full engaging civil society,” the statement continues.

Once the resolution has been passed, states and civil society must stand their ground to ensure treaty that is strong, universal and implemented, Snyder told IDN.

“I believe it will have meaning, I believe we are going to change the dynamics around this issue...to create a platform of peace in the twenty-first century,” she said. [IDN-InDepthNews – 20 October 2016]

Image: Faith Communities Concerned about the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons met with Kim Won-Soo, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs to hand over an interfaith joint statement at United Nations Headquarters, New York
| Facebook Kimiaki Kawai

Learning from the Reykjavik Summit 30 Years On

By *Lowana Veal*

REYKJAVIK (IDN) - At a time when there is a sharp deterioration in relations between the United States and Russia, triggered by disputes over Ukraine, the Crimea and Syria, the capital of Iceland hosted experts, diplomats and researchers on October 10-11 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the historic Reykjavik Summit between Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev.

IDN, a flagship agency of the International Press Syndicate group, spoke to some of the participants of the commemorative event, the initiative for which came from the International Peace Institute (IPI) in New York. What prompted them to organize the event?

“The Reykjavik Summit was the beginning of the end of the Cold War – though not the only factor, but one of them – and was the beginning of the end of the Soviet empire,” Terje Rød-Larsen, IPI President told IDN.

“Tensions are now rising between Russia and the U.S. ... There is also a rise in violent political Islam, which has very clear authoritarian features, and is in many ways an oriental form of fascism. Once again there’s a rise of right-wing ideologies in Western Europe with racist overtones,” Rød-Larsen said.

“There is a very clear need for leaders to get together and the Reykjavik model could once again be relevant. That’s why IPI contacted the Icelandic Ministry of Foreign Affairs to mark a commemoration of the 1986 event and to make a forward-looking event with Russian members and the U.S. as well as with European members. We both had figures who were key figures in the negotiations 30 years ago who could address issues of importance today and also others who are key players in foreign policy,” he explained.

Are there lessons to be learned from the Summit? Yes, says Rød-Larsen. “Firstly, the importance of leadership – that both leaders agreed to come and meet halfway in Reykjavik.”

“Secondly, a number of people who were there 30 years ago . . . attending listened to each other and respected each other, even though the situation in the last hour was tense. That – decency – is often lacking today. There’s a complete lack of trust today between Russia and the West.

“A basic level of trust is important, which is missing today and is dangerous. Both Russia and the West have the impression that the other is trying to encircle their interests, e.g. Russia and Ukraine. The West will talk about Crimea, the Russians about Kosovo. There’s a lack of dialogue.

“Thirdly, there is a need for experts and leaders together. In Hofdi (the building where the summit was held) there was one room with experts, the other with Reagan and Gorbachev. Often this doesn’t happen.” “And finally: Don’t give up,” he concluded.

Walter Kemp, IPI Vice-President also points to the importance of dialogue.

“Since arms control talks have stalled for the last few years, we need to get back to talking and negotiations. Keep working, stay engaged. Not threaten each other. What sort of mechanism can you have to reduce that kind of risk?”

Kemp said: “In the Cold War there was structural confrontation. But today it is unpredictable and unstructured. How do we make talks more structured and predictable? Some people said 30 years ago that it was important for the U.S. and Russia to talk, but now the world is more complex and we should include other countries too,” he added.

Nevertheless, Kemp also sees a positive side to the situation. “There ARE examples of how great powers can cooperate, as for instance in the 5+1 format of the Iran nuclear talks,” he said, referring to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

Alain Le Roy is the former Secretary-General of European External Action Service and spoke about the road ahead. “30 years on, we’re close to a new arms race... Sometimes you need a clear boost to revamp the discussion on disarmament, especially on nuclear disarmament. The disarmament process is slow,” he told IDN.

Le Roy says there is considerable mistrust between Russia and the West. “There’s a need to reset this, to try and find another way to launch talks at a higher level. But discussion is increasing,” he continued.

Valur Ingimundarson, Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Iceland, is not convinced that the Summit could provide useful lessons today. “The breakthrough in superpower relations was contingent on a leadership change in the Soviet Union, with Mikhail Gorbachev trying to save an ailing economy by achieving arms control agreements with the U.S... And while arms control agreements established trust between the two sides, the Soviet non-intervention in Eastern Europe following the political revolutions in 1989 was the key toward ending the Cold War,” he told the meeting.

In his opinion, “The most pregnant political metaphor of our times – the war in Syria – cannot be dealt with by Russia or the United States alone; other domestic and regional stakeholders have to be involved and the UN as a world body needs to play a central role in mediating the conflict.”

The evening before the main event, short presentations were made, including a video from Mikhail Gorbachev. Referring to the need for a change in format over disarmament talks, he said: “We really needed to break through all those logjams!”

Later on he mentions a more serious threat. “New types of nuclear weapons are being created; their qualitative characteristics are being ramped up. Missile defense systems are being deployed. Non-nuclear prompt strike systems are

being developed, whose danger is comparable to the weapons of mass destruction. The military doctrines of nuclear powers have changed for the worse, extending the limits of acceptable use of nuclear weapons. It is mostly for this reason that the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation has increased.”

Like Rød-Larsen and Le Roy, Gorbachev sees the collapse of trust as a major problem in international relations. “The problems and conflicts of the past two decades could have been settled by peaceful and diplomatic means. Instead, attempts are being made to resolve them by using force. This is what has happened in the former Yugoslavia, in Iraq, in Libya, in Syria.”

Besides undermining trust, this has also led to militarization of both politics and minds, which makes the demilitarizing process more difficult, he says. “To change this situation, we need dialogue. Refusal to engage in dialogue was the biggest mistake of the past few years.”

Hofdi, the house that hosted the summit 30 years ago has just been turned into the Reykjavik Peace Centre, whose primary aim is to promote peace through research and education.

At the opening ceremony, the keynote speech was given by Steve Killelea from the Institute of Economics and Peace. Killelea was the brainchild behind

the Global Peace Index, which has now produced its tenth report. “It’s not all bad news,” he told the audience. “In the last year, 81 countries became more peaceful while 79 countries became less peaceful.” The five top risers over the last year are Panama, Thailand, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Mauritania, while the top five fallers are Yemen, Ukraine, Turkey, Libya and Bahrain.

Ocean Dream, the Japanese Peace Boat, timed its arrival in Reykjavik to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the Summit. The crew included five Hibakusha (survivors of atomic bombs 71 years ago), who described their experiences of the nuclear bomb at a public meeting in Reykjavik the day after the Summit conference.

“We want to raise awareness of the devastating effects of nuclear weapons,” the Boat’s coordinator of nuclear-related programmes, Akira Kawasaki, told IDN. The group had visited Hofdi earlier in the day. [IDN-InDepthNews – 18 October 2016]

Image: Mikhail Gorbachev | Video message



Iceland Debates Whether It Hosted Nuclear Weapons

By Lowana Veal

REYKJAVIK (IDN) - Recently released declassified documents by Washington have unleashed a debate whether the U.S. ever deployed nuclear weapons in Iceland, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) since its foundation in 1949.

Experts are of the view that though the U.S. claims to have never deployed nuclear weapons in a country at a strategic juncture of the North Atlantic and Arctic oceans, it does not mean that it had no nuclear plans for Iceland. Previous research by Valur Ingimundarson and William Arkin demonstrates that during the Cold War Iceland was considered a potential storage site.

The documents, consisting of various letters and telegrams, released by the U.S. National Security Archive (NSA), date back to November 18, 1951 – six months after the U.S. and Iceland secretly signed a defence agreement whereby the U.S. would take over the defence of Iceland.

The authorities had deemed this necessary both because of the Korean War and because Iceland has never had an army.

In the first telegram, Icelandic Foreign Affairs Minister Bjarni Benediktsson had shown U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Morris N. Hughes a London Times article quoting Senator Edwin Johnson, who said that Iceland, North Africa, and Turkey were better deployment sites for atomic weapons than the UK.

Knowing that Johnson's thoughts would not be popular with Icelanders, Hughes recommended "official reassurance" that the U.S. had no plans to deploy nuclear weapons in Iceland.

Ensuing telegrams essentially focused on the classic "neither confirm nor deny" stance about the locations of nuclear weapons. In a "Top Secret" telegram dated December 21, 1951, Hughes was authorized by U.S. State Department officials to inform Benediktsson confidentially that the U.S. would "make no move without [the] full consultation and agreement" of Iceland's government.

Jump to 1960. Not long after a U.S. U-2 spy plane was shot down while in Russian air space, the Foreign Minister of the time, Gudmundur I. Gudmundsson, asked Ambassador Thompson whether the U.S. had used Keflavik air base for U-2 flights, had stored nuclear weapons there or had moved them through Keflavik in southwest Iceland.

The formal response remains classified, but a draft response from Ambassador Thompson assured Gudmundsson that the U.S. had neither stored the weapons in Iceland nor shipped them via Keflavik.

An earlier draft had been sent in a telegram a week previously and had mentioned the requirement of U.S. Navy for an Advanced Underseas Weapons Shop (AUW) for storing nuclear depth bombs and its ongoing construction, but that item was dropped from the later draft. Apparently the Icelanders who were

building the facility thought it was going to be used to store torpedoes.

The final document mentioned in the NSA press release is a response by Thompson to a top-secret letter sent by Ivan White, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for External Affairs, which still remains classified.

Thompson's reply intones that White may have asserted that the U.S. government "was free to deploy nuclear weapons in Iceland without securing the agreement of Reykjavik".

Furthermore, "[If] that was the case, the Eisenhower administration had departed from the Acheson policy of assuring "full consultation and agreement."

Iceland was not the only country in which the U.S. was contemplating the storage of nuclear weapons. West Germany, the UK, Turkey, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Greece were also considered, but only Germany and the UK have been officially disclosed.

According to the press release that accompanied the declassified documents, it is now a "settled issue" that nuclear weapons were never deployed in Iceland.

However, when IDN-INPS showed the declassified documents to Elvar Astradsson, a peace activist, he instantly remarked: "That is all known. But they don't make any mention of the secret documents that no one knew about."

These are annexes and technical schedules to the NATO agreement that were signed by Iceland and the U.S. on May 5, 1951 – three days before the NATO agreement was signed – but only came to light when a former Foreign Minister of Iceland, Valgerdur Sverrisdottir, published them on the Ministry website in January 2007. "She was not very popular amongst her fellow politicians for doing so," he added.

"These documents basically allowed the U.S. to do whatever it liked," he continued. He also pointed out that before the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) was set up in the UK in 1958, there was very little awareness of the nuclear weapons issue "and Icelanders wouldn't have been following it".

Besides making arrangements for housing personnel and making the area fit for military use, Article 10 of the Annex on Administration of the above-mentioned agreement states: "United States public vessels and aircraft, and the armed forces and vehicles, including armour, of the United States shall, in connection with operations under this Agreement, be accorded free access to and movement between ports and the agreed areas through Iceland, including territorial waters, by land, air and sea. ... United States aircraft may fly over and land in any of the territory of Iceland, including the territorial waters thereof, without restriction except as mutually agreed."

Technical Schedule no. 1 states: “The United States military authorities and the appropriate authorities of Iceland will consult together, to the extent military requirements permit, relative to the location of structures and facilities which the United States may desire to construct in the Keflavik area.”

Despite the assertion by the NSA that nuclear weapons were never deployed in Iceland, there are many indications that nuclear weapons have been in Iceland, at least on a transitory basis.

The organ of the long-established Campaign Against Military Bases organization, *Dagfari*, contains a number of such accounts and stated in 1977: “Anti-militarists have long suspected that the Keflavik airfield is a nuclear base, though it is clearly stipulated in the NATO agreement that no such weapons shall be situated here.”

Another issue of *Dagfari* from 1999 says that although the question remains whether nuclear weapons have ever been stored in Iceland, “there is little doubt that nuclear weapons have been in Icelandic waters on navy vessels on their way through Iceland”.

One issue contains an account of an American positioned in Iceland who recounted how he shared a military plane with nuclear material as well as with five high-ranking officers.

The plane used the “hot” runway that was used for planes carrying weapons.

“It’s best to completely forget this flight,” the pilot told him after he alighted. After refuelling, the plane continued its journey. The following day, he discovered that the plane had almost definitely been carrying nuclear weapons to be stored in Germany. This would have been sometime between 1983 and 1986.

The U.S. military left Iceland suddenly in 2006. Since then most of the site has been used as a centre for innovative industries, technology and education, using buildings and facilities previously owned by the military.

But earlier this year (2016), the U.S. requested the use of a hangar for submarine monitoring, so they could fly over the sea and detect submarines using sonar.

Then in June the U.S. Department of Defense met with the Icelandic Foreign Affairs Minister, Lilja Alfreðsdóttir, about wanting to strengthen cooperation with the U.S. military once more, because the security situation had changed since 2006.

Then in July 2016, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) published a report in which they openly suggest: “NATO can optimize its ASW [anti-submarine warfare] posture to ensure that the right capabilities are in the right places at the right time by reopening Keflavik Naval Air Station in Iceland and encouraging Norway to reclaim and reopen its submarine support facility at Olavsvern.” Which could mean anything. [IDN-InDepthNews – 07 October 2016]



Left: Icelandic Foreign Minister Gudmundsson greeting U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson during John F. Kennedy’s funeral, November 1963. A few years earlier he had asked Ambassador Tyler Thompson whether the U.S. was storing nuclear weapons in Iceland. Credit: National Archives, Still Pictures Branch, RG 59-PR, box 9.



Right: Ásbrú is a part of the former U.S. Naval Air Base Keflavik not supervised by the Icelandic defence authorities. Credit: Lowana Veal | IDN-INPS

World Congress in Berlin Demands Demilitarization of Minds

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN (IDN) - "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed," declares the Preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO. This is also the crux of the message emerging from the World Congress titled 'Disarm! For a Climate of Peace – Creating an Action Agenda' from September 30 to October 3, 2016 in Berlin.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's famous remark, "The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded", reverberated in the halls of Berlin's Technical University.

An array of current and former UN officials, researchers, representatives of governments, civil society and interfaith organisations as well as peace, disarmament and development activists from around the world participated in the gathering organized by the International Peace Bureau (IPB) jointly with several German, other European and international organizations.

IPB Co-President Ingeborg Breines set the tone, when she declared: "Excessive military expenditures not only represent a theft from those who are hungry and suffer, but are also an ineffective means of obtaining human security and a culture of peace."

Substantial reductions in horrendous military costs amounting to more than one trillion US dollars would eliminate the crushing poverty. Nearly one-third of humanity lives in insufferable conditions, a majority being women, children and young people.

"We need to move the money from the military sector and instead tackle the real security issues such as the threat to the very survival of the planet and humanity, be it by climate change, nuclear weapons or excessive inequality," she said.

All countries must reduce their military spending by 10% per year over the 15 years of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. "Although it will not change

any power imbalance, it would go a very long way in meeting the needs and aspirations of people," she added.

Since one year's military spending equals about 615 years of the UN annual budget, such a reduction in military costs would also strengthen the United Nations' efforts and possibilities to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", Breines declared.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, UNESCO Director-General from 1987 to 1999, pleaded for disarmament for development and for moving away from a Culture of War to a Culture of Peace and Non-violence.

He made an impassioned plea for strengthening the United Nations. It is the UN with 193 members that should matter and not factional groups such as the G7, G8, G10, G15, G20 and G24.

He is currently the Chairman of the Foundation for a Culture of Peace and member of the Honorary Board of the International Decade for the Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World as well as the Honorary Chairman of the Académie de la Paix.

"Unlike the outright bans on biological weapons in 1972 and on chemical weapons in 1996 a ban on nuclear weapons was, and continues to be, fiercely resisted by the nuclear weapon states," said Jayantha Dhanapala, a former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs (1998-2003) and the current President of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs.

He stressed the urgent need for moving away from 'placebo nuclear disarmament' to a nuclear-weapon free world, particularly as an estimated 15,850 nuclear warheads, each of them far more destructive than the U.S. bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki 71 years ago, are held by

nine countries – four thousand on hair-trigger alert ready to be launched.

All nine countries are modernizing their weapons at enormous cost while the DPRK (North Korea), defying the global norm against nuclear weapons testing, has conducted its fifth and most powerful test on September 9, he added.

Kazakhstan's Ambassador at Large Yerbolat Sembayev, who represented Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov, stressed the need for nuclear-weapon states to follow the example of the Central Asian country and relinquish all weapons of mass destruction. Kazakhstan's foreign policy, emphasizing peace, dialogue and international cooperation has been guided by the recognition of the "immorality" of nuclear weapons, "the vision of security", and "ensuring a healthy environment", he explained. "It is with this in view that the Central Asian republic has been in the forefront of the global campaign to end nuclear testing and to warn against the dangers of nuclear weapons," said the Ambassador at Large.

Several speakers regretted that the sad state of affairs ("The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded") spelt out by Secretary-General Ban in his inaugural remarks at the sixty-second annual DPI/NGO Conference 'For Peace and Development: Disarm Now!' in Mexico City on September 9, 2009 had remained unaltered.

In its Action Agenda the IPB World Congress says: "High on the list of institutions that need to be transformed is the economy that underpins the war system. Our principal focus is the high levels of tax revenues used to fund the military.

"The world's governments are spending more than \$1.7 trillion a year on their militaries, more than at the peak of the Cold War. Some \$100 billion of these vast treasuries are devoured by nuclear weapons, whose production, modernization and use should be ruled out on military, political, legal, ecological and moral

grounds.

The Action Agenda notes that NATO member states are responsible for over 70% of the \$1.7 trillion global total. “To reverse the dangerous trend they are encouraging, we urge them to rescind the ‘2% of GDP target’ and firmly resist pressures to increase their military budgets further.” NATO, in IPB’s view, is part of the problem, rather than any kind of solution, and should have been closed down with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.

The IPB Action Agenda pinpoints the disregard for the rule of law: This is a serious symptom of a world in disorder, it says. “When armed forces repeatedly bomb hospitals and schools and attack civilians; when one country invades another and the question of its legitimacy is not even remarked upon; when long-standing commitments to disarmament are ignored; when the good offices of the UN and other inter-governmental bodies are side-lined in favour of big-power games – then citizen action is urgently called for.”

The Agenda calls for decent work to satisfy humanity’s needs: moving the money towards a sustainable green economy without the straitjacket of the

dominant growth model. Such an economy is incompatible with massive military spending, it argues.

“Disarming the economy requires democracy, transparency and participation. This implies making operative a gender perspective, both on the military system, and on the models of peace making and development being promoted to replace it.”

The Global Campaign on Military Spending is more than simply about cuts in the military budget, declares the Agenda. It is also: conversion to a civilian-oriented economy; an end to military research; technological development to actively promote peace; creating opportunities to implement humanistic solutions and sustainability in general; development cooperation and prevention and resolution of violent conflicts; and demilitarisation of minds.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 03 October 2016]

Image: Technical University Main Building | Ulrich Dahl | Wikimedia Commons



UN Security Council Bans Nuke Tests But Not Bombs

By Ramesh Jaura

NEW YORK (IDN) - One day ahead of the twentieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the United Nations Security Council adopted a Resolution reinforcing the de facto global ban on nuclear weapons testing established 20 years ago.

The 15-member body – comprising the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France as permanent (P5) members with the right to veto and 10 non-permanent members elected by rotation for a period of two years – adopted the Resolution after extensive discussions on September 23 by a vote of 14 in favour and none against but one abstention by Egypt on the ground that the text of the Resolution did not stress on the need for nuclear disarmament.

The Security Council emphasises “the vital importance and urgency of achieving the early entry into force of the Treaty” and “calls upon all States to refrain from conducting any nuclear-weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion and to maintain their moratoria in this regard”.

Such moratoria, it adds, “do not have the same permanent and legally binding effect as entry into force of the Treaty”.

The Resolution refers to a Joint Statement on the Treaty by the P5 on September 15, 2016, in which those States noted that, “a nuclear-weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion would defeat the object and purpose of the CTBT”.

While welcoming the action taken by the Security Council in support of the Treaty and commending the U.S. for its initiative and the members of the Council, particularly its permanent members, for their support, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the Resolution is “not a substitute for the entry-into-force of the CTBT”.

Speaking to the press shortly after the Council voted on the resolution, Lassina Zerbo, the Executive Secretary of the Vienna-based Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), the Treaty’s Preparatory Commission, said the organisation welcomed any initiative that serves to strengthen the norm against nuclear testing.

“This resolution is timely,” said Dr Zerbo, “because it comes at a time where we celebrate the 20 years anniversary of the opening for signature, of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, but timely as well because it comes at a time where DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) has reminded the international community of the absolute necessity to get this treaty into force, by having the moratorium on nuclear testing strong and sealed.”

He was referring to the latest incident of nuclear testing -- conducted by DPRK -- which was condemned by CTBTO, the UN Secretary General, the Security Council, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Zerbo also noted that voting today and adopting the resolution, keeps the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty relevant.

“We understand some of the concerns that States may have, that this does not substitute the process for ratification. The process for ratification remains the ultimate way to get the Treaty into force, but we just hope that this step - which is an important step, because after the Iran deal, this constitutes one next key element in arms control, non-proliferation and ultimately disarmament - we hope that there will be more steps towards disarmament, because we all seek a world free of nuclear weapons at the end of the day,” said Zerbo.

He however noted that the first step towards that world, is an end to nuclear testing. “A world free of nuclear of weapons goes by stopping testing too, and then taking steps that will reinforce the agreements that are already here, and then leading us towards what we all want: a world free of nuclear

weapons; a world free of any attempt of modernisation that some are talking about today.”

In a web-posted message, the CTBTO Executive Secretary said: “The 20th anniversary year has thus far seen a number of important conferences and events dedicated to the CTBT, and two new ratifications: Swaziland and Myanmar, bringing the total number to 166. With two nuclear tests by the DPRK (in January and September), the year has also reminded the international community of the urgency of advancing the Treaty’s entry into force.”

In August, events were held in Astana, Kazakhstan, New York and Vienna to mark the International Day Against Nuclear Tests and the 25th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

The “Art for a Nuclear Test Ban” initiative was featured at several exhibits throughout the year, including during the launch of a dedicated United Nations Postal Administration Stamp on September 21 in New York.

Ban said the action by the Security Council “is especially timely as the international norm against nuclear tests has been repeatedly challenged in recent years by one country.”

The reference was to North Korea (officially known as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea - DPRK), which has conducted nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016 in defiance of the Security Council resolutions.

The fifth and potentially most powerful nuclear test was undertaken on September 9, in which DPRK claimed to have successfully detonated a nuclear warhead that could be mounted on ballistic rockets.

Ban renewed his call for the two nuclear-weapon States – China and the U.S. – that have not yet ratified the CTBT “to translate their commitment to the moratorium into urgent action as well as for the six other remaining States listed in Annex 2 of the Treaty to join the CTBT without any further delay”.

Indeed eight States are holding up CTBT's entry-into-force. China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the US have signed but not ratified. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to even sign. In order to achieve the universality of the Treaty, every single ratification counts, Ban said.

Behind the U.S. initiative

The Secretary-General's appeal to the two nuclear powers to ratify the Treaty is underlined by the fact that when first presenting the idea of a Security Council resolution on the CTBT, the U.S. explained that the aim would be to reinforce global support for the treaty and its verification system and "stigmatise those countries that continue to test and act in ways contrary to a de facto norm of international behavior", while emphasising that the resolution would not create any new legal obligations.

The U.S. initiative is widely seen as motivated by domestic U.S. politics and a desire to strengthen President Barack Obama's nuclear non-proliferation legacy. While the U.S. was among the first signatories of the treaty, the Congress in 1999 voted against ratification and despite sustained efforts, the Obama administration has been unsuccessful in its attempts at re-engaging Congress.

According to observers, the initial reaction to the idea of a CTBT Resolution among Security Council members was "less than enthusiastic, and negotiations were difficult". A draft was first agreed among the P5, with the joint statement forming an integral part of the discussions, and was then shared with the elected members.

Nuclear disarmament

As negotiations moved to the full Council, there were significant reservations on the part of members who have traditionally held strong views on nuclear disarmament and have been critical of the nuclear weapon states for not fulfilling their obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), most notably from Egypt and New Zealand, who are in the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) in the General Assembly's First Committee.

NAC, which also comprises Brazil, Ireland, Mexico

and South Africa, sponsors an annual resolution in the First Committee titled 'Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments', which is normally adopted with several abstentions, including China, and with the other P5 voting against.

The current Council composition also includes several members of the Non-Aligned Movement, which has been consistently critical of the P5's lack of compliance with their nuclear disarmament obligations, namely Angola, Malaysia, Senegal and Venezuela, in addition to Egypt.

Against this backdrop, statements by the U.S. and Egypt before the adoption of the Resolution and others after the Resolution was voted make an interesting reading.

Statements before and after

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said before action on draft resolution that Member States had a chance to reaffirm the CTBT's promise of a more secure and peaceful planet. In October, the international community would mark the thirtieth anniversary of a meeting between former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and former U.S. President Ronald Reagan in Iceland, where they had declared plans to move in a new direction on nuclear issues.

Most recently, he continued, the United States and Iran had spent two long years negotiating what many had seen as improbable: the decision of a nation to give up its nuclear programme and make it clear it was willing to take steps to make the world safer.

Responsible Governments everywhere were committed to addressing the dangers posed by nuclear materials and weapons. An affirmative vote on the resolution before the Council today would be a sign of the body's unwavering commitment to a safer world in which nuclear energy was used solely for peaceful purposes.

With today's technology, "we don't need to blow up weapons to see what we can do", he said, adding that the Council's action today could reaffirm to people everywhere that a world without nuclear weapons was possible and that States were doing

everything possible to make that future a reality.

Egypt's Deputy Foreign Minister for International Institutions and Organizations Hisham Badr outlined six concerns over the resolution, emphasizing that the Council was not the appropriate forum to address the Test-Ban Treaty in the way the resolution had attempted.

The text failed to highlight the importance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the mention of which was absent in its operative paragraphs. "Why is there eagerness to achieve the universality of the CTBT, but complete silence when it comes to the NPT?" he asked, calling on all Non-Proliferation Treaty member States to promote that instrument's universality.

The text, he said, also failed to address the urgency and criticality of steps towards nuclear disarmament and turned a blind eye to the outcome documents from the Non-Proliferation Treaty review conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010.

Further, he said, the absence of nuclear disarmament from the text severely undermined its credibility and sent the wrong message to the international community – that the Council had engaged in a "cherry picking" approach to disarmament.

In that vein, he said the text unreasonably placed nuclear-weapon States on equal footing with non-nuclear-weapon States. Calling the resolution's intrusive nature in the work of the Preparatory Commission and the Provisional Technical Secretariat counterproductive, he said the text reflected a puzzling dilemma.

While some States had expressed enthusiasm in the Council for the urgency of the completion of the verification regime, they did not shoulder their responsibility to ratify the Test-Ban Treaty, with their respective legislative branches repeatedly refusing to do so. Despite those reservations, Egypt had decided to abstain from the vote, he said.

After the vote of 14 in favour and none against but one abstention, Senegal's Foreign Minister Mankeur Ndiaye said the final goal was not only non-proliferation, but also nuclear disarmament. Moving towards that objective, it was important to



strengthen non-proliferation among nuclear-weapon States, who must provide negative security assurances.

Malaysia's Permanent Representative to the UN Ramlan Bin Ibrahim noted with serious concern that the Test-Ban-Treaty had yet to take effect and encouraged its early entry into force. As the Treaty did not contain any provisions, which committed States with nuclear weapons and those with nuclear weapon capabilities to total nuclear disarmament, the deed preserved in the Treaty could not be disregarded.

The resolution did not sufficiently recognize that fact. Furthermore, it was crucial that States with nuclear capabilities undertook their responsibility to ratify the Treaty, he said urging Annex 2 countries to do so as soon as possible.

The challenge ahead, was "ensuring that there should not be precedent on making reference to documents in Council resolutions that can only be agreed to by a handful of States", he added. The text's authority and credibility would be negated if the concerns of all Council members were not taken on board in a balanced way.

Gerard van Bohemen, New Zealand's Permanent Representative to the UN, said that the anniversary of the adoption of the Test-Ban Treaty was reason to

celebrate, yet there was cause for deep disappointment that the Treaty was still not in force. Urging all States that had not yet signed and ratified the Treaty to do so as soon as possible, he said until they all did, the international community would not be able to "close the door" on nuclear testing.

New Zealand, he said, shared the reservations of other Council members about the reference in the resolution to the Joint Statement by five nuclear-weapon States who also happened to be permanent Council members, he said, adding that "we are uncomfortable with this Council being used to validate the perspectives" of any group.

"For as long as some States retain nuclear weapons – and declare them to be essential for national security – others would seek them as well," he continued. That paradox highlighted the mutually reinforcing nature of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. "The neglect of one will set back the other," he added. [IDN-InDepthNews – 23 September 2016]

Image: A view of the meeting as Security Council members vote the draft resolution on Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on 23 September 2016
| UN Photo | Manuel Elias

DPRK Nuclear Test Calls for Dumping Cold War Responses

By Kalinga Seneviratne

BANGKOK (IDN) - Even before the ink dried up on a statement issued in the Laotian capital Vientiane by the East Asia Summit (EAS) on nuclear proliferation, North Korea announced the successful testing of a nuclear bomb that has focused attention in the region on increasing militarization.

Pyongyang's latest weapons testing came less than a day after the EAS leaders adopted a statement urging it to give up its nuclear and missile programs. It was the first time that the 18-member regional body, which also includes the United States, China, Russia and Japan, adopted a single-issue statement other than the chairman's statement.

The statement said that EAS "fully supports" the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2270 of March 2, 2016, "which unequivocally condemned the January nuclear test and February long-range ballistic missile launch" and that they are "registering deep concern over the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK - North Korea) subsequent and repeated ballistic missile launches in violation and flagrant disregard of the Council's relevant resolutions".

After a three-year lull, North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test on January 6, 2016 and on February 7 it launched a long-range rocket that Pyongyang said had put a satellite into orbit.

On August 24, it successfully launched a ballistic missile from a submarine and on September 5 it fired three ballistic missiles that flew about 1,000km, all of which entered Japan's air defence zone.

A shallow magnitude 5.3 earthquake detected near North Korea's nuclear test site on September 9, pointed to a fifth atomic test, which Pyongyang has acknowledged.

"The North's nuclear test, defying the EAS statement, proves the Kim Jong-un regime's lunatic imprudence," South Korean President Park Geun-Hye told the Korean media after returning early from Vientiane to chair an emergency security meeting with government officials in Seoul.

"Stronger sanctions and diplomatic isolation are what the North would only achieve through nuclear tests and they will lead to the regime's self-destruction," she warned.

President Park said that the South Korean government would cooperate with the UNSC and relevant countries on adopting additional tougher sanctions, while seeking all means to press the country into giving up its nuclear ambitions.

According to reports, many of the South Korean newspapers have described the North Korean leader Jong-Un as a "nuclear maniac" and asked their government to persuade Washington to re-deploy tactical nuclear weapons that were withdrawn from the country in the 1990s. One newspaper even suggested

that China should be asked to cut off oil supplies to its neighbor, which could create economic chaos and possible starvation in North Korea.

Yet, others have cautioned about such extreme measures and questioned Seoul and Washington's response to a perceived North Korean military threat by militarizing the region.

Hankyoreh, a leftist South Korean daily, has taken issue with their government's handling of the nuclear threat from the North with such a cold-war mentality. The daily pointed out that the repeated tests reflect a failure in the existing approach to the mounting crisis.

"There won't be any solution in expressing anger to the North and keeping putting pressure on it. We must go beyond Cold War-style confrontation," Hankyoreh daily is reported to have warned its leaders. "We must stop pinning our hopes on the unrealistic theory that the North is coming close to implosion. Instead, a new, comprehensive strategy is needed."

While much of Asia would not care less about North Korea's nuclear grandstanding, even though the latest blast is claimed to have advanced its ability to launch a nuclear war, by miniaturizing and mounting a warhead on a missile, the four powers that usually respond to such tests demonstrated a well rehearsed symphony. South Korea accused its Northern leader of "maniacal recklessness", while China "firmly opposed" the test, Japan "protested adamantly" and the U.S. warned of "serious consequences".

With Pyongyang possibly making big strides towards becoming a nuclear power, President Jong-Un warned South Korea and the U.S. "to refrain from hurting the dignity and security of the DPRK".

The timing of missile and nuclear tests has always coincided with a major international event where a response can be garnered from the leaders of the four powers thus drawing attention to his regime. This also provides space in the international media for North Korea to point out the provocations from Seoul and Washington.

Between August 22 and September 2 the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian military exercises took place off the North Korean coast where up to 25,000 U.S. servicemen took part along with its South Korean counterparts and militaries of other allied nations such as Australia and Japan.

These exercises included pre-emptive strikes against perceived North Korean nuclear threats. Pyongyang has complained to the UN Secretary General in a letter that these exercises were to rehearse a "pre-emptive nuclear war" on the North.

In response, the North fired a SLBM at a high angle, using solid fuel, which flew over 500 km, landing in Japan's air defense identification zone. Fired at a normal

angle it could have gone up to 1000 km.

“Military exercises are necessary to enhance the deterrent, at the absence of threat reduction through a peace process. Yet, deterrent is not sufficient to bring about a peaceful resolution of the Korean issue. Every year, the annual exercises in spring and summer end up raising tensions,” noted Tong Kim, a fellow of the Institute of Korean-American Studies writing in the Korea Times.

Pyongyang’s SLBM firing has also raised concern about the planned deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system that the U.S. is

planning to deploy in South Korea by the end of 2017. China and Russia are opposed to it and the plan also has its critics within South Korea.

“China has started taking concrete steps to curb South Korean interests in reaction to Seoul’s decision. Local residents in the South strongly oppose the basing of a missile battery in their own area. Many opposition politicians demand a parliamentary review of the deployment,” points out Kim in the article titled ‘North pulls off new ball game’.

In an editorial in Korea Times, the newspaper said that if China does not want THAAD to be deployed on Korean soil, “it should actively do its part to contain North Korea’s nuclear ambitions”. The Korean English language daily also criticized the Obama administration for not having been “forthcoming in dealing with North Korea and it has failed to change Pyongyang’s behavior”.

“The nuclear test carried out by the DPRK on September 9 should not come as a big surprise given the planned deployment of the US’ Terminal High Altitude

Area Defense system in the ROK (South Korea).

“In other words, the almost confirmed deployment of THAAD, an anti-missile defense system, has prompted Pyongyang to continue its ill-designed foreign policy,” argues Wang Junsheng, a researcher in Asia-Pacific strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences writing in China Daily, pointing out that North Korea’s testing usually follows U.S. and South Korean military moves.

“China’s strategic choices in the face of a rising nuclear threat in the neighborhood are limited because of the geopolitical complexity and the denuclearization process may take five to 10 years to complete,” he says.

“Washington and Seoul, in particular, should sincerely rethink their decision to install THAAD on the peninsula and review their other strategic mistakes that have prompted Pyongyang to make the wrong steps,” Wang adds.

He warns that “a vicious cycle is in the making (and) the peninsula policies adopted by the U.S. and the ROK are not conducive to lasting peace, as they have exhausted the very few opportunities to replace the 1953 armistice with a peace treaty’. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 September 2016]

Photo: Gauging North Korea from South Korean side of the Demilitarized Zone | Kalinga Seneviratne | IDN-INPS



Nuclear Disarmament Campaign Targets Norway's Bergen

By Lowana Veal



BERGEN (IDN) – Norway is a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), enjoying the Alliance's protection as a nuclear umbrella state and yet widely known for its association with peace issues: not only for hosting the first international Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo in March 2013.

"Norway (also) took the lead in the Oslo Process which culminated in the signing of the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008," said Hitotsugu Terasaki, director general of peace and global issues at the Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

SGI joined hands with three Norwegian peace organizations – ICAN Norway, No to Nuclear Weapons (NNW) and the Norwegian Peace Association (NPA) – to arrange an event in Bergen, Norway's second largest city with a population of 260,000.

The event on September 5 consisted of an exhibition titled *Everything You Treasure – For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons* and a symposium titled, 'Conversation: A way forward to eliminate nuclear weapons – Perspectives of

Norwegian and Japanese peace movements'.

The exhibition was first set up in cooperation with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), in August 2012 in Hiroshima, the target of first-ever atomic bombings along with Nagasaki in 1945.

Five years earlier, SGI had launched the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition (PDNA), collaborating with various NGOs committed to the anti-nuclear weapons movement.

The exhibition has meanwhile been shown in 62 cities in 15 countries – and more cities and countries for display are in planning. Each time the exhibition is shown in a different city, SGI organizes an event similar to that in Bergen, in order to create a platform for dialogue as well as to expand the grassroots network of groups and individuals around the world who want to abolish nuclear weapons.

The goal of the exhibition that looks at the nuclear weapons issue from 12 different perspectives is to create linkages to other people's areas of interest in order to increase global awareness, said Kimiaki Kawai, SGI's director of peace

and human rights. “All of us should be involved.”

Kawai added: “In our day-to-day life, we don’t see nuclear weapons and it is easy for people to lose interest in the question. So one of the things we emphasize is that if money spent on nuclear weapons is spent on health and other crucial questions, life would be better.”

SGI is a Tokyo-based lay Buddhist organization, which has a strong tradition for peace work and official ties with the United Nations. Along with other groups, including faith-based groups, SGI has been calling for action on disarmament since 1957, when the Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons was issued at the height of the Cold War by Josei Toda, then president of Soka Gakkai.

“It’s very important now more than ever that civil society organizations work together on this issue in order to avoid any political deadlock,” Terasaki told IDN.

The Bergen event followed in the footsteps of the UN Open Ended Working group on nuclear disarmament (OEWG) that wrapped up in Geneva on August 19 the third series of sessions, convened since February, by adopting a recommendation to the United Nations General Assembly to initiate negotiations on a legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading to their elimination.

In Geneva, Norway was among countries including Japan that abstained from voting in favour of the UN General Assembly initiating negotiations for a ban on nuclear weapons to start in 2017. But, unlike other NATO countries, it did not oppose the report of the OEWG that will be presented to the UN General Assembly in October 2016.

The report also includes a recommendation for States to undertake measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of nuclear weapons use, increase transparency about nuclear weapons and enhance awareness about the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.

“At different points in time during the 71-year period (since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) the global movement (against nuclear weapons) has been stagnant while other times saw a more positive outlook,” said Terasaki. “However, we are in the final years of being able to listen directly to the experiences of hibakusha [survivors of the atomic bombings] who are raising their voices to abolish nuclear weapons,” he added.

In the ‘Conversation: A way forward to eliminate nuclear weapons’, Frode Ersfjord from ‘No to Nuclear Weapons’, who spent time in Japan this summer, and visited Hiroshima, stressed the need for grassroots actions as well as political activity. A combination of good organizers and institutional memory is crucial for getting people out on the streets – demonstrations on a particular issue often start off small but attendance swells as time goes on.

Representatives from three Opposition parties – the Socialist Left, Greens and Reds – who joined the Conversation said they all agreed that the campaign to abolish nuclear weapons had to be carried out on a national basis as well as internationally.

Active participants included: Susanne Urban from Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Bergen and peace academic Arne Strand from the Christian Michelsen Institute.

In a short interview with IDN, Urban observed that the nuclear threat is very close. “We’re very interrelated and connected: we can’t harm others without harming ourselves,” she said. This point is also stressed in one of the exhibition panels.

Strand pointed out that “we’re quite good at looking at new conflicts and the changing world situation, but we overlook the old issue of nuclear disarmament because it’s been around for such a long time that we’re used to it. But there are certain things happening now, like between the U.S. and Russia, that should be of concern to us, and also whether terrorist groups could get access to nuclear weapons.”

Fredrik Heldal, director of the Norwegian Peace Association, said: “Instead of concentrating on the political side – the pros and cons of bans, lobbying and such like – we need to make it more into an ethical issue. A discussion on ethics and morals ... will resonate more and it will be easier to sell the issue.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – 09 September 2016]

Image: Visitors to the exhibition Everything You Treasure – For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons | IDN-INPS.

Kazakhstan Leads the Way to a Nuclear-Weapon Free World

By Ramesh Jaura and Katsuhiko Asagiri

ASTANA (IDN) - As divisions between States on how to achieve nuclear disarmament grow, countries like Kazakhstan must lead the way to common ground and inclusive dialogue. Such leadership is urgently needed to make our world truly secure, said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a message delivered to the conference on 'Building a Nuclear-Free World'.

Welcoming participants, President Nursultan Nazarbayev explained why Kazakhstan was leading the way: "August 29, 1991, is marked by an event of historic significance both for our country and the whole world. 25 years ago, we legally stopped the most sinister experiment of militarism, which had been tormenting our land and our people for almost 40 years. Several decades before that event, the world tried to lower the threshold of nuclear threat through the processes of nuclear weapons reduction, and a moratorium of its testing."

He added: "We, in Kazakhstan, were the first to cut the 'Gordian knot' by adopting a decree on closing the largest nuclear test site in the world. After our decision, test sites of all leading nuclear powers became silent but they have still not been closed anywhere. Kazakhstan was the first to take such a step. This was the will of our people. It shows the great importance of this event for the entire planet."

The conference on August 29 was co-hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (PNND).

Legislators, religious leaders, academics, scientists, medical professionals, lawyers, youth and other representatives of civil society from 50 countries from around the world participated in the conference. Representatives of international organisations included: Secretary General of the Disarmament Conference in Geneva, Michael Møller;

Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Lassina Zerbo; President of the Nobel Peace Laureate Pugwash Conferences, Jayantha Dhanapala.

Others were: President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and Co-Chairman of PNND Saber Chowdhury; President of the Pan African Parliament Roger Nkodo Dang; Chairman of the Parliament of World's Religions Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid; and Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Executive Director for Peace and Global Issues, Kazuo Ishiwatari.

In hosting the conference, Ban said, Kazakhstan had "once again" demonstrated its "commitment to the pursuit of a world free of nuclear weapons".

In addition, the UN Chief said: "Kazakhstan has played a leading role in the creation of a Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. It spearheaded the Universal Declaration on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World at the General Assembly. President [Nursultan] Nazarbayev has called nuclear disarmament a top global priority."

The outgoing UN chief was hitting the nail on the head. The Declaration adopted by the conference – 'The Astana Vision: From a Radioactive Haze to a Nuclear-Weapon Free World' – acknowledges Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev's historical role in pushing for finishing the unfinished UN agenda, vigorously promoted by Ban.

The Declaration recalls that closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was "the first such step in the world history of disarmament".

The 456 nuclear weapons explosions conducted by the Soviet Union at the test site in eastern Kazakhstan have indeed created a catastrophic impact on human health and environment, for current and future generations.

The legacy from the nuclear tests around the world, including the Pacific, Asia, North Africa and North



America, and the experience of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the risks of nuclear-weapons-use by accident, miscalculation or design – have established a global imperative to abolish these weapons.

The Declaration says: "We commend the leadership of President Nazarbayev and the people of Kazakhstan for voluntarily renouncing the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal, joining the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), achieving a Central Asian Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone, launching The ATOM Project to educate the world about dangers and long-term consequences of nuclear tests, moving the United Nations to establish August 29 as the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, initiating a Universal Declaration for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World adopted by the United Nations in 2015, and advancing a Manifesto 'The World. The 21st Century' to end the scourge of war."

The conference participants supported the ambition expressed in the Manifesto that a nuclear-weapons-free world should be the main goal of humanity in the 21st century, and that this should be achieved no later than the 100th anniversary of the United Nations in 2045.

The Declaration commends world leaders for taking

action, through the series of Nuclear Security Summits and other international action, to prevent nuclear weapons or their components from falling into the hands of terrorists. It call upon world leaders to “join President Nazarbayev in placing a similar high priority on nuclear disarmament”.

It congratulates Kazakhstan on the country’s election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2017-2018. “We are confident that Kazakhstan will work closely with other Security Council members to prevent nuclear proliferation and advance the peace and security of a nuclear-weapon-free world,” states the Declaration.

The Declaration supports the initiative put forward at this conference for President Nazarbayev to establish an international prize for outstanding contribution to nuclear disarmament and the achievement of a nuclear weapon free world, and the announcement of the Astana Peace Summit in 2016. The Declaration specifically calls on governments to:

1. Sign and Ratify the CTBT, in particular the nuclear armed States, if they have not already done so, noting the symbolism of this conference taking place on the 25th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the 20th anniversary of the opening for signing of the CTBT;
2. Initiate negotiations and substantive discussions in accordance with the adopted 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Plan of Action, and the universal obligation to negotiate for complete nuclear disarmament affirmed by the International Court of Justice in 1996;
3. Establish a Middle East Zone free from Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction as agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, and call upon the United Nations Secretary-General to advance this mandate; and establish additional nuclear-weapon-free zones, such as in North East Asia, Europe and the Arctic;
4. Reduce the risks of nuclear-weapons-use by taking all nuclear forces off high-operational readiness, adopting no-first-use policies and refraining from any threats to use nuclear weapons;
5. Fully implement their treaty and customary law obligations to achieve zero nuclear weapons;
6. Commence multilateral negotiations in 2017 to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons;
7. Support interim measures by the UN Security Council regarding nuclear disarmament, including to prohibit nuclear tests and nuclear targeting of populated areas;
8. Further develop the methods and mechanisms for verifying and enforcing global nuclear disarmament, including through participation in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification;
9. Eliminate the reliance on nuclear deterrence in security doctrines, and instead resolve international conflicts through diplomacy, law, regional mechanisms, the United Nations and other peaceful means; and
10. Calls on all nuclear weapon states to undertake deep cuts to their nuclear

weapons stockpiles with the aim to completely eliminate them as soon as possible, but definitely no later than the 100th anniversary of the United Nations.

The cooperation between different constituents at the international conference provides a platform for building the global movement to achieve nuclear disarmament, states the Declaration.

Deeply concerned for the future of all humanity, and encouraged by the example of Kazakhstan in the field of nuclear disarmament, the conference participants “affirm the possibility and necessity to achieve the peace and security of a nuclear-weapon-free world in our lifetimes” – not somewhere in a distant future.

But this would require political determination. As Ban said in his message: “Political will is essential to replace the costly, divisive and dangerous rivalries that prevail in our world with a sense of global solidarity for our shared future. I call upon all States to summon the political will to advance progress towards realizing our vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – 29 August 2016]

Image: (left to right) Chairman of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev; President Nazarbayev; Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Lassina Zerbo | www.kazembassy.org.uk

Wide Support for UN Talks on a Legal Ban-the-Bomb Tool

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA (IDN) - In what the International Campaign to abolish nuclear weapons (ICAN) calls “a dramatic final day”, a group of non-nuclear countries have pushed through a proposal to initiate negotiations in 2017 to prohibit nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

The UN Open Ended Working group on nuclear disarmament (OEWG) wrapped up on August 19 the third series of sessions that have been convened since February, by adopting a recommendation to the United Nations General Assembly in October to initiate negotiations on a legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading to their elimination.

The Working Group held a total of 30 substantive meetings from February 22 to 26, May 2-4 and May 9-13 as well as on August 5, 16, 17 and 19. Several informal meetings were also held.

The recommendation is part of a more detailed report of the OEWG that will be presented to the UN General Assembly. The report also includes a

recommendation for States to undertake measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of nuclear weapons use, increase transparency about nuclear weapons and enhance awareness about the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.

In a recorded vote on the proposal, 62 countries supported (all non-nuclear states), 27 countries opposed (mostly NATO countries plus South Korea), and 8 countries abstained (among them were Sweden, Switzerland and Japan).

The Ambassador of Mexico, the country that had initiated the OEWG, called this “the most significant contribution to nuclear disarmament in two decades”.

Following the adoption of the report, UNFOLD ZERO, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament and ICAN made statements at the OEWG session commending the work of the OEWG, and giving support for the nuclear disarmament negotiations in 2017.

The majority support for the ban treaty was clearly underlined by joint



statements delivered by Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and the Pacific as well as statements from several European states.

However, resistance continued to come throughout the working group from a small group of states who persisted that nuclear weapons are essential to their national security.

Despite threatening to block a report, which contained a recommendation for a ban treaty, these governments did not have the leverage to thwart the successful outcome of the group, ICAN said.

After long deliberations, it seemed that States were going to agree to a compromised report, which reflected the views of both sides of the ban treaty issue. But, after this agreement had seemingly been secured behind closed doors, Australia made a last-second turnaround and announced that it was objecting to the draft of the report and called for a vote.

In spite of the opposition from Australia and several other pro-nuclear weapon states, the majority was able to carry the day, ICAN reported. On that basis, the working group was able to recommend the start of negotiations on a new legal instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons.

“This breakthrough is result of the new global discourse on nuclear weapons. Bringing together governments, academia and civil society, a series of three conferences have uncovered new evidence about the devastating humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the risks of their use, whether accidental or intentional,” ICAN noted in a statement.

The momentum generated by the “humanitarian initiative” has now culminated with the international community on the verge of negotiating a nuclear weapons ban, it added.

Nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction not yet prohibited under international law, despite their inhumane and indiscriminate nature. A ban would not only make it illegal for nations to use or possess nuclear weapons; it would also help pave the way to their complete elimination. Nations committed to reaching the goal of abolition have shown that they are ready to start negotiations next year.

It is now up to the October meeting of the UN General Assembly First Committee to bring forward this process by issuing a mandate to start the negotiating process, ICAN said.

“To what extent the deep and growing polarization that exists between nuclear disarmament and deterrence enclaves within the broader nuclear policy community can be bridged, remains an open question,” says Jenny Nielsen, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP) in a blog for the European Leadership Network.

“Whether the appetite exists at this time for bridging efforts – particularly with the growing momentum (formalized through the OEWG) to convene a conference in 2017 to negotiate a ban instrument on nuclear weapons – is more doubtful,” maintains Nielsen.

It would benefit states and analysts to engage in timely and constructive

discussions on what viable alternative and options for maintaining strategic stability (as well as providing security assurances and insurance against uncertainties) – beyond the contested reliance on nuclear weapons – exist, adds Nielsen.

“This is particularly prudent in light of emerging technologies, which may offer both challenges and alternatives to strategic stability based on nuclear deterrence. Left unbridged, the polarized views on the role and value of nuclear weapons won’t bring positive contributions towards reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use and a secure world free of nuclear weapons.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – 19 August 2016]

Image: OEWG session in Geneva | Xanthe Hall

The No Nukes Mantra Between Hope and Despair

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN (IDN) – UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s mantra “No more Hiroshimas - No more Nagasakis - Never again”, chanted to commemorate the anniversaries of the devastating atomic bombings of two Japanese cities has yet to usher in a nuclear-weapon-free world. Also his ‘five point proposal on nuclear disarmament’, tabled on UN Day October 24, 2008, has been practically consigned to oblivion.

The fault does not lie with the Secretary-General. As the world commemorated the 71st Hiroshima and Nagasaki anniversaries on August 6 and August 9, the question on the minds of proponents of a world free of nuclear weapons was: Is there reason to hope rather than despair?

The rationale behind the question is that though the two atomic bombings during the final stage of World War II – which killed at least 129,000 people – remain the only use of nuclear weapons for warfare in history, nine countries today possess more than 15,000 nuclear weapons.

The nine countries are: the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

The United States and Russia maintain roughly 1,800 of their nuclear weapons on high-alert status – ready to be launched within minutes of a warning. Most are many times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in August 1945.

The wider problem, as ICAN (the International Campaign to abolish nuclear weapons) points out, is that five European nations host U.S. nuclear weapons on their soil as part of a NATO nuclear-sharing arrangement, and roughly two dozen other nations claim to rely on U.S. nuclear weapons for their security.

Besides, there are many nations with nuclear power or research reactors capable of being diverted for weapons production. The spread of nuclear know-how has increased the risk that more nations will develop the bomb.

With this in view, Ban said on August 6, in a message delivered to the Peace Memorial Ceremony in Hiroshima, Japan, by Kim Won-soo, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs: “The world needs the Hibakusha spirit more than ever.” He was referring to the determination and perseverance of the survivors of the 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bomb attacks as an example for championing peace and seeking a better future for all.

Indeed, the Hibakusha have turned their tragedy into a rallying cry for humanity, Ban continued, noting that they have shared their stories so the horror experienced by Hiroshima will never be forgotten.

“They have become true champions of peace and a better world,” he said, underscoring that this is the very spirit that is needed now, in a world where tensions are rising and progress on nuclear disarmament is hard to find.

“At this sober (peace) memorial, I ask all States to heed the message of the Hibakusha and overcome their differences to galvanize global will for disarmament. This is essential to peaceful cooperation,” said Ban, explaining that those States with nuclear weapons have a special responsibility to prevent another Hiroshima.

They must honour their commitments and lead the way to dialogue, and he called on all States to find common ground through inclusive dialogue.

He went on to stress that the bombing of Hiroshima shows that nuclear weapons do not discriminate between gender, age, religion, ideology or nationality. “Let us keep striving together for a safer and more secure future and a better world for all. You can count on me to continue spreading your message: No more Hiroshimas. No more Nagasakis. Never again,” he concluded.

As the Hibakusha grow older, a new generation must assume the role of the messengers of peace. The Secretary-General’s message made clear that the UN stood with youth in striving to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

“I call on the young peace makers of Nagasaki to rise to the challenge and ensure that the suffering caused by nuclear weapons is never forgotten,” he continued, adding: “Spread the word with your peers around the world. Your generation did not invent nuclear weapons, but you can be the generation to eliminate them.”

Best known Hiroshima survivor and peace activist Setsuko Thurlow, who was a 13-year-old girl living in Hiroshima, when the first atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945 has a similar message for President Obama, in a letter she wrote to him in June:

“President Obama, you uniquely have the power to enact real change. This could be your legacy. To usher in an era of real disarmament where lifting the threat of nuclear war could ease all people to ‘go through their day in peace. What a precious thing that is. It is worth protecting, and then extending to every child’.”

Tabling a three-point agenda, Setsuko Thurlow wrote: “If you truly wanted to hasten our ‘own moral awakening’ through making nuclear disarmament a reality, here are three immediate steps:

“1. Stop the U.S. boycott of international nuclear disarmament meetings and join the 127 countries that have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge to create a new legal instrument and new norms for a nuclear weapons ban treaty as a first step in their elimination and prohibition.

“2. Stop spending money to modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal, a staggering \$1 trillion over the next three decades, and use this money to meet human needs and protect our environment.

“3. Take nuclear weapons off high alert and review the aging command and control systems that have been the subject of recent research exposing a culture of neglect and the alarming regularity of accidents involving nuclear weapons.”

Whether one or another point of the agenda Setsuko Thurliff has proposed to President Obama would be realized, remains to be seen.

However, Washington Post reported on August 4, 2016: “President Obama has decided to seek a new United Nations Security Council resolution that would call for an end to nuclear testing and support for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

This was a follow-up of the report on July 10, which said that President Barack Obama planned to implement at least a part of his cherished nuclear agenda through a series of executive actions during the next months before leaving the White House.

These options included declaring a “no first use” policy for the United States nuclear arsenal and a UN Security Council resolution affirming a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons as envisaged in the CTBT.

However, Nagasaki Mayor Tomihisa Taue in his Peace Declaration delivered at the annual ceremony in Nagasaki Peace Park on August 9, went some steps further and said new frameworks aimed at containing nuclear proliferation are necessary if mankind is to be prevented from destroying its future. “Now is the time for all of you to bring together as much of your collective wisdom as you possibly can, and act,” he said.

Compared with a similar declaration by Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui three days earlier, Taue was more blunt in both his suggestions for steps to achieve a nuclear-free world and his criticism of the Japanese government, stated the Kyodo, the Japanese news agency.

He faulted Japan’s policy of advocating the elimination of nuclear weapons while relying on the U.S. for nuclear deterrence. He urged the government to make legally binding post-war Japan’s “three non-nuclear principles” of not producing, possessing or allowing nuclear weapons on Japanese territory.

Taue further pressed the government to work to create a ‘Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone’ (NEA-NWFZ) as a security framework that does not rely on nuclear deterrence.

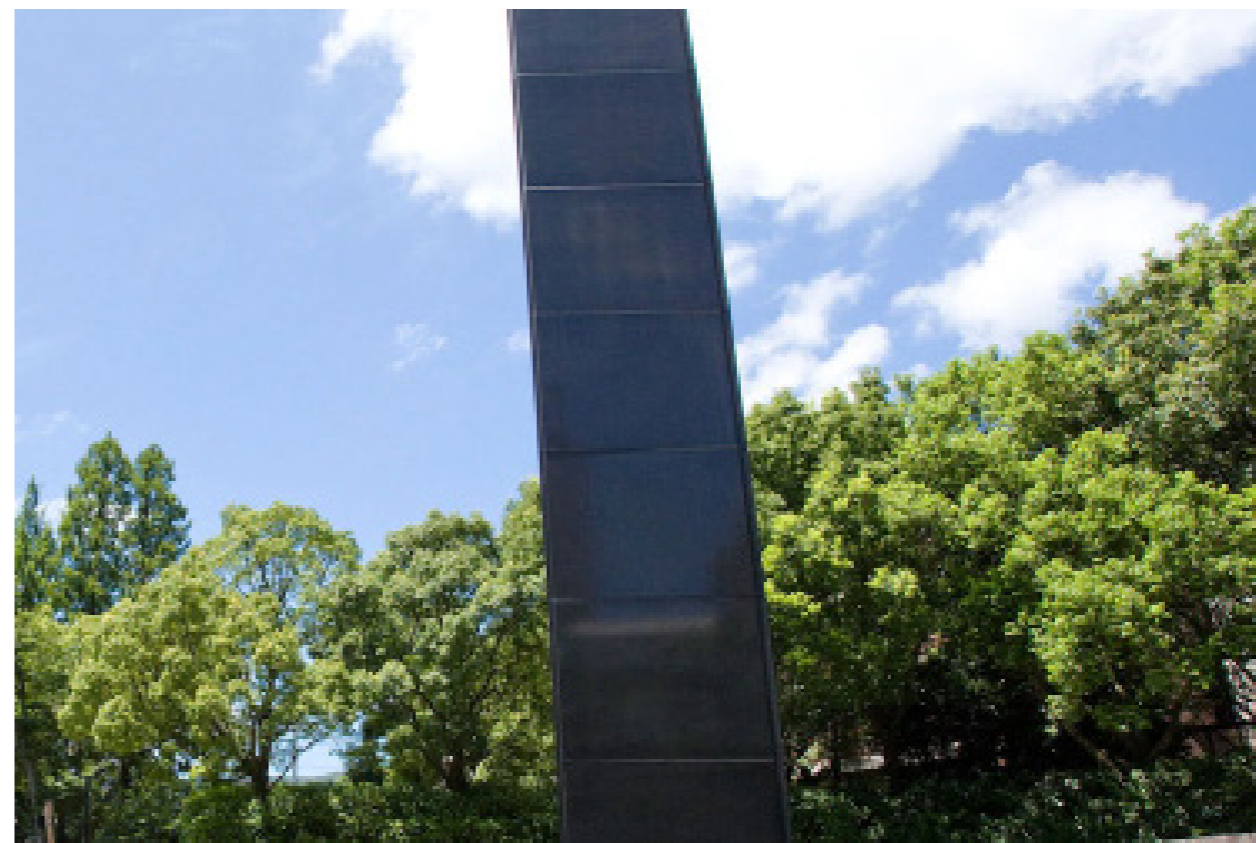
While Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in his speeches on the occasion of Hiroshima and Nagasaki anniversaries, vowed to continue to make various efforts to bring about a “world free of nuclear weapons”, he did not mention any concrete steps.

In fact, such statements sounded hollow, particularly as Susi Snyder, Nuclear Disarmament Programme Manager for Pax Christi in the Netherlands, recalled in a contribution for ICAN that the Heads of State and Government who participated in the NATO summit in Warsaw Poland on July 8-9 agreed on a series of documents and statements which do not signal the possibility of prohibiting nuclear weapons.

“Whereas the majority of countries worldwide are ready to end the danger posed by nuclear weapons and to start negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear

weapons,” Snyder wrote, “both NATO documents (Summit Communiqué and the Warsaw Declaration on Transatlantic Security) reaffirmed the NATO commitment to nuclear weapons, and the Communiqué included a return to cold war style language on nuclear sharing.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 August 2016]

Image: The Hypocenter Monument at Nagasaki Peace Park, Japan | UN Photo/
Eskinder Debebe



Nuclear War a Potentially Deadly Issue in US Elections

By Rodney Reynolds

NEW YORK (IDN) – As the U.S. presidential elections gather political momentum, one of the key issues that has triggered a provocative debate revolves round the very survival of humanity: the looming threat of an intended or unintended nuclear war.

Come November 8, the U.S. will be making a choice between two contenders: former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a candidate of the Democratic Party; and Donald Trump, a self-proclaimed billionaire businessman from New York, a candidate of the Republican Party.

While Clinton has remained restrained, even as she has vowed to continue the nuclear policies of outgoing President Barack Obama, including the modernization of the American nuclear arsenal, Trump has been described as “reckless” and “out of control” on the use of nuclear weapons by the United States.

As one sceptic points out: “It’s sometimes said that Trump has no core political views, no grasp of policy, no position that he won’t reverse 15 minutes later; he’s changed party registration at least seven times.” The New York Times quoted Clinton as saying: “A man you can bait with a tweet is not a man we can trust with nuclear weapons.”

The U.S. President, as the country’s commander-in-chief, has only minutes to decide whether to fire as many as 925 nuclear warheads with a destructive force greater than 17,000 Hiroshima bombs, according to Hans M. Kristensen, the director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Washington-based Federation of American Scientists, who was quoted in the Times on August 4.

The only U.S. president who ordered a nuclear strike against another nation – Japan – was Harry S. Truman back in August 1945 during the final stages of World War II.

Asked about a future nuclear scenario involving

the U.S., Norman Solomon, Executive Director of the Washington-based Institute for Public Accuracy told IDN: “I have no confidence that issues related to nuclear weapons will be coherently and prominently discussed by the major candidates in the presidential race.”

“Donald Trump is frighteningly reckless with his rhetoric, while Hillary Clinton has indicated that she favors continuity with the Obama administration’s dangerously irresponsible plans to initiate a massive new generation of U.S. nuclear weapons at a cost of \$1 trillion during the next three decades.”

While Trump exudes the scent of madness, he noted, Clinton exemplifies what the sociologist C. Wright Mills called “crackpot realism”.

“She is within the mainline consensus that prevails in Washington, and therefore the conventional media wisdom is that she is reasonable and responsible,” said Solomon.

In fact, her support for a huge nuclear-arms development buildup is embodying its own kind of madness that stays within the boundaries of what the most powerful political forces in the United States depict as sober rationality, he noted.

“What is especially dangerous about Clinton is that her support for further U.S. nuclear weapons development and deployment is coupled with a belligerent approach to Russia, as NATO has approached its borders and implicitly threatened what the Kremlin views as Russia’s national security,” he argued.

“If there is to be a consistently constructive contribution to public discussion of nuclear-arms policies, it will come from voices apart from the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates”, said Solomon, author of *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*.

Speaking from Hiroshima on August 4, Joseph Gerson, co-Convener of the International Peace and

Planet Network and member of the International Peace Bureau’s Board, told IDN that throughout the election campaign, telling questions and related fears about Donald Trump’s ignorance, his brutal approach to people and situations, and his emotional imbalance have been raised.

The report by Joe Scarborough, an American TV and radio host, that during a briefing by an unnamed expert, Trump repeatedly asked why the U.S. cannot use its nuclear weapons during crises and wars, seems to confirm these fears, Gerson pointed out. As expected, Trump denied the story.

Earlier, Gerson said, Trump had made it clear that he didn’t know what the U.S. nuclear triad is, and he refused to rule out the possibility of using nuclear weapons against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Trump’s reported questions about the possible use of nuclear weapons were made at a time when William Perry, the former U.S. Defense (War) Secretary, is warning that the dangers of the use of nuclear weapons are greater now than during the Cold War. “Given Donald Trump’s statements, this certainly seems to be the case,” Gerson warned.

“Given what we have long known about nuclear weapons: that human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist; that it would be impossible to mount a meaningful response to the humanitarian consequences of the detonation of even a single nuclear weapon on a city; and that even a small incident at sea, let alone a nuclear attack, could trigger escalation to general and omniscidal war, Trump’s statements are reminiscent of Dr. Strange love’s nuclear madness” (as depicted in the 1964 Hollywood satire ‘Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb’.)

“Here in Hiroshima, and certainly in the critically important third session of the UN Open Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament,

Trump's statements will frighten ordinary people, activists and senior government officials across the globe."

Gerson said Trump's words and actions have already raised questions and fears about what the United States has become.

"Worse, his words will reinforce pressures toward nuclear weapons proliferation, reinforcing the perceived need to develop nuclear forces that can deter an aggressive United States."

One would need to be much closer to Hillary Clinton, a woman who has said that nuclear weapons can be eliminated "in some century", not this one, and her senior advisers to know if and how she might exploit Trump's statements and reports about them.

Gerson said it would certainly seem that the situation is ripe for an advertisement along the lines of the girl picking daisy petals in the countdown to oblivion that was so effectively used in the 1964 election by (US President Lyndon) Johnson's campaign against Barry Goldwater. "It might serve as the final nail in the coffin of Trump's election campaign."

"One can only hope that the expert to whom Joe Scarborough referred will have the courage to step forward and to tell us Trump's questions and their context precisely. It could cost this man his or her job, but it could also save humanity," declared Gerson. [IDN-InDepthNews – 08 August 2016]

Image: Panoramic view of the monument marking the hypocenter, or ground zero, of the atomic bomb explosion over Nagasaki | Wikimedia Commons



Astana and Geneva Preparing Ban-the-Bomb Conferences

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA (IDN) - Kazakhstan will host an international conference on August 28-29 to build and strengthen political will for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, some 15,000 of which are threatening the very survival of humankind.

The conference in Astana is being organised by the Senate of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND).

It will gather parliamentarians and mayors from around the world, along with a selection of religious leaders, government officials, disarmament experts, policy analysts, civil society campaigners and representatives of international and regional organisations – the United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

They will meet on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. Beginning with the first Soviet nuclear weapon test at the Semipalatinsk site in eastern Kazakhstan on August 29, 1949, this former Soviet republic suffered more than 450 Soviet nuclear weapon tests at the site before it was closed at the urging of the Kazakh people and President Nazarbayev on August 29, 1991.

August 29, proclaimed by the UN at the initiative of Kazakhstan as the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, is commemorated annually worldwide.

Kazakhstan also the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear Weapon Free World adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2015.

The conference will take place as a new UN process – the Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament (OEWG) – prepares to report to the UN General Assembly on action to be taken on multilateral negotiations to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The Astana conference will take place within days of the UN Open Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations (OEWG) meeting again in Geneva on August 5 and August 16-19 to follow up on the substantive work it undertook in February and May 2016.

The focus in February and May was on the legal measures required to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, and to prepare recommendations on reducing nuclear risks, enhancing transparency, and building further



awareness about the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

According to UNFOLD ZERO, Thailand's Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi, who chaired the previous meetings, will release the draft report of the OEWG on August 5. Between August 16 and 19 it will be edited and "hopefully adopted" by the participating governments.

Key proposals tabled in the previous OEWG sessions include: Beginning multilateral negotiations in 2017 on a legal agreement for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons; Convening a series of nuclear disarmament summits, similar to the Nuclear Security Summits, initiated by U.S. President Barack Obama in 2010 with a view to stirring global attention and political action for nuclear disarmament; Adoption of initial measures, such as no-first-use policies, de-alerting all nuclear weapons systems, reducing nuclear stockpiles and rescinding launch-on-warning.

"There are a number of options for the type of legal agreement to be negotiated, each with its advantages and disadvantages," says UNFOLD ZERO – a platform for United Nations (UN) focused initiatives and actions for the achievement of a nuclear weapons free world.

The main four options are a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention, a simple ban treaty, a framework agreement or a hybrid approach which would include a number of separate agreements on specific aspects of nuclear disarmament.

While most non-nuclear countries favour a nuclear weapons convention or ban treaty, most allied countries favour a hybrid approach (which they call 'building blocks').

The May 2-13 sessions of the OEWG concluded with indications that a group of non-nuclear countries is ready to start negotiations in 2017 on a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons.

The proposal was put forward by a group of countries that have already prohibited nuclear weapons in their regions through nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs). 115 countries are part of NWFZs covering Latin America, the South Pacific, Antarctica, South East Asia, Africa and Central Asia.

Nine of these countries (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and Zambia) submitted a proposal to the OEWG to 'Convene a Conference in 2017, open to all States, international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons'.

The proposal also stresses the need 'to report to the United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to be convened no later than 2018...on the progress made on the negotiation of such an instrument' – as spelt out in the OEWG working paper 34 – Perspectives from nuclear weapon free zones.

The proposal was backed by a number of other non-nuclear States and civil society organizations during the OEWG sessions. However, none of the nuclear umbrella countries (NATO, Japan, South Korea and Australia) agreed with the

proposal. The nuclear-armed States, which did not participate in the OEWG, are also opposed to the proposal.

Many of the non-nuclear States participating in the OEWG argued that agreement from the nuclear-reliant states was not necessary to negotiate such a treaty.

However, others maintained that if such a treaty did not include at least some of the nuclear reliant states, it would have little or no impact on nuclear weapons policies and practices. Some argued that it could indeed be counter-productive, taking pressure off the nuclear reliant states to adopt interim steps toward nuclear abolition.

According to UNFOLD ZERO, other options for nuclear disarmament negotiations were proposed that would be more likely to attract support from nuclear reliant states and thus impact directly on their policies.

These included a 'building blocks approach' and a framework agreement similar to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, but for nuclear disarmament.

Supporters of the framework agreement suggested that it 'could include stronger prohibition measures early in the process, while still engaging those states not able to adopt such measures at the outset.' (see Options for a Framework Agreement, Middle Powers Initiative working paper to the OEWG).

However, many non-nuclear States criticized the 'building blocks' approach and framework agreement proposals as not promoting sufficiently strong measures in the near-term. They argued that a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons would be better even if it did not include the nuclear-reliant countries.

One of the main reasons that the nuclear-armed countries did not participate in the OEWG, and why the 'nuclear umbrella' countries do not support a nuclear prohibition treaty, is because these countries still rely on nuclear weapons for their security.

In the February and May sessions, the OEWG held useful discussions on the role of nuclear weapons in the 21st century and whether it is possible to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons, including during current times of increased tensions and conflicts between nuclear-reliant countries. [IDN-InDepthNews – 25 July 2016]

Image: Central Downtown Astana with Bayterek tower | Wikimedia Commons

Support for 'Obama Nuclear Doctrine' by Executive Order

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) - Despite protests by Republican congressional leaders and the heads of Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, President Barack Obama is garnering wide support for his reported plan to implement at least a part of his cherished nuclear agenda through a series of executive actions during the next months before leaving the White House.

None of the executive options Obama is considering require formal congressional approval. In fact, all of those actions would "fall under his executive authority as commander-in-chief", says David Krieger, president of the U.S.-based Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF).

Krieger is one of the nuclear disarmament pundits whose views IDN solicited in the aftermath of a report in the Washington Post on July 10, which said that executive options Obama is considering, include declaring a "no first use" policy for the United States nuclear arsenal and a UN Security Council resolution affirming a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons as envisaged by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Obama is also pondering to offer to Russia a five-year extension of the New START treaty's limits on deployed nuclear weapons, a delay on development of a new nuclear cruise missile, called the Long-Range Stand-Off weapon, and cutting back long-term plans for modernizing the nation's nuclear arsenal, which the Congressional Budget Office reports will cost about \$350 billion over the next decade.

The fact that Obama is considering such executive moves was revealed by his deputy national security adviser Ben Rhodes in remarks to the Arms Control Association on June 6. He said that the president "will continue to review whether there are additional steps that can be taken to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our own strategies and to reduce the risk

of inadvertent use".

Such steps would not only result in implementing an important element of the nuclear policy agenda Obama spelled out in his April 2009 Prague speech, nuclear disarmament experts say. These would also go a long way in moving ahead on the Universal Declaration for the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2015 – at the initiative of Kazakhstan.

Among those whose opinions IDN sought on Obama's plan are Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the the Arms Control Association (ACA), based in Washington; Xanthe Hall, co-director of the German affiliate of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) and a member of the board of ICAN Germany; and Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND).

Since President Obama is a staunch supporter of the entry into force of the global ban on nuclear testing, IDN also requested comment by Dr. Lassina Zerbo, executive secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) based in Vienna.

In an interview, Dr. Zerbo welcomed the strong support shown to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the CTBTO by President Obama and his administration, adding: "I am grateful for his efforts." Senior U.S. officials, including Undersecretary Rose Gottemoeller, had stated that the United States is considering "ways to affirm the international norm against nuclear testing", he said.

Need to finish the 'unfinished business'

"I also believe that any step reaffirming not just the United States' commitment to a nuclear test ban, but that of the international community is a step in

the right direction, and a resolution by the Security Council would clearly send a strong signal," affirmed Dr. Zerbo.

"Nevertheless, we should not allow this to divert our attention from the real unfinished business: the fact that we have a Treaty which is operational, yet still not in force, after 20 years," he pointed out.

"A Security Council resolution might be a good thing, but what really counts is the ratification of the remaining eight countries," the CTBTO executive secretary stressed.

Dr. Zerbo's concern is explicable. As Arms Control Association's executive director Kimball noted, "the door to further nuclear testing remains open, in large part because of the U.S. Senate's highly partisan and rushed vote to reject ratification of the treaty in 1999 and the United States' failure to reconsider the treaty in the 16 years since".

According to Kimball, "U.S. inaction has, in turn, given the leaders of the seven other states (China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan) that must ratify the CTBT for its entry into force an excuse for delay."

However, he believes that a Security Council resolution focused on nuclear testing and the CTBT, especially if pursued in combination with a parallel UN General Assembly resolution, would be in the interest of all but perhaps one nuclear-armed state (North Korea) and all of the nonnuclear weapon states.

"This initiative would be entirely consistent with the letter and spirit of the Treaty. It would also help guard against the danger of treaty fatigue, including the possibility of the slow erosion of support for the CTBTO, including the maintenance and effective operation of the IMS and the IDC," Kimball referred to his remarks at an event in Washington.

IMS is CTBTO's coveted International Monitoring System which, when complete, will consist of 337

facilities worldwide to monitor the planet for signs of nuclear explosions. Around 90 percent of the facilities are already up and running.

IDC is the International Data Centre at the CTBTO's headquarters in Vienna, which receives gigabytes of data from the global monitoring stations. The data are processed and distributed to the CTBTO's Member States in both raw and analyzed form.

Not binding on a successor, but . . .

IDN asked whether the executive actions Obama plans and is being asked to take would be binding for his successor?

"Unfortunately, they would not be binding on his successor. He would have to make a strong case for the policy changes with the American people in order for the people to put pressure on his successor to maintain such policies," said Nuclear Age Peace Foundation president Krieger. "In fact some of the policies might be challenged in the courts."

Nevertheless, he said in an e-mailed comment: "I consider it very positive news that President Obama is considering making major changes to U.S. nuclear policy by executive action in his final months in office."

He added: "At the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, we have urged President Obama to make the following changes in U.S. nuclear policy: Declare a No First Use policy; Eliminate launch-on-warning; De-alert the US nuclear arsenal; Remove US nuclear weapons from foreign soil; Eliminate land-based nuclear weapons; Zero-out funding for modernizing the US nuclear arsenal; Convene the nine nuclear-armed countries to commence good faith negotiations for total nuclear disarmament."

Krieger added: "Were the president to take these bold actions, he would be demonstrating true leadership in the interests of all humanity and placing the world on a path to nuclear zero within his lifetime."

IPPNW Germany's Xanthe Hall said: "If the future President of the United States has an ounce of sense, she or he should welcome such policy changes." As far as Donald Trump is concerned, she said, it remains to be seen what he would do when in power.

"He is highly unpredictable. However, other unpredictable Republican Presidents have successfully advanced nuclear disarmament in the past," Hall recalled.

"It is always much harder for a Democrat to change nuclear weapons doctrine, but Obama should try. Both no-first-use and de-alerting would be major shifts in deterrence thinking and make the world a much safer place."

She added: "As for Hillary Clinton, she has the added problem of being a woman who has to prove that she is able to make military decisions. Why this should be questioned is beyond me, but it is."

However, it is unheard of that a Democratic President would revoke policy from a previous Democrat President. "So if Obama was to introduce these changes, she is unlikely to change them should she become President, but she might kick up a fuss beforehand to show strength," IPPNW Germany's Hall argued.

She believes that on the whole, it might be easier to make doctrinal changes than to cancel nuclear weapons programmes that involve large contracts and have a huge lobby. Executive actions would not directly affect the massive modernization programme that is underway in the U.S.

"But – if unilateral – they may act as a confidence-building measure towards Russia because they would reduce threat levels substantially. However, if they were indeed implemented unilaterally then many politicians in the U.S. may feel that it would make them more vulnerable," Hall pointed out.

"At this stage, I think it is unlikely that Vladimir Putin would agree to also implement no-first-use and de-alerting in Russia, but it would be worth approaching him with the idea," Halle added.

A fundamental shift

Commenting on executive action on a no-first use policy, PNND Coordinator for France, Jean-Marie Collin said: "If adopted, this would be a fundamental shift in policy and a monumental step toward a nuclear-weapon-free world. It could re-start the stalled nuclear reduction talks with Russia, and

kick-start pluri-lateral negotiations, i.e. amongst the P5 (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States) along with India and Pakistan."

P5 are five permanent members of the Security Council which also has 10 additional members elected by rotation each for a period of two years.

"Pluri-lateral nuclear disarmament measures are unlikely to take place if nuclear doctrines continue to include the option of first-use of nuclear weapons," PNND Global Coordinator Alyn Ware stated.

"Such doctrines imply that these weapons will continue to be required to meet a range of threats including from conventional, chemical or biological weapons," Ware noted. However, he said, if the purpose of nuclear weapons is changed to one of providing deterrence only against the nuclear weapons of a potential enemy, then nuclear disarmament becomes possible, as long as it can be verified.

"More simply put," he explained, "if nukes are to deter all sorts of evil, regardless of whether or not they are effective against such threats, then we will hold onto nukes as long as there is evil in the world. But if nukes are just to deter other nukes, then we can work to eliminate the nukes together, jointly removing the reason for keeping nukes."

President Obama made a commitment in his 2010 Nuclear Posture Review to achieve 'sole-purpose' deployment, i.e. that the only purpose for nuclear weapons would be to deter other nuclear weapons. "This is very similar to a no-first-use policy. India and China already have no-first-use policies, but this has so far not motivated the other nuclear-armed States to follow suit," Ware argues.

Ware and Collin believe that if the U.S. adopted a no-first-use policy it would be a significant signal to Russia of U.S. good faith and could move Moscow to re-subscribe to no-first-use, a policy it held until 1993.

"In addition, the United Kingdom and France have both come under pressure from their parliaments to respond to the humanitarian initiative, which highlights the catastrophic impact of any use of nuclear weapons. Adopting a no-first-use policy is a confidence-building step they could take in

response. However, they would be unlikely to do this alone,” says Collin.

The latest gesture of support for Obama comes from U.S. Senator Edward J. Markey, co-president of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND). He and nine other senators sent a letter to President Obama on July 20 calling on him to cancel ‘launch-on-warning’, adopt a ‘no-first-use’ policy, and scale back the excessive nuclear weapons modernization program.

The senators note that during his visit to Hiroshima on May 27 – the first by a sitting U.S. President 71 years after the U.S. dropped nuclear bombs on the two Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki – he called on nations that possess nuclear weapons to “have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them”.

Also Arms Control Association’s Daryl G. Kimball staunchly supports a no-first-use policy. “One very important step would be for Obama to declare that the United States will not be the first to use nuclear weapons. Such a decision could unwind dangerous Cold War-era thinking and greatly strengthen U.S. and global security,” he wrote in an article published June 30 on the Association’s website.

Kimball argues: “By adopting a no-first-use policy, the United States could positively influence the nuclear doctrines of other nuclear-armed states, particularly in Asia. Such a shift in U.S. declaratory policy could also alleviate concerns that U.S. ballistic missile defenses might be used to negate the

retaliatory potential of China and Russia following a pre-emptive U.S. nuclear attack against their strategic forces.”

Kimball refers to remarks delivered in Hiroshima by President Obama on May 27, 2016 in which he declared that “among those nations like my own that hold nuclear stockpiles, we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear and pursue a world without them”. He adds: “Yes, we must.”

“We must” because a U.S. no-first-use policy would reduce the risk of nuclear catastrophe, improve the prospects for further Russian nuclear cuts, and draw China into the nuclear risk reduction process.

Further: “It would put a spotlight on the dangerous nuclear doctrines of Pakistan and North Korea, where the risk of nuclear weapons use is perhaps most severe, and challenge them to reconsider the first-use option,” says Kimball.

“By encouraging a new norm against first-use of nuclear weapons, Obama could help ensure, for this generation and those to come, that nuclear weapons are never used again,” says the Arms Control Association’s executive director Kimball. [IDN-InDepthNews – 22 July 2016]

Image: More than 10,000 people crowding a square near Prague Castle cheer the President and First Lady Michelle Obama on April 5, 2009
| Tomáš Krist, Lidové noviny | U.S. Embassy in Prague



Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Needs Stronger Political Push

Interview by Ramesh Jaura with CTBTO Chief Dr. Lassina Zerbo

BERLIN | VIENNA (IDN | INPS) – If it were for Dr. Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), the treaty banning all nuclear tests would have entered into force “yesterday”.

This view not only reflects what he terms in a lighter vein his “notoriously optimistic” perspective. It is also grounded in a series of signals underlining that “the discussion about ratification has moved to a new level” so that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, better known by its acronym CTBT, should not remain an “unfinished business”.

In an exclusive email interview with IDN-InDepthNews, flagship of the International Press Syndicate (INPS), he spells out the reasons for his ‘optimism’, adding: A UN Security Council resolution banning nuclear tests, as President Obama is reported to be contemplating, might be a good thing. “But what really counts is the ratification of the remaining eight countries.” These are China, DPRK (North Korea), Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, and the United States.

China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the United States are among 183 that have signed the CTBT since it was opened for signature in 1996. But these do not count among 164 States that have ratified.

Some of the reasons underlying Dr. Zerbo’s optimism are: It is the first time that the head of the CTBTO was received by an Israeli Prime Minister in June 2016. European Parliament and Federica Mogherini, European Union’s High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, also a member of CTBTO’s Group of Eminent Persons, are demonstrating “creative leadership”.

Kazakhstan, which has voluntarily relinquished nuclear weapons, and Japan that commemorated in 2015 the 70th anniversary of the ruthless atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are staunch supporters of early entry into force of the Treaty.

Besides, Chinese authorities have told the CTBTO chief that their ratification is not conditional upon U.S. ratification. “We do have supporters on both sides of the Senate aisle,” says Dr. Zerbo. Senior U.S. officials, including Undersecretary Rose Gottemoeller have stated that the United States is considering “ways to affirm the international norm against nuclear testing”.

Following is the full text of the email interview: (Read also transcript of a video interview during the symposium ‘Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security: the CTBT@20’ from January 25 to February 4, 2016 at the Vienna International Centre in Austria.)

IDN | INPS: Your remarks after the meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu (in Jerusalem on June 20) indicated that sometime in the not-too-distant future we might celebrate the first anniversary of the CTBT’s entry into force. Should we expect that not-too-distant future before the end of the year or a bit later?

CTBTO Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo: You know that I am notoriously optimistic. But the CTBT will enter into force only 180 days after the last ratification has been deposited. So even if China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and the United States were to ratify later today, I’m afraid we would not make it in 2016.

So when will the CTBT enter into force? Yesterday, if it were up to me. But let me be serious: we are seeing quite a lot of positive signs in this 20th anniversary year. There is a lot of support from our Member States and the fact that the head of the CTBTO was received for the first time by an Israeli Prime Minister shows that the country is in favour of this Treaty, and that the discussion about ratification has moved to a new level.

IDN | INPS: EU Foreign Affairs and Security Policy High Representative Federica Mogherini said in her remarks at the 20th anniversary ministerial meeting in June: “We have not given up our goal. But to achieve it, we need a stronger push and more unity from all of us.” Also Rose Gottemoeller said: “We cannot, and must not, give up.” How do you think can such a “stronger push and more unity” be achieved?

Dr. Zerbo: If CTBT Member States are serious about achieving entry into force – and I believe they are – then they must be willing to expend political capital. What we need is political leadership: governments willing to engage with their own legislators, ratifying countries working with non-ratifiers to address concern and create incentives, working with civil society and thinking outside the box.

As Kazakhstan’s Foreign Minister said last fall (September 29, 2015) in New York at the Article XIV Conference on Facilitating Entry into Force, “business-as-usual” efforts will not suffice.

Together with my friend High Representative Federica Mogherini, a member of our Group of Eminent Persons, we briefed the European Union’s Foreign Affairs Committee on July 7, 2016.

One of the suggestions the parliamentarians made was to include the CTBT in any future third country trade agreements. This is exactly the kind of creative leadership approach I am talking about. Or take India’s desire to join the NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group) – why not include opening discussions on the CTBT in the equation?

IDN | INPS: Despite President Obama’s strong support for the Treaty, its ratification has been blocked by the Senate, with Republicans insisting the CTBT will hamper the efficacy of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. China’s reluctance to ratify the treaty is said to be linked to the American failure to do so. What prospects do you see for the Treaty’s ratification after Obama finishes his term?

Dr. Zerbo: In the United States, ratification has not been “blocked” by the

Senate so much as there simply has not been renewed consideration and sustained discussion about the Treaty. Most Republicans and Democrats in the Senate, I am told, simply have not focused on the subject, and are not familiar with some of the technical advances that address key concerns that led to the negative Senate vote back in 1999.

We do have supporters on both sides of the Senate aisle. Former Secretary of State George Shultz once said that his fellow Republicans “might have been right voting against [the CTBT back in 1999] but they would be right voting for it now, based on these new facts”.

These facts are the proven efficiency of our verification regime, which was not much more than a blueprint in 1999, and the success of the U.S. Stockpile Stewardship Program that enables the U.S. lab directors to certify the safety and reliability of the arsenal without explosive testing.

On China, we have been told by the authorities that their ratification is not conditional upon U.S. ratification. Again, this is an opportunity to show leadership and move forward.

IDN | INPS: Do you see a possibility to have India emulating the example of the U.S., China and Pakistan and halting its boycott of CTBTO meetings? I understand that you are trying to build a pro-CTBT lobby in India.

Dr. Zerbo: India and the CTBTO have a lot to offer each other – I am thinking of the spin-off applications of our monitoring data for disaster early warning and scientific research on the Earth’s processes. Vice-versa, the expertise of Indian scientists would help us further enhance our monitoring system.

On the other hand, no serious Indian nuclear scientist or political force wants a return to nuclear testing. So, again, I am optimistic that the country that launched the idea of a nuclear test ban – four decades before the CTBT was negotiated – will eventually join the family of CTBT Member States.

IDN | INPS: There are reports off and on that if CTBT continues to remain an ‘unfinished business’ the Preparatory Commission might find political and

financial support eroding? How do you evaluate such reports?

Dr. Zerbo: While we are very grateful for the level of political and financial support we receive from our Member States at the moment, this certainly remains a mid-term risk. Some countries have clearly stated that they will not indefinitely continue to support the test-ban and its organization if the few hold-out states continue to block entry into force.

This is why it is so important to get the entry into force process back on track, especially in this 20th anniversary year. To sum it up: it is time to finish what we started!

IDN | INPS: According to reports, Obama plans to pursue a UN Security Council resolution affirming a ban on the testing of nuclear weapons – as an alternative to the U.S. ratifying the CTBT. What do you think of that?

Dr. Zerbo: I very much welcome the strong support shown to the CTBT and the CTBTO by President Obama and his administration, and I am grateful for his efforts. Senior U.S. officials, including Undersecretary Rose Gottemoeller on June 13 in Vienna, have stated that the United States is considering “ways to affirm the international norm against nuclear testing”. I also believe that any step reaffirming not just the United States’ commitment to a nuclear test ban, but that of the international community is a step in the right direction, and a resolution by the Security Council would clearly send a strong signal. Nevertheless, we should not allow this to divert our attention from the real unfinished business: the fact that we have a Treaty which is operational, yet still not in force, after 20 years. A Security Council resolution might be a good thing, but what really counts is the ratification of the remaining eight countries. [IDN-InDepthNews – 18 July 2016]



Image: Opening of the CTBT exhibition in the Vienna International Centre’s Rotunda on the occasion of the CTBTO20 Ministerial Meeting June 2016. From left: Federica Mogherini, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo and Lazar Comanescu, Foreign Minister of Romania

U.S. Mayors Warn Against Largest NATO 'War Games'

By J C Suresh

TORONTO | INDIANAPOLIS (IDN) - "The largest NATO war games in decades, involving 14,000 U.S. troops, and activation of U.S. missile defenses in Eastern Europe are fueling growing tensions between nuclear-armed giants," the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM) has warned in run-up to the 28-nation North Atlantic Alliance's summit on July 8-9 in Poland's capital Warsaw.

The resolution adopted by the USCM's 84th Annual Meeting June 24-27 in Indianapolis says: "More than 15,000 nuclear weapons, most orders of magnitude more powerful than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, 94% held by the United States and Russia, continue to pose an intolerable threat to cities and humanity."

To underscore the point, the resolution recalls: "August 1945 U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki indiscriminately incinerated tens of thousands of ordinary people, and by the end of 1945 more than 210,000 people – mainly civilians, were dead, and the surviving hibakusha, their children and grandchildren continue to suffer from physical, psychological and sociological effects."

The USCM calls on "the next President of the United States, in good faith, to participate in or initiate... multilateral negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons as required by the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty".

While commending President Barack Obama for visiting Hiroshima in May, nearly 71 years after the atomic bombings, the United States Conference of Mayors strongly criticizes the Obama Administration for having "laid the groundwork for the United States to spend one trillion dollars over the next three decades".

USCM, the nonpartisan association of American cities with populations over 30,000, says, "the Obama Administration" has not only reduced the U.S. nuclear stockpile less than any post-Cold War presidency", but also decided to spend one trillion dollars "to maintain and modernize its nuclear bombs and warheads, production facilities, delivery systems, and command and control".

And this despite the fact that "federal funds are desperately needed in our communities to build affordable housing, create jobs with livable wages, improve public transit, and develop sustainable energy sources", said the resolution.

The USCM "calls on the next President and Congress of the United States to reduce nuclear weapons spending to the minimum necessary to assure the safety and security of the existing weapons as they await disablement and dismantlement, and to redirect those funds to address the urgent needs of cities and rebuild our nation's crumbling infrastructure".

The USCM, for the 11th consecutive year, adopted a strong resolution in support of Mayors for Peace, warning that "the nuclear-armed countries are edging ever

closer to direct military confrontation in conflict zones around the world," and calling on the next President of the United States "to pursue new diplomatic initiatives to lower tensions with Russia and China and to dramatically reduce U.S. and Russian nuclear stockpiles".

The USCM also "commends Mayor Denise Simmons and the Cambridge City Council for demonstrating bold leadership at the municipal level by unanimously deciding on April 2, 2016, to divest their one-billion-dollar city pension fund from all companies involved in production of nuclear weapons systems and in entities investing in such companies".

Mayors for Peace, an international organization, founded in 1982 and led by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, aims through its 2020 Vision Campaign to achieve the global elimination of nuclear weapons by 2020.

Mayors for Peace membership has grown by more than ten-fold since 2003, as of June 1, 2016 counting 7,063 cities in 161 countries and regions including 207 U.S. members, representing some one billion people, one-seventh of the world's population. On June 22 in Des Moines, Mayor Frank Cownie formally agreed to serve as Lead City for the U.S. section of Mayors for Peace.

Addressing the USCM International Affairs Committee on June 25, Yasuyoshi Komizo, Secretary-General of Mayors for Peace, explained: "One common challenge we face is that many countries continue to maintain that their national security depends on nuclear deterrence. Yet nuclear deterrence is based on mutual distrust and attempts to maintain peace through the threat of indiscriminate mass killings."

He added: "Such a system cannot be sustainable. We must also note that nuclear weapons cannot offer any effective solutions to the global security challenges of the 21st century. They also consume budgetary and technological resources needed for economic development, including the welfare of the world's cities." [IDN-InDepthNews – 01 July 2016]

Ratifications of Test Ban Treaty Still a Nuclear Fantasy

By Rodney Reynolds

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) - There has been widespread speculation – both inside and outside the United Nations -- that Israel may be toying with the idea of ratifying the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), perhaps within the next five years.

But is this in the realm of political reality or nuclear fantasy?

The speculation was triggered following a three-day visit to Israel by Dr Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), who met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on June 20.

Striking a note of optimism about the possible ratification of the treaty by Israel, he told the Jerusalem Post: “It is not a matter of if, but when.”

When Israel eventually ratifies the treaty, he predicted that Iran and Egypt may follow suit – also facilitating the long outstanding proposal for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East (NWFZ).

Aaron Tovish, International Director at Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision 2020 Campaign, told IDN “in the Middle East, saying these two countries (Israel and Iran) are closest to ratifying only means that the third is further away”. He said both countries are still “very far away” from ratifying the CTBT. Egypt is only further away, because it wants Israel to “go first.”

“The idea of having them all hold hands, and take the jump together, is attractive, but first you have to get them to hold hands,” said Tovish. Just because it is less ambitious, it doesn’t mean the prospect of a “nuclear-test-free” zone is any more realistic than a NWFZ, he added.

“In my view, the best prospect for progress – that will ultimately impact the Middle East – lie at the international level, particularly the work being now done in Geneva,” he declared.

Asked about the speculation, UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq said: “This is something the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization has been dealing with.”

“I believe you’re referring to remarks that were made by the head of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, Lassina Zerbo. So, I don’t have anything to add to that.” Of course, said Haq, if there are further ratifications of the Treaty that would be very welcome news.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has implored all of the countries who have yet to ratify the treaty to do so, so that it can finally enter into effect, he declared.

In the Jerusalem Post interview, Dr Zerbo was quoted as saying that the implementation of last summer’s deal to rein in Iran’s nuclear programme – and confirmation from Israeli and international scientists that Tehran can’t produce nuclear weapons – would mean “the biggest threat for Israel is gone and over”.

Zerbo said the next step should then be to ratify the CTBT, which both Iran and Israel signed in 1996. He called this “a low-hanging fruit,” toward the goal of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.

“Israel and Iran can make a huge difference for this treaty, and they have nothing to lose ... absolutely nothing,” Zerbo said. “Both of them can take leadership and show carte blanche to the world to say we have together decided to ratify the CTBT.”

Tariq Rauf, Director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme, at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN that in his view, reports that Israel will ratify the CTBT in the near term are “wildly optimistic.”

He said Prime Minister Netanyahu’s reported comments indicated support for the treaty but contained no commitment for an early ratification.

Likewise, ratification of the CTBT by the Majlis in Iran (like Israel, it also has signed the treaty) is unlikely given that the postulated economic and trade benefits flowing from the conclusion and entry into force of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA or the Iran nuclear deal) have yet to materialize – the Airbus and Boeing aircraft sales deals are held up as no Western banks are ready to enter into commercial transactions involving Iran, fearing US penalties.

“Israel is unlikely to ratify without Egypt and Iran also doing so -- and Egypt will not ratify unless Israel joins the NPT and gives up its nuclear weapons -- which clearly will not happen.”

He said Dr Zerbo is right to portray an optimistic outlook for ratification by Iran and Israel, since that’s his mandate and job, and he is trying his best to encourage ratification by the remaining five States whose ratification is required (China, Egypt, Iran, Israel, and USA) -- and also three States whose ratification is also required (North Korea, India, Pakistan) but which have not even signed the CTBT.

“In current circumstances, very unfortunately ratification or signature by any of these eight States is not in the cards in the near term. The CTBT is an important nuclear arms control treaty that should be brought into force as soon as possible,” declared Rauf, a former senior official at the International Atomic Energy Agency (2002-2012) dealing with nuclear verification, non-proliferation and disarmament.

In his interview, Dr Zerbo said China won’t ratify before the United States, India won’t ratify before China, and Pakistan won’t ratify before India – which means U.S. action is also crucial.

North Korea, the only country to test nuclear weapons in the 21st century, is

least likely of the eight key countries to ratify the CTBT, he said.

The CTBT, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly back in 1996, has still not come into force for one primary reason: eight key countries have either refused to sign or have held back their ratifications.

The three who have not signed – India, North Korea and Pakistan – and the five who have not ratified — the United States, China, Egypt, Iran and Israel – remain non-committal 20 years following the adoption of the treaty.

Currently, there is a voluntary moratoria on testing imposed by many nuclear-armed States. “But moratoria are no substitute for a CTBT in force. The nuclear tests conducted by North Korea are proof of this,” Ban said in remarks to the informal meeting of the General Assembly to observe the International Day Against Nuclear Tests, on September 10, 2015.

According to the Washington-based Arms Control Association even though nuclear weapons have only been used twice in wartime and with terrible consequences, what is often overlooked is the fact that they have been “used” elsewhere – through more than 2,000 nuclear test explosions by at least eight countries since 1945.

These nuclear test explosions have been used to develop new nuclear warhead

designs and to demonstrate nuclear weapons capabilities by the world’s nuclear-armed states. The tests, particularly the atmospheric detonations, have negatively affected the lives and health of millions of people around the globe.

In response, the Association said, ordinary citizens, scientists, legislators, and government leaders have pursued a multi-decade effort to bring into force a global verifiable comprehensive nuclear test ban.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 27 June 2016]

Image: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Meets with
CTBTO Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo on June 20, 2016
| Kobi Gideon | Government Press Office (GPO)



Bangladesh Opting for Peace Rather than Nuclear Arms

By Naimul Haq

DHAKA, Bangladesh (IDN) – Despite increasing global threats of nuclear attacks, Bangladesh – surrounded by nations possessing nuclear arms – is opting to remain a peaceful nation rather than join the nuclear club.

Endorsing the political will to pursue global peace and comply with international nuclear peace treaties, national security experts say that although the Cold War has ended potential for nuclear strikes is still alive.

In separate but united voices, they argue out that the threat of global nuclear war has decreased, but the risk of a nuclear attack has substantially increased as more nations have acquired technologies to develop nuclear weapons, besides the thirst of terrorists for acquiring such weapons of mass destruction.

They say that, so long as the danger of threats remain, Bangladesh must embrace for enhancing national security intelligence and focus on radiation survival strategies from such attacks.

Referring to the issue of China-India-U.S. nuclear ‘umbrella protection’, Brigadier General M. Sakhawat Hussain (Retired), a national security and defence analyst, told IDN: “Bangladesh is neither a hostile country nor faces threats of nuclear attacks at least in this century. Presently there is no imminent external threat but of course, one cannot predict the future.”

Hussain questioned the rationale behind possessing a nuclear weapon and said that any dream of developing a nuclear weapon would be the riskiest of adventures. “Who do we attack or who is considered our enemy,” he asked. “In general, if you notice, nations possessing nuclear weapons have enemies, for instance, the U.S. had the Soviet Union as its biggest enemy, India and Pakistan developed the weapons to counter each other, North Korea faces threat from its enemies of South Korea and the U.S. and similarly Israel pursued nuclear weapons feeling threats could come from its Arab enemies.”

He went on to argue that “geographically, if ever an India-Pakistan war was to break out again, strategically Bangladesh could also face the threats of countering radioactivity from possible bomb attacks since we are their neighbour. In such case, like other nations, we should also prepare our citizens for knowledge on radiation survival rather than preparing for countering nuclear attack.”

Hussain also emphasised the need for a strong nuclear intelligence system which, he said, was a key to nuclear security today.

Major General (retired) Mohammad Abdur Rashid, a leading national security analyst, told IDN: “Entering the ‘nuclear club’ in the era of today’s global security would be a useless investment especially when Bangladesh is now a rising economy. Considering the geopolitical situation of the region, there is no reason to dream of developing nuclear arms.”

Rashid, who is also Executive Director of the Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies (ICLDS), said: “Bangladesh should instead consider focusing on radiation survival strategies if ever India and Pakistan engage in nuclear war. The best we can do is to save our population from such aggression and almost every country has its own preparation to protect its citizens from from deadly nuclear radiation.”

He also emphasised enhancing intelligence to detect any nuclear threats and prepare accordingly. “A strong intelligence wing could be an ideal tool to caution against any advance threats.”



M. A. Gofran, an expert on renewable energy, told IDN: “When the world is seeking an end to the nuclear arms race, there is no rationale for a poor nation like Bangladesh to ever pursue highly expensive and unsafe nuclear weapons. In fact, nuclear is not an option for war any more and there will never be a nuclear bomb attack after the world witnessed what such weapons of mass destruction in Hiroshima and Nagasaki can do to humanity.”

On the ‘umbrella protection’ issue, Gofran said: “A nuclear giant like India or the U.S. cannot possibly guarantee ‘protection’ for even a friendly nation. A nuclear bomb is not just an artillery piece. To retaliate with a nuclear bomb for another friendly nation would be like risking its own territory for a possible nuclear bomb attack by an enemy of another nation and why would any nuclear giant act so irresponsibly?”

Senior journalist Afsan Chowdhury ruled out the possibility of any nuclear threat for Bangladesh: “We are safe largely because who would want to attack us with nuclear weapons? India is all around us and unless it does which is almost impossible, we are safe. We pose no threat to any country.”

Concerning current energy policy and nuclear fuel handling capacities, Afsan said: “We are not competent or efficient enough to handle such nuclear technology (weapons). And who would we attack? In the global security context, developing a nuclear weapon would make no sense. I see no Bangladesh government pursuing that.”

Major General (Retired) Mohammad Ali Sikder, a political-security analyst told IDN: “We have always been a friendly nation and that friendly gesture is deeply embedded in our political history. We never encouraged conflicts in the past and so we don’t have any nuclear rivals. In fact, I don’t see any reason why we should ever feel insecure.”

According to Sikder, “the neighbouring nuclear giants – India and China – have always been our closest allies. As of today, the geopolitical reality does not pose any nuclear threat to Bangladesh. Therefore, we do not need to think about nuclear weapon capabilities at this particular time.”

However, he added, “we must have enhanced capability of external intelligence to remain upgraded. The smartest thing to do is to be up dated with advanced intelligence technology. That way we would know about any potential threats, if they exist at all.”

M. Ali Zulquarnain, Chairman of the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC), told IDN that Bangladesh’s nuclear programme has always been for peaceful purposes.

He said that “BAEC is continuing its research (mostly medical) and development works in line with the need of the society and advancement of nuclear technology. Through INPRO and other international and regional activities, BAEC is working in the areas of sustainable nuclear energy systems, innovative reactor concepts for the prevention of severe accidents and mitigation of their consequences, and nuclear fuel and fuel cycle analysis for future nuclear energy systems.”

He went on to explain that he believed Bangladesh is “in a better position compared with some other developing nations for utilising nuclear power and carrying out research related to it because of our expertise in nuclear research activities.” The country “has a flawless history in the world for the peaceful use of nuclear energy and we are the signatories of almost all of the international treaties for covering nuclear non-proliferation.”

IDN also spoke to a wide range of people from civil society including teachers, former government and non-government officials, journalists and businessmen. In unison, they all called for pursuing peace and rejected any idea of entering into a nuclear race which they described as ridiculous.

“Bangladesh enjoys one of the fastest growing economies in South Asia and a nuclear arms ambition would jeopardise this growth instantly,” said one experienced banker.

A veteran teacher from a reputed university said: “First of all, can Bangladesh afford to be a member of the nuclear club? It is highly expensive and highly unsafe. On both the grounds, Bangladesh simply has no choice but to prosper from the current economic growth.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 25 June 2016]

Image: Site of planned nuclear power units at Rooppur as part of an agreement on 25 December 2015 between the Russian state nuclear corporation Rosatom and the government of Bangladesh | seogan.ru

The Worst Acts of the Nuclear Age

Viewpoint by David Krieger

SANTA BARBARA | USA (IDN) - The ten worst acts of the Nuclear Age described below have set the tone for our time. They have caused immense death and suffering; been tremendously expensive; have encouraged nuclear proliferation; have opened the door to nuclear terrorism, nuclear accidents and nuclear war; and are leading the world back into a second Cold War.

These “ten worst acts” are important information for anyone attempting to understand the time in which we live, and how the nuclear dangers that confront us have been intensified by the leadership and policy choices made by the United States and the other eight nuclear-armed countries.

1 - Bombing Hiroshima (August 6, 1945). The first atomic bomb was dropped by the United States on the largely civilian population of Hiroshima, killing some 70,000 people instantly and 140,000 people by the end of 1945. The bombing demonstrated the willingness of the US to use its new weapon of mass destruction on cities.

2 - Bombing Nagasaki (August 9, 1945). The second atomic bomb was dropped on the largely civilian population of Nagasaki before Japanese leaders had time to assess the death and injury caused by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima three days earlier. The atomic bombing of Nagasaki took another 70,000 lives by the end of 1945.

3 - Pursuing a unilateral nuclear arms race (1945 – 1949). The first nuclear weapon test was conducted by the US on July 16, 1945, just three weeks before the first use of an atomic weapon on Hiroshima. As the only nuclear-armed country in the world in the immediate aftermath of World War II, the US continued to expand its nuclear arsenal and began testing nuclear weapons in 1946 in the Marshall Islands, a trust territory the US was asked to administer on behalf of the United Nations. Altogether the US tested 67 nuclear weapons in the

Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958, with the equivalent explosive power of 1.6 Hiroshima bombs daily for that 12-year period.

4 - Initiating Atoms for Peace (1953). President Dwight Eisenhower put forward an Atoms for Peace proposal in a speech delivered on December 8, 1953. This proposal opened the door to the spread of nuclear reactors and nuclear materials for purposes of research and power generation. This resulted in the later proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional countries, including Israel, South Africa, India, Pakistan and North Korea.

5 - Engaging in a Cold War bilateral nuclear arms race (1949 – 1991). The nuclear arms race became bilateral when the Soviet Union tested its first atomic weapon on August 29, 1949. This bilateral nuclear arms race between the US and USSR reached its apogee in 1986 with some 70,000 nuclear weapons in the world, enough to destroy civilization many times over and possibly result in the extinction of the human species.

6 - Atmospheric Nuclear Testing (1945 – 1980). Altogether there have been 528 atmospheric nuclear tests. The US, UK and USSR ceased atmospheric nuclear testing in 1963, when they signed the Partial Test Ban Treaty. France continued atmospheric nuclear testing until 1974 and China continued until 1980. Atmospheric nuclear testing has placed large amounts of radioactive material into the atmosphere, causing cancers and leukemia in human populations.

7 - Breaching the disarmament provisions of the NPT (1968 – present). Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) states, “Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament....” The five nuclear weapons-states parties to the NPT (US,

Russia, UK, France and China) remain in breach of these obligations. The other four nuclear-armed states (Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea) are in breach of these same obligations under customary international law.

8 - Treating nuclear power as an “inalienable right” in the NPT (1968 – present). This language of “inalienable right” contained in Article IV of the NPT encourages the development and spread of nuclear power plants and thereby makes the proliferation of nuclear weapons more likely. Nuclear power plants are also attractive targets for terrorists. As yet, there are no good plans for long-term storage of radioactive wastes created by these plants. Government subsidies for nuclear power plants also take needed funding away from the development of renewable energy sources.

9 - Failing to cut a deal with North Korea (1992 to present). During the Clinton administration, the US was close to a deal with North Korea to prevent it from developing nuclear weapons. This deal was never fully implemented and negotiations for it were abandoned under the George W. Bush administration. Consequently, North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003 and conducted its first nuclear weapon test in 2006.

10 - Abrogating the ABM Treaty (2002). Under the George W. Bush administration, the US unilaterally abrogated the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. This allowed the US, in combination with expanding NATO to the east, to place missile defense installations near the Russian border. It has also led to emplacement of US missile defenses in East Asia. Missile defenses in Europe and East Asia have spurred new nuclear arms races in these regions.

David Krieger is a founder and president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. [IDN-InDepthNews – 18 June 2016]

New Data Dampens Hope of a Global Ban on Nuclear Weapons

By Ramesh Jaura



BERLIN (IDN) - While campaigners for a world free of nuclear weapons are confident that “a ban is coming”, the annual nuclear forces data launched by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on June 13 gives little hope for optimism.

“Despite the ongoing reduction in the number of weapons, the prospects for genuine progress towards nuclear disarmament remain gloomy,” says Shannon Kile, Head of the SIPRI Nuclear Weapons Project. “All the nuclear weapon-possessing states continue to prioritize nuclear deterrence as the cornerstone of their national security strategies.”

But for the Geneva-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), “it is now clear beyond doubt that an overwhelming majority

of the world’s nations are ready to start negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons”. By putting in place a ban, they hope to stimulate much-needed progress towards the total elimination of nuclear forces.

This upbeat stance is grounded in deliberations of the May session of the 2016 United Nations open ended working group (OEWG) on nuclear disarmament in Geneva. The focus was on the proposal to start work on a global ban on nuclear weapons.

Ray Acheson of Reaching Critical Will points out that 127 states have signed the Humanitarian Pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. These states submitted a proposal to the OEWG calling for the urgent pursuit a new treaty to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The question for the OEWG Chair, Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi of Thailand, says Acheson, is whether or not he will reflect this overwhelming support and clear recommendations for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in his report for consideration of the UN General Assembly in September.

“The question for the nuclear-supportive states – who have articulated their support for nuclear weapons more strongly than ever before – is whether they will try to block a document with a clear recommendation from the majority of states. The question for those states wanting to pursue a prohibition is if they will accept anything less than what they have passionately and rightfully demanded at this meeting.”

Answers to Acheson’s questions will have to await the August session of the OEWG. But SIPRI’s data highlights some of the perturbing current trends and developments in world atomic arsenals.

The data shows that “while the overall number of nuclear weapons in the world continues to decline, none of the nuclear weapon-possessing states are prepared to give up their nuclear arsenals for the foreseeable future”.

According to the data, at the start of 2016, nine states – USA, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea – possessed nearly 4,120 operationally deployed nuclear weapons – that is, warheads placed on missiles or located on bases with operational forces.

If all nuclear warheads are counted, explains SIPRI, the nine states together possessed a total of approximately 15,395 nuclear weapons compared with 15,850 in early 2015.

According to SIPRI, global nuclear weapon inventories have been declining since they peaked at nearly 70,000 nuclear warheads in the mid-1980s. The decline has been due primarily to cuts made in the Russian and U.S. nuclear forces as a result of three arms limitation treaties since 1991 as well as unilateral force reductions.

However, the pace of their reductions appears to be slowing compared with a decade ago, and neither Russia nor the USA – which together account for nearly 93% of nuclear weapons in the world – has made significant reductions in its deployed strategic nuclear forces since the 2011 bilateral Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), maintains SIPRI.

At the same time, the SIPRI data finds that, both Russia and the USA have extensive and expensive nuclear modernization programmes under way. The USA, for example, plans to spend \$348 billion during 2015–24 on maintaining and comprehensively updating its nuclear forces. Some estimates suggest that the USA’s nuclear weapon modernization programme may cost up to \$1 trillion over the next 30 years.

“The ambitious U.S. modernization plan presented by the Obama Administration is in stark contrast to President Barack Obama’s pledge to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and the role they play in U.S. national security strategy,” says Hans Kristensen, co-author to the SIPRI Yearbook.

Kristensen from Denmark is an Associate Senior Fellow with the SIPRI Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Programme and Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

The SIPRI data further shows that the other nuclear weapon-possessing states have much smaller arsenals, but have all either begun to deploy new nuclear weapon delivery systems or announced their intention to do so.

China, which has a stockpile of about 260 nuclear warheads, appears to be gradually increasing its nuclear forces as it modernizes the arsenal. India and Pakistan too appear to be expanding their nuclear weapon stockpiles and missile delivery capabilities.

At the beginning of 2016 India was estimated to have an arsenal of 100–120 nuclear weapons. This estimate, according to SIPRI, is an increase in the size of the Indian nuclear stockpile from the 90–110 warheads estimated in January 2015.

Pakistan was estimated to possess a stockpile of 110–130 warheads as of January 2016. This marked an increase from the 100–120 warheads estimated for 2015, notes SIPRI.

North Korea is estimated to have enough fissile material for approximately ten nuclear warheads. “However, it is unclear whether North Korea has produced or deployed operational weapons,” declares SIPRI. [IDN-InDepthNews – 13 June 2016]

Image: ICAN

If Provoked, U.S. Public Likely to Support Nuclear Attack

By Rodney Reynolds

NEW YORK (IDN) - When President Barack Obama made a historic visit on May 27 to Hiroshima – where a U.S. nuclear attack on Japan in 1945 resulted in over 200,000 casualties* – he offered no apologies for the human devastation nor provided any justification for the first and only use of nuclear weapons ever.

But he reiterated his call for a world without nuclear weapons – even as the U.S. continues to modernize its nuclear programme at a cost of over \$1 trillion dollars proving there is still a widening gap between pledges and deliveries.

Despite all the good intentions, are we any closer, are we far removed, from a future nuclear war that could annihilate millions? In a projection into the future, the Wall Street Journal on May 19 posed a more relevant question: “Would we drop the bomb again?”

Dr Scott D. Sagan, professor of political science and senior fellow at the Centre for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University and Dr Benjamin A. Valentino, associate professor of government at Dartmouth College, point out that two surveys, one in 1945 and the other in July 2015, suggest that Americans are open to nuclear strikes in the future.

A Roper poll, conducted in September 1945, a month after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, indicated that 53 percent of respondents nation-wide agreed the U.S. “should have used two bombs on two cities, just as we did.”



A second poll conducted in July 2015, to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the bombings, indicated only 28 percent supported the U.S. nuclear attacks while 32 percent “indicated support for a nuclear demonstration strike.”

The two academics, who authored the article, conclude: “Our surveys can’t say how future presidents and their top advisers would weigh their options. But they do reveal something unsettling about the instincts of the U.S. public: When provoked, we don’t seem to consider the use of nuclear weapons a taboo, and our commitment to the immunity of civilians from deliberate attack on wartime, even with vast casualties, is shallow.”

Today, as in 1945, “the U.S. public is unlikely to hold back a president who might consider using nuclear weapons in the crucible of war.”

Just ahead of Obama’s visit, more than 70 prominent scholars and activists, including Oliver Stone, Noam Chomsky and Daniel Ellsberg, signed a letter urging the U.S. President to announce concrete steps towards nuclear disarmament.

Joseph Gerson, of the Quaker peace organization American Friends Service Committee, said: “The U.S. is on track to spend a trillion dollars over thirty years on the next generation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

He said President Obama should cancel this spending, revitalize disarmament diplomacy by announcing a reduction of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, and challenge Russian President Vladimir Putin to join in beginning negotiations to create the nuclear weapons-free world promised in Prague and required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.”

In a letter addressed to Obama, the 70 activists said the U.S atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 indiscriminately incinerated tens of thousands of children, women and men in an instant.

By the end of 1945 more than 210,000 people – mainly civilians, were dead. Over 90% of the doctors and nurses in Hiroshima were killed or injured by the bomb, the letter said.

The surviving hibakusha, their children and grandchildren continue to suffer from physical, psychological and sociological effects of the bombings. Health effects caused by genetic damage to future generations are still unknown.

Today, the letter said, more than 15,000 nuclear weapons, most of them orders of magnitude more powerful than the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs, 94% held by the U.S. and Russia, continue to pose an intolerable threat to humanity.

“Yet no disarmament negotiations are underway or planned.”

Last year The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the hands of its Doomsday Clock to three minutes to midnight citing the “extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity” posed by “unchecked climate change, global nuclear weapons modernizations, and outsized nuclear arsenals,” and the failure of world leaders to act.

Seven years ago in Prague, the letter said, “you raised the hopes of people around the world when you declared: “[A]s the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act.... So today,

I state clearly and with conviction America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”

“But to the contrary, under your leadership, the U.S. is planning to spend one trillion dollars over the next three decades to modernize every nuclear warhead type in its arsenal, and to upgrade and replace their delivery systems – submarines, land-based missiles, and bombers – for the foreseeable future.”

“As the first sitting U.S. President to visit Hiroshima you have an historic opportunity to demonstrate the moral responsibility you claimed in Prague.”

To this end: “We call on you, as a demonstration of good faith and a concrete interim step, to dramatically reduce the U.S. nuclear arsenal and urge Russia to do the same, as use of even a fraction of existing arsenals could cause nuclear winter, resulting in severe climate change leading to global famine.”

“We call on you to cancel the \$1 trillion, 30-year programme to upgrade the U.S. nuclear arsenal and overhaul the nuclear weapons complex, and to redirect those funds to meet human needs.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 31 May 2016]

* Within the first two to four months of the bombings, the acute effects of the atomic bombings killed 90,000–146,000 people in Hiroshima and 39,000–80,000 in Nagasaki; roughly half of the deaths in each city occurred on the first day, according to Wikipedia updated on 6 June 2016.

Image: Hiroshima Peace Memorial | Wikimedia Commons

Obama's Hiroshima Debut Does Not Prohibit Nuclear Weapons

By Ramesh Jaura

ISE-SHIMA | Japan (IDN) - Despite President Barack Obama's call for a "world without nuclear weapons" during his 'historic' visit to Hiroshima, the city where the first ever atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945, causing over 140,000 casualties, the United States is nowhere close to prohibiting nuclear weapons.

This was also underlined by 'Leaders' Declaration' emerging from the two-day summit of the Group of Seven (G 7) major industrial nations that concluded on May 27 on Kashiko Island located in Ise-Shima area of Mie Prefecture in Japan.

The Summit's host, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, chose the venue for its rich culture, beautiful scenery and close proximity to one of the country's most honoured historical sites: the Ise Jingu, or the Grand Shrine, built nearly 2,000 years ago.

Leaders' journey into a spiritual land surrounding Ise Jingu seems to have sparsely influenced G7 decisions: While the Group's three nuclear powers – USA, France and Britain – and the non-nuclear Japan, Canada, Germany and Italy vowed that "non-proliferation and disarmament issues" are among their "top priorities", the 32-page Declaration devoted only nine lines to the issue.

The G7's three nuclear powers possess one-third of the world's atomic arsenal, estimated at a total number of 15,350 atomic warheads.

Notwithstanding a stockpile of 5,185 weapons of mass destruction at the command of the Three nuclear haves, the Seven declared: "We reaffirm our commitment to seeking a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in a way that promotes international stability."

In this context, the 'Leaders' Declaration' endorsed the G7 Foreign Ministers' 'Hiroshima Declaration' on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation and the Statement of the G7 Non-Proliferation Directors' Group on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

The Hiroshima Declaration resulted from discussions at the April 10-11 meeting of Foreign Ministers in a city that along with Nagasaki suffered atomic bombings more than 70 years ago.

Japan's Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, who hails from Hiroshima, explained that the rift between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states had grown deeper and that the prevailing conditions surrounding nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts had become increasingly severe.

Kishida therefore stressed the necessity at precisely such a point in time for the G7 to send a strong message from Hiroshima toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. Following discussions, the Ministers agreed to subsequently issue the Hiroshima Declaration.

For the first time ever, the G7 Foreign Ministers also visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, laid a wreath at the Cenotaph for the atomic bomb victims,

and visited the Atomic Bomb Dome, coming into contact with the realities of atomic bombings.

President Barack Obama followed suit on May 27 visiting Hiroshima as the first sitting president of the U.S. "to honour the memory of all who were lost during World War Two".

"Seventy-one years ago on a bright cloudless morning, death fell from the sky and the world was changed," Obama said. "The memory of the morning of Aug. 6, 1945 must never fail. Since that fateful day we have made choices that have given us hope. The United States and Japan forged not only an alliance but a friendship."

While this gesture was appreciated by many, ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) said, Washington was embarking on a massive nuclear weapons modernization programme of \$1 trillion – "ensuring that the the U.S. would be nuclear-armed for decades to come", ICAN said.

In run-up to Obama's Hiroshima visit, ICAN's Executive Director Beatrice Fihn said: "Over the past seven years, the U.S. nuclear policy has been nothing but disappointing for those who believed that Obama could make real change on nuclear weapons – in particular its boycott of a promising new process to ban nuclear weapons."

Obama's call from Prague in 2009 to "put an end to the cold war thinking" and reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the U.S. and its allies' security strategies has not been matched by action, she said. "All nuclear-armed states and states under the U.S. nuclear umbrella continue to rely heavily on nuclear weapons in their security strategies despite numerous commitments to disarm."

In Hiroshima Obama was accompanied by Japanese Prime Minister Abe, who is also facing harsh criticism at home for his "hypocritical stance" on nuclear weapons, calling for nuclear disarmament while continuing to rely on U.S. nuclear weapons and opposing progress on a new treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

ICAN added: The Obama administration has failed to engage with the growing movement of non-nuclear weapon states pushing for a prohibition of nuclear weapons, the so-called Humanitarian Pledge. The U.S. in fact boycotted a UN working group set up by the UN General Assembly to discuss new legal measures for nuclear disarmament.

For its part, Japan participated in the UN talks from May 2 to 13 in Geneva, only to oppose the start of a process to negotiate a ban, claiming reliance on nuclear weapons is necessary for its national security. However, despite the boycott by the U.S. and other nuclear-armed states, ICAN insisted, the majority of states in the world are ready to start negotiations of a new treaty prohibiting



nuclear weapons.

“Given their absence or negative participation in the UN talks in Geneva in May, their symbolic call for a nuclear-free world is ironical,” said Akira Kawasaki of Peace Boat. “If the two leaders are serious about nuclear disarmament, why don’t they join the global movement calling for a process to ban nuclear weapons?” he asked.

“A visit to Hiroshima is not enough. The real test to evaluate their commitment will be whether they will support a global process of negotiation for a new instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons.”

Finh said: “After the Prague speech, Obama lost a chance to lead the world towards nuclear disarmament. Despite this first visit to Hiroshima by a U.S. president, leadership on this issue is instead emerging from the broad coalition of over 120 non-nuclear weapon states that have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge.”

The Ise-Shima Declaration came two weeks after the second session of the United Nations Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) for nuclear disarmament in Geneva. While the Group’s two sessions – February 22-26 and May 2-13 – failed to agree on a draft plan, the final three-day session in August was slated to negotiate a final report with recommendations for the United Nations General Assembly.

ICAN played a decisive role galvanising the support of the civil society, including faith-based organizations. An interfaith joint statement issued on May 2

highlighted the moral and ethical imperatives for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The statement, endorsed by nearly 35 faith groups and individuals, was presented to OEWG Chair, Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi of Thailand on May 3.

Underlining the civil society’s key role, UNFOLD ZERO stated: “There is now strong momentum for the start in 2017 of multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament – something which has been blocked for nearly 20 years.”

UNFOLD ZERO partner organisations include Mayors for Peace, Peace Depot, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), Basel Peace Office, International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA) and Middle Powers Initiative mobilized critical support.

The proposal was spelt out in the OEWG working paper 34 – Perspectives from nuclear weapon free zones by a group of countries that have already prohibited nuclear weapons in their regions through nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs). 115 countries are part of NWFZs covering Latin America, the South Pacific, Antarctica, South East Asia, Africa and Central Asia.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 27 May 2016]

Image: President Obama at Ise Grand Shrine | G7 Summit 2016 Japan Website’

UN Group Explores Ways Out of Nuclear Stalemate

By Jamshed Baruah



GENEVA (IDN) – The United Nations General Assembly has tasked an Open Ended Working Group(OEWG) to create a blueprint for constructing a world free of nuclear weapons. The Group’s two sessions – February 22-26 and May 2-13 – failed to agree on a draft plan. But the final three-day session in August was slated to negotiate a final report with recommendations for the United Nations General Assembly.

The report would be justified in stating – as Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) told the OEWG on May 13 – that “a majority of the world’s governments are ready and want to start negotiations of a new legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons”. And this even without the participation of the nuclear weapon states.

Some 100 governments joined over the course of two weeks in May and many more contributed their support through a joint working paper from the Humanitarian Pledge group comprising 127 States.

Participating governments were undeterred by the continued boycott of the working group by the nine nuclear-armed states: USA, Russia, China, France, and Britain as well as Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea.

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weapons. The statement, endorsed by nearly 35 faith groups and individuals, was presented to OEWG Chair, Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi of Thailand on May 3.

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Nine of these countries (Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and Zambia) submitted a proposal to the OEWG to “Convene a Conference in 2017, open to all States, international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons” and “to report to the United Nations high-level international

conference on nuclear disarmament to be convened no later than 2018...on the progress made on the negotiation of such an instrument”.

The plan was supported by a number of other non-nuclear States and civil society organizations during the OEWG sessions. However, none of the nuclear umbrella countries – non-nuclear NATO states, Japan, South Korea and Australia – agreed with the proposal. The nuclear-armed States, which did not participate in the OEWG, are also opposed to the proposal.

Many of the non-nuclear States participating in the OEWG argued that agreement from the nuclear-reliant states was not necessary to negotiate such a treaty. However, others argued that if such a treaty did not include at least some of the nuclear reliant states, it would have little or no impact on nuclear weapons policies and practices. Some also maintained that it could be counter-productive, taking pressure off the nuclear reliant states to adopt interim steps toward nuclear abolition.

Other options for nuclear disarmament negotiations were proposed that would be more likely to attract support from nuclear reliant states and thus impact directly on their policies.

These included a ‘building blocks approach’ and a framework agreement for nuclear disarmament, similar to the 1992 UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It has been developed by the Middle Powers Initiative working paper to the OEW: Options for a Framework Agreement.

Supporters of the framework agreement suggested that it “could include stronger prohibition measures early in the process, while still engaging those states not able to adopt such measures at the outset”.

However, many non-nuclear States criticized the ‘building blocks’ approach and framework agreement proposals as not promoting sufficiently strong measures in the near-term. They argued that a clear prohibition treaty would be better even if it did not include the nuclear-reliant countries.

One of the main reasons that the nuclear-armed countries did not participate in the OEWG, and why the ‘nuclear umbrella’ countries do not support a nuclear prohibition treaty, is because these countries still rely on nuclear weapons for their security.

An UNFOLD ZERO analysis said: “The OEWG held useful discussions on the role of nuclear weapons in the 21st century and whether it’s possible to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons, including during current times of increased tensions and conflicts between nuclear-reliant countries.”

A number of non-nuclear States and civil society organizations emphasized the possibilities for achieving security, reducing tensions and resolving international conflicts through alternative means.

These include diplomacy, law, mediation, arbitration, adjudication and the use of common security mechanisms in the United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other bodies. Some delegates noted that the recent agreement with Iran was an example worth emulating.

A number of countries and NGOs focused on a different issue – the lack of

political will and commitment of the nuclear-reliant States to nuclear disarmament. The Middle Powers Initiative, Arms Control Association, Basel Peace Office, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and UNFOLD ZERO proposed a series of Nuclear Disarmament Summits in order to build such political will.

The proposal – in MPI’s working paper to the OEWG titled Nuclear disarmament summits: Building political traction for the adoption and implementation of legal measures and norms, was inspired partially by the success of the Nuclear Security Summits, which built cooperation and commitment to prevent nuclear terrorism.

The Nuclear Disarmament Summits – a series of bilateral (U.S.-Russia) and multilateral meetings at head-of-government level – would enhance media and public attention to the issue and increase the pressure on nuclear-reliant states to adopt key disarmament measures, supporters of the proposal argued.

Diplomatic sources consider it unlikely that consensus will be achieved on either a prohibition treaty (the most popular proposal among the non-nuclear States) or the building blocks (‘progressive’) approach which is the most popular proposal among the nuclear-reliant states.

Such an agreement would, for example: reaffirm the disarmament obligation in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and customary international law; acknowledge the humanitarian consequences of nuclear explosions and affirm the at least general incompatibility of use of nuclear weapons with international humanitarian law; and state the common objective to extend forever the practice of non-use.

It would also outline non-binding aims for achieving reductions and elimination of nuclear weapons within an “aspirational timeframe”; set out processes for achieving these aims, including further negotiations and reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, it would agree on supporting measures such as further work on verification, confidence-building and establishing security without nuclear weapons.

If framework proposal eludes consensus, sources said, “it’s looking more and more likely that a group of non-nuclear States will move ahead in 2017 to commence negotiations on a prohibition treaty regardless of whether-or-not and nuclear-reliant states participate”. [IDN-InDepthNews – 15 May 2016]

Image: A composite of posters of the winners of United Nations Poster for Peace contest | UNFOLD ZERO

UN Working Group Urged to Assist in Banning Nukes

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA (IDN) - The powerful message of a joint statement by diverse faith groups, calling for abolition of nuclear weapons, has been strongly backed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's reaction to President Barack Obama's decision to visit Hiroshima on May 27.

Obama would be the first sitting U.S. President to visit the Japanese city during the G-7 economic summit that was annihilated by the first ever atomic bomb, dropped by the United States on August 6, 1945. It was followed by the second bomb that devastated Nagasaki three days later, killing a total of more than 200,000 people.

Ban "very much welcomes" Obama's decision to visit Hiroshima, UN Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. "For the secretary-general, one of the enduring lessons of Hiroshima is the need to abolish nuclear weapons once and for all," he added.

"We would hope that the visit is again a global message on the need for nuclear disarmament, which is something that the Secretary-General is calling for," the Spokesman said.

The remarks attributed to Ban were grounded in his profound commitment to a nuclear weapons free world. At the same time, these reminded of Obama's historic speech in April 2009 in Prague, in which he pledged to rid the world of nuclear weapons. His presidency, Obama declared, would see "America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons".

The interfaith joint statement issued at the start of the second session of the 2016 Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) from May 2 to May 13 in Geneva highlighted the moral and ethical imperatives for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The OEWG is purported to be taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

The Group was convened by the United Nations General Assembly based on a resolution adopted in December 2015 to substantively address concrete effective legal measures, provisions and norms needed to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. Its first session was held in February 2016.

The statement, endorsed by nearly 35 faith groups and individuals, was presented to OEWG Chair, Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi of Thailand on May 3. Its significance lies in the fact that since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the continued existence of nuclear weapons has "forced humankind to live in the shadow of apocalyptic destruction".

Because their use would not only destroy the past fruits of civilization, it would also disfigure the present and consign future generations to a grim fate, declares the statement.

The statement adds: "Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the values

upheld by our respective faith traditions – the right of people to live in security and dignity; the commands of conscience and justice; the duty to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard the planet for future generations."

The joint statement focuses on three crucial issues its authors are urging the OEWG to address:

- Heed the voices of the hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) urging the abolition of nuclear weapons, whose suffering must never be visited on any other individual, family or society, by reaffirming that the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons at the core of all nuclear disarmament efforts;
- Continue to call upon all states to participate in the OEWG and subsequent processes in order to fulfil their obligations to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament;
- Outline in its report to the UN General Assembly, with the maximum degree of detail, a legal framework that will facilitate the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons under strict international control, which should be negotiated without delay in a form open to all states and blockade by none.

Sources close to faith groups said that three eminent faith organisations – PAX, the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and the World Council of Churches (WCC) – had taken the lead in drafting the statement titled Faith Communities Concerned about the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons.

"It is our sincere hope that the discussions during the OEWG will pave a concrete roadmap leading to 'the beginning of the end' of the nuclear weapons age," said Hirotsugu Terasaki, Executive Director of Peace and Global Issues of the SGI.

"We encourage all participants to begin from the foundation of moral, ethical and humanitarian perspectives. Our opposition to nuclear weapons must be bigger than words, and should be made binding through a new legal instrument prohibiting them once and for all," added Susi Snyder, Nuclear Disarmament Programme Manager for PAX.

Explaining the WCC's stance, Dr. Emily Welty, Acting Moderator of the WCC Commission on International Affairs said: "Our deepest held convictions and faith call us to reject security that is dependent on the threat of nuclear weapons. They should be seen as a sinful misuse of our resources."

The statement builds on previous interfaith statements on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons issued in April 2014 in Washington DC, December 2014 in Vienna and May 2015 in New York.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 11 May 2016]

Campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Free World Intensifies

By Ravi Kanth Devarakonda

GENEVA (IDN) - As the global community grapples with the increasing threat of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists, the nuclear weapon states – the United States, Russia, China, France, and Britain, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea – have turned a deaf ear to the ongoing multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations in Geneva for preparing recommendations to ensure a world without the dreadful nuclear warheads.

In order to intensify efforts to achieve a treaty banning nuclear weapons, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) brought together in Geneva some 130 campaigners, including faith organizations. The meeting was held ahead of the second session of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) for nuclear disarmament from May 2-13. The first session was held in Geneva from February 22-26.

The OEWG is mandated to draw-up legal measures and norms for prohibiting nuclear weapons in the world. It was established by the UN General Assembly in December 2015 for negotiating new global rules for nuclear disarmament, including the abolition of nuclear weapons and “measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear weapon detonations”.

Given the untold misery and havoc caused by the nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki over 70 years ago when the United States chose to detonate weapons of mass destruction in civilian areas, and the continued tragedies stemming from the Chernobyl disaster 30 years ago and the Fukushima nuclear accident five years ago, it is normal to expect leadership role from the nuclear weapon states at the OEWG.

With the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which is the “grand bargain” of the official nuclear weapons states – the United States, Russia, China, Britain, and

France – for stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons, having failed to produce a concrete roadmap, it has become imperative for non-nuclear weapon states to accelerate global efforts towards complete disarmament.

While the U.S. and other countries are investing trillions of dollars for developing smart nukes, the Federation of American Scientists estimated the total number of nuclear warheads early 2016 at 15,350. The U.S. has a stockpile of 4,670 nuclear warheads, followed by Russia (4,490), France (300), China (260), Britain (215), Israel (80), India (120), Pakistan (130), and North Korea (10).

Recently, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (BAS) announced that the Doomsday Clock would remain at three minutes to midnight as a reflection of how close the BAS thinks the world is to a catastrophic disaster that takes into account risks such as climate change and the possible use of nuclear weapons.

But, ironically, neither the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, nor the newly emerged nuclear weapon states – Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea – are taking part in the OEWG’s sessions. “It’s not an easy task we have ahead of us,” Beatrice Fihn, ICAN’s executive director told IDN-INPS.

“Nuclear weapons are huge weapons, the biggest bombs that ever existed and they are some kind of political monsters, the ultimate symbol of power and increasingly seen as the entrance fee for a permanent Security Council seat,” she maintained.

Despite the absence of the nuclear weapons states at the meeting, the non-nuclear weapon states and the ICAN and other civil society groups are leaving no stone unturned in persuading the OEWG to prepare strong recommendations for the UN General Assembly.

In a powerful statement issued at the Geneva meeting on May 2, Seguridad Humana en

Latinoamérica y el Caribe (SEHLAC), a partner organization of the ICAN, said: “The alarming evidence presented today [May 2] and at the previous session of the open-ended working group indicates that the risk of a nuclear weapon detonation – whether by accident or design – is increasing.”

“We believe that the heightened tensions among nuclear-armed states and their allies in recent years makes progress towards nuclear disarmament all the more important and urgent,” the SEHLAC maintained on behalf of ICAN.

Both non-nuclear weapon states and ICAN and its various partners circulated concrete proposals on how to move forward towards the shared goal of banning nuclear weapons.

Already 127 countries have endorsed the ‘Humanitarian Pledge’ for stigmatizing, prohibiting, and eliminating nuclear weapons. It aims to fill the “legal gap” under which the nuclear weapons of mass destruction are not yet explicitly prohibited under international law.

The Pledge, which was issued on December 9, 2014 at the conclusion of the Vienna conference on Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons enables member states to start negotiating a comprehensive treaty for banning nuclear weapons.

The Humanitarian Pledge, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly over five months ago, calls on nations to join negotiations for finalizing a treaty to prohibit the nuclear weapons.

Members of the nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) – Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, and Zambia – on May 2 submitted a strong four-page proposal on how to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

The proposal by the NWFZ nine countries calls for a “legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear

weapons". It wants the OEWG to make a crucial recommendation for convening a conference in 2017 involving all states, international organizations, and civil society "to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons".

Clearly, this proposal by the nine countries is an important turning point, according to ICAN's executive director Fihn. It "shows that governments are getting ready to start a process banning nuclear weapons", she said.

In separate proposals, The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, Mexico, Nicaragua, and five Pacific island states – Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, and Tuvalu – submitted proposals for negotiating a new treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

A broad consensus in the making appears to be that the nuclear weapon and the non-nuclear weapon states together with the international civil society should strive for a meaningful and effective legal treaty.

"If our ultimate goal is to eliminate nuclear weapons, we cannot physically abolish them without the participation of nuclear weapon states," said Kimiaki Kawai, director for peace and human rights at Soka Gakkai International (SGI), Japan-based Buddhist network representing more than 12 million people in 192 countries.

SGI presented a detailed working paper to OEWG on Nuclear Weapons and Human Security in which it argues for a "truly global enterprise involving all States and fully engaging civil society," adding: "All States have an obligation to promote and participate in good faith negotiations for disarmament, bringing them to a successful conclusion."

"I have a conviction that we should really start our efforts consistently to have a discussion between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, and identify the issues that exist between the two and the kind of steps to resolve

these," said Hirotsugu Terasaki, SGI's Executive Director of International Peace and Global Issues.

"If the shared goal is to create a world without nuclear weapons, a universal goal, then the civil society network [must] support the direction of such a discussion [between the nuclear haves and have-nots]," Terasaki told IDN-INPS. It is important to identify whether from the security or economic points of view, nuclear weapons benefit the nuclear weapon states, he added.

"Looked at from various aspects, it is very clear that the existence of nuclear weapons does not protect humanity," Terasaki maintained. "Therefore, nuclear deterrence is an illusion; and we have to come out of that. It's not good to see countries still spending (huge amounts of money) on nuclear weapons," he argued.

In fact, as SGI's working paper points out, the continued maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapons runs counter to the spirit of Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for the "least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources".

"The world without nuclear weapons is garnering increasing support the world over. The majority of the world's government want to negotiate a new treaty that would prohibit nuclear weapons. I really hope that the nuclear weapon states would take the sincere stance to participate in discussions (on doing away with nuclear weapons)," SGI's senior official Terasaki said.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 5 May 2016]

Image: UN Geneva



Hiroshima Declaration Avoids Firm Commitment to Nuclear-Free World

By Rodney Reynolds

HIROSHIMA (IDN) - When the Foreign Ministers of G7 countries -- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and the United States – adopted the ‘Hiroshima Declaration’ at the end of a two-day meeting on April 11, they failed to make any concrete commitments for the total elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

The Declaration was replete with pious intentions and time-worn platitudes of the dangers of weapons mass destruction (WMDs), but fell short of a world without nuclear weapons.

Tariq Rauf, Director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN the Declaration is a major disappointment and a frittering away of a solemn opportunity – the 71st year following the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – to commit to nuclear disarmament and elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is unfortunate that the G-7 Foreign Ministers termed their “commitment to seeking a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in a way that promotes international stability”.

But it related this to the turmoil in Syria and Ukraine and the nuclear programme of North Korea, he pointed out.

In the fight against the Dae’sh (also known as ISIS) and addressing the instability in Ukraine, nuclear weapons are completely irrelevant, he argued.

“And, threatening North Korea with force or nuclear weapons is counter-productive and cannot resolve the security situation in the Korean peninsula,” said Rauf, formerly Head of Nuclear Verification and Policy Coordination at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

John Steinbach, one of the founding members of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki Peace Committee of the National Capital Area, was equally skeptical. He said: “It is reported that Secretary Kerry called his visit (to Hiroshima) ‘gut-wrenching’ and wrote: ‘It is a stark, harsh, compelling reminder not only of our obligation to end the threat of nuclear weapons, but to re-dedicate all our effort to avoid war itself.’”

“We certainly agree with the sentiments – and we wish current U.S. policy reflected those priorities,” said Steinbach.

But the actual context is that the U.S. is engaged in an unprecedented nuclear build up, he added. “It is spending \$1 trillion dollars over the next 30 years to ‘modernize’ its nuclear weapons arsenal. This includes creating smaller, ‘more usable’ weapons.” The Obama administration, he pointed out, has clearly turned its back on its stated goal of abolishing nuclear weapons.

Steinbach said while there have been reductions in the U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons arsenals, there are still approximately 15,000 nuclear weapons, the vast majority held by the U.S. and Russia.

“Moreover, NATO is expanding, posing the threat of a direct confrontation with Russia.



The U.S. has continued its wars in the Mideast. Climate change is resulting in instability and resource wars may well lead to more conflicts.” And the ‘Doomsday Clock’ of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is still set to 3 minutes, he noted.

When John Kerry visited the Hiroshima Peace Park on April 11, he was the first U.S. Secretary of State and the highest ranking American diplomat to visit a city devastated by two U.S. atomic bombs 71 years ago. Falling short of admitting U.S. guilt for perpetrating a war crime of biblical proportion, Kerry dramatised his visit describing it as ‘gut-wrenching.’

Addressing a news conference in Hiroshima, he told reporters: “It is a reminder of the depth of the obligation every one of us in public life carries ... to create and pursue a world free from nuclear weapons.”

But he left one question lingering: Will U.S. president Barack Obama, who in his April 2009 speech in Prague called for a world without nuclear weapons, make a historic visit to Hiroshima when he arrives in Japan for a G7 summit of world leaders on May 26-27?

Kerry side-stepped the question when he told reporters that Obama also wanted to travel to the city in southern Japan but he did not know whether the U.S. president’s complex schedule would allow him to do so when he

visits the country for the summit meeting. “Whether or not he can come as president, I don’t know,” said Kerry.

If Obama does visit Hiroshima, he will face the stark realities of the type of destruction that can be caused to humanity in a future war with nuclear weapons.

In a statement released here, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said: “I think this first-ever visit by G7 foreign ministers to the peace memorial park is a historic first step towards reviving momentum toward a world without nuclear weapons.”

A former U.S. President Jimmy Carter visited the memorial in 1984, but four years after he left office, followed by a 2008 visit by Nancy Pelosi, then Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, according to the New York Times. “But no serving (U.S.) administration official of cabinet rank or higher has visited” (the memorial), the Times reported.

The Foreign Ministers ended their two-day meeting on April 11 by adopting the ‘Hiroshima Declaration’ where the G-7 countries “share the deep desire of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that nuclear weapons never be used again”.

The statement not only emphasized the importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but also called for a ban on nuclear test explosions, and urged all states to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) without delay and conditions.

At the May summit, the G7 will be represented by world leaders from the seven industrialized countries, plus the 28-member European Union (EU). The summit will take place in Kashiko Island, Shima, Mie Prefecture, Japan.

The Hiroshima Declaration emphasized the importance of the G7 meeting in Hiroshima 71 years after World War II, which unleashed unprecedented horror upon the world.

“The people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced immense devastation and human suffering as a consequence of the atomic bombings and have rebuilt their cities so impressively. In this historic meeting, we reaffirm our commitment to seeking a safer world for all and to creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons in a way that promotes international stability. This task is made more complex by the deteriorating security environment in a number of regions, such as Syria and Ukraine, and, in particular by North Korea’s repeated provocations.”

SIPRI’s Rauf told IDN although the G-7 Foreign Ministers expressed support for the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and urged India, Israel and Pakistan to join the NPT, they downplayed the legally binding obligation of the nuclear-weapon States to eliminate their nuclear weapon arsenals.

This is not surprising, he said, since the G-7 Foreign Ministers represent three nuclear-weapon States – France, UK and USA – and their allies (Canada, Germany, Italy and Japan) all nestling under a security system firmly anchored in nuclear weapons.

He also said it would have been appropriate for the G-7 Foreign Ministers to

have recognized the dire humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons and pledged to seek their total elimination through multilateral negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

And, also a pledge from France, UK and the U.S. to change their opposition to the UN General Assembly-mandated Open-ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Negotiations on Disarmament (that will be meeting in its second session in May in Geneva), and announce they would take part in these discussions to find ways of advancing the nuclear disarmament agenda.

He said such opposition by the nuclear-weapon States to the wishes of the vast majority of UN Member States to discuss possible ways and paths to nuclear disarmament shows the true colours of the nuclear-armed States.

At the end of March, some 52 world leaders met in Washington at the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) to discuss ways of strengthening the security of nuclear materials in civilian use, but some 83% of the nearly 1,800 metric tons of the world’s nuclear weapon-usable materials – highly enriched uranium and plutonium – were off the table as were the nearly 15,000 nuclear weapons.

“G-7 Foreign Ministers should get serious, along with the G-7 leaders, when they meet at their 42nd summit meeting in Japan on 26-27 May 2016 and commit themselves to: irreversible nuclear disarmament; join with the other nuclear-armed States to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon-usable materials; and work to bring the CTBT, prohibiting all nuclear test explosions, signed in 1996, into effect before the end of this year. “

“The challenges are big, but time is short. G-7 leaders need to stand up to their responsibilities,” declared Rauf. [IDN-InDepthNews – 12 April 2016]

Image: The first visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park by all the G7 Foreign Ministers | Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan.

UN and Hiroshima Citizens Insist on a World Without Nuclear Weapons

By Ramesh Jaura

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) - Before the UN Disarmament Commission started the second week of its session at the United Nations headquarters in New York, a joint statement issued in Hiroshima by the Japan NGO Network for Nuclear Weapons Abolition and the Hiroshima Alliance for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (HANWA) declared: "The prospect for a nuclear-free world is not bright."

The statement emerging from Citizens Symposium some 7,000 miles away from New York on April 10 and addressed to the G7 governments - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States – said: "Today, the over 15,000 nuclear warheads that exist on the planet continue to threaten the existence of humanity. Nuclear proliferation continues and the vicious cycle involving poverty, inequality, environmental degradation and violence is bringing about various kinds of humanitarian crises across the world."

The statement urged the G7 to "reflect the lessons learned seventy years ago by the use of nuclear weapons on the cities of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki: the unprecedented and inhumane experience of the atomic bombing has taught us that 'nuclear weapons and humanity cannot coexist'."

These sentiments and views were reflected in several speeches during the general debate at the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC). The Commission Chairman Vanuatu's Odo Tevi stressed that disagreements and rivalries persisted between States, while the increasing threats of terrorism and cyber attacks presented additional global challenges.

The multilateral disarmament agenda showed signs of decay and decline, as States were retreating from negotiations, he added. The 2015 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review had concluded without agreement on a substantive outcome document. Against that backdrop, the Disarmament Commission, with its universal membership, had a critical role to play in



2016 in renewing trust between States.

Kim Won-Soo, Under Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, said the Commission was entering the middle phase of its current cycle during a time of deepening paralysis and divisions within multilateral disarmament bodies.

Drawing attention to the inability to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty into force and the lack of negotiations during the Conference on Disarmament, he noted that those disappointments were well known to all, from the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Much needed to be done with regard to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, he said. Over the past 11 months, views had been polarized and

entrenched. Despite that, work on the elaboration of effective legal measures would resume at the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in May, he said, adding that the Disarmament Commission continued to maintain its unique and distinct role. In that regard, he encouraged Member States to make use of the Commission to engage in constructive dialogue geared towards realizing a nuclear-weapon-free world.

This is what Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Kazakhstan's Permanent Representative to the UN, aimed at, when he emphasized the need to break the stalemate of UNDC since 1999 and revitalize the effectiveness of the disarmament machinery. He noted with deep regret that entities of the disarmament machinery had not executed their mandates since the last two decades and expressed

the hope that such a situation would soon change by way of various bold and innovative measures to achieve the desired objectives for a safe and secure world.

Considering that the threat of use of nuclear weapons by state and non-state actors remains the main challenge that humanity faces today, every opportunity must be used to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, recognizing the key role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as the main international structure responsible for the elaboration of goals and principles.

IAEA should be commended for uniting international efforts in ensuring nuclear security. However, the Nuclear Security Summits contribute significantly – and support the IAEA – to accomplish this common goal. With this in view, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev had participated in all the four summits. He was confident that implementing the recommendations adopted at the Summits in Washington, Seoul, The Hague, and on March 31-April 1 in Washington would greatly increase nuclear security worldwide.

Abdrakhmanov said, one of the key statements of Kazakh leadership at the Fourth Summit had been the position that, despite the considerable progress made as an outcome of the summits, the objectives set up in the framework of this initiative, generally speaking, are not fully implemented.

“It is, therefore, necessary to consider the continuation of these summits to further reduce nuclear security threats. Hence, Kazakhstan presented . . . at the (Washington) summit a fundamentally new document titled, Manifesto: The World. The 21st Century, which expresses the momentous stand on the issues of war and peace, particularly above all, the threat of a nuclear apocalypse in the event of failure of the international community to promote and advance a total ban on nuclear weapons.

Speaking at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2015, President Nazarbayev in fact encouraged the international community “to make the building of a nuclear-weapon-free world as the main goal of humanity in the 21st century”.

Kazakhstan therefore tabled resolution 70/57 on the Universal Declaration for the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World, which was supported by the majority of UN Member States and adopted on December 8, 2015. It outlines the basic principles and objectives of nuclear disarmament, and urges that bold steps be taken, including the adoption of a legally binding international instrument to prohibit and destroy all nuclear weapons as well as to establish a Global Anti-Nuclear Movement aimed at nuclear disarmament.

Kazakhstan has supported the establishment of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) to advance the process of multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. “To us, this entity is not an alternative to the CD and the UNDC. However, the OEWG has the absolute majority of supporters, and its potential cannot be ignored. We call on the nuclear weapons possessing states to participate in this dialogue,” Ambassador Abdrakhmanov said.

Kazakhstan’s views have been supported by several delegates during the ongoing UNDC discussions.

Associating himself with the Non-Aligned Movement, Venkatesh Varma, India’s Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva said, the Commission’s current difficulties were due to “the lack of political will of States” to invest in multilateral outcomes. At the fourth Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi had underlined his country’s commitment to disarmament.

Indeed, nuclear security would continue to be a priority for India, which was also committed to global non-discriminatory disarmament and to complete disarmament in a time-bound manner, Varma said.

Stressing the need to close gaps in negotiations leading to that goal, he anticipated the start of discussions in the Conference on Disarmament on a disarmament convention. In that regard, he supported global efforts, including creating an agreement on a step-by-step process towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and Kazakhstan’s proposal on a universal declaration on a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Turning to confidence-building measures, he said a step-by-step process should unfold at a pace comfortable to all parties. While India’s priority was the Commission’s agenda item on nuclear disarmament, it would not stand in the way of a possible third item to help the international community respond to emerging threats.

Ambassador Abdrakhmanov also stressed the importance of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs) that meanwhile cover the entire southern hemisphere, and 116 Member States of such zones represent the majority of UN Member States.

“We support expanding such zones in the future, and particularly the creation of a Middle East Zone Free of the Weapons of Mass Destruction,” he said, adding: “We support the proposal to hold annual meetings of representatives of all the NWFZs in New York. . . the Protocol to the Semipalatinsk Treaty, signed by representatives of the ‘Nuclear 5’ countries in 2014, has already been ratified by the UK, China, Russia and France, and we look forward to the early completion of this work by the U.S.,” the Kazakh Permanent Representative to the UN added. [IDN-InDepthNews – 11 April 2016]

Image: Atomic Bomb Dome by Jan Letzel and modern Hiroshima | Wikimedia Commons

2016 Nuclear Security Summit: Obama's Last Hurrah

By Jayantha Dhanapala

KANDY, Sri Lanka (IDN) - In the practice of general medicine a placebo is defined as a medicine or a procedure prescribed for the psychological benefit for the patient – to humour or placate rather than for any physiological or therapeutic effect. U.S. President Barack Obama's rhetoric in Prague in April 2009 gave the world a tantalizing vision of a nuclear weapon free world: "The existence of thousands of nuclear weapons is the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

Since then we have had the anti-climax of four Nuclear Security Summits and repeated warnings about nuclear terrorism but no meaningful nuclear disarmament.

Pocketing his prematurely awarded Nobel Peace Prize, the U.S. President has reverted to being the conventional leader of the greatest military-industrial complex in the world spending approximately US \$610 billion annually of the global military expenditure of US \$ 1.8 trillion and a staggering US \$ 355 billion over the next ten years on nuclear weapon modernization.

After a modest new START pact with Russia in 2010 he has continued the policies of nuclear deterrence, aggressive NATO expansion and Ballistic Missile Defence systems emplacement making a rapprochement with Putin's Russian Federation, after the latter's annexation of Crimea and hostile policy directed at Ukraine, even more difficult.

Faced with an implacably hostile Republican dominated Congress, Obama belatedly arrived at an agreement with Iran through a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action largely because of the principled position of the EU and the patience of the Iranian leadership under the liberal President Rouhani.

Other foreign policy "successes" are the yet unimplemented decision to close Guantanamo and

the re-establishment of relations with Cuba followed by a visit there. Both these achievements must be recorded as "incompletes" in Obama's report card since the U.S. Congress opposes the closure of Guantanamo and the cessation of the human rights violations that go on there – violations for which other countries are routinely condemned in the Geneva-based Human Rights Council by the U.S. – while the embargo against Cuba continues even as diplomatic missions are ceremoniously re-opened after decades.

Amidst these non-events in the final year of the Obama Presidency is the fourth and final Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington with a final communiqué coming out on April 1. The conspicuous Russian absence notwithstanding, the active participation of two of the largest countries in the world – China and India – with a collective population of over 30% of the world, both of them nuclear weapon armed, was seen as an accomplishment that salvaged the Summit.

While the flow of refugees from proxy wars and conflict-ridden Middle East countries challenges European unity and its moral value base, extremist ISIS terrorism strikes terror in European cities. Suddenly nuclear terrorism becomes more real than ever despite all that has been done implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and the Obama-sponsored Security Summits of 2010 in Washington, 2012 in Seoul and 2014 in The Hague.

The key fact is that no steps are being taken towards the elimination of nuclear weapons despite the surge of international support for the 'Humanitarian Pledge' and a Nuclear Weapon Convention.

And as long as nuclear weapons exist the simple logic is that their ownership cannot be restricted to the nine states that now possess them. Other states and non-state actors will want them. If there are no

nuclear weapons there cannot be nuclear weapon proliferation to terrorists or anyone else. The Global Zero campaign put it bluntly: "There's no such thing as 'nuclear security' as long as nuclear weapons exist."

Joe Cirincione of the Ploughshares Fund writing to the Huffington Post states: "The president has the right vision, but he has been let down by his own bureaucracy, particularly Pentagon officials who defend obsolete nuclear programs more than the president's policies. He could use a speech at Hiroshima to recapture his agenda, to force executive actions. He could announce that he is canceling or delaying the most dangerous and destabilizing of the new systems he has ordered built — the new nuclear cruise missile and the new intercontinental ballistic missile, as former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry urged.

"He could take at least a portion of our redundant, obsolete weapons off of hair-trigger alert. He could pull our nuclear weapons left over from Cold War deployments from insecure bases in Turkey and Belgium. He could take any of a dozen other actions experts have recommended. He could leave the presidency knowing that when he had the chance, he did everything he could to protect America from the most horrific weapons humankind ever invented."

In the face of the above agenda the recently concluded Nuclear Security Summit is in fact a placebo. The final communiqué of the Summit must be deconstructed to identify what was actually achieved:

1. It repeats that the threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism remains one of the greatest challenges to international security and is constantly evolving.
2. It reaffirms that measures to strengthen nuclear security will not hamper the rights of States to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful

purposes but the Iranian example is no encouragement. No prohibition of civilian reprocessing of plutonium is mentioned nor is the need to shift to low-enriched uranium reactors despite repeated advice of expert groups.

3. It reaffirms the fundamental responsibility of States, in accordance with their respective obligations, to maintain at all times effective security of all nuclear and other radioactive material, including nuclear materials used in nuclear weapons, and nuclear facilities under their control. And yet we have a long list of accidents, thefts and cyber attacks.
4. International cooperation, including sharing of information in accordance with States' national laws and procedures, was pledged towards establishing a more inclusive, coordinated, sustainable, and robust global nuclear security architecture for the common benefit and security of all.
5. The essential responsibility and the central role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in strengthening the global nuclear security architecture and in developing international guidance was supported.

The Communiqué ends stating that “The 2016 Summit marks the end of the Nuclear Security Summit process in this format” leaving it to the incoming U.S. Administration to devise a new format.

But looking at the U.S. Presidential Campaign amidst the denunciation of terrorism there is no indication that any of the contenders in the Presidential race will be ready to reduce and secure nuclear arsenals let alone eliminate them.

Indeed Donald Trump the leading Republican contender would have Japan and the Republic of Korea acquire their own nuclear weapons and never mind the Treaty for the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its 189 states-parties. And all this amidst a deafening silence of the famous Four Horsemen of the Nuclear Apocalypse – Shultz, Kissinger, Nunn and Perry who first led the charge for nuclear disarmament with their famous 2008 Wall Street Journal op-ed well before Obama's conversion on the road to the White House and to Prague.

Thus we return to the caveat Obama entered in his Prague speech as his escape valve: “This goal will not be reached quickly – perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence. But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, “Yes, we can.”

Can we really eliminate nuclear terrorism without eliminating nuclear weapons? No we cannot.

*Jayantha Dhanapala is a former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs 1998-2003 and a former Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the USA 1995-97 and to the UN in Geneva and Vienna 1987-92. He is the current President of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs and Distinguished Associate Fellow of SIPRI. The views expressed are his own. [IDN-DepthNews – 4 April 2016]

Image: President Obama and his Wife, Michelle in 2009 in Prague
| Adrigu – Wikimedia Commons





Citizens of Hiroshima walk by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, the closest building to have survived the city's atomic bombing.