

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



2018 Report of the Joint Media Project



Credits

The news articles, analyses and opinions in this report were published between April 2017 and March 2018 in IDN-InDepthNews www.indepthnews.net, flagship agency of the International Press Syndicate Group www.international-press-syndicate.org.

These were posted on the SGI-INPS project website www.nuclearabolition.info, and can be accessed freely.

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Publishers:

The International Press Syndicate Group and
The Global Cooperation Council
Marienstr. 19-20, D -10117 Berlin

Global Coordinator | Editor-in-Charge:

Ramesh Jaura

Project Director:

Katsuhiko Asagiri,
President International Press Syndicate (INPS) Japan
Ichimura bldg. 4F, 3-2 Kanda Ogawa-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo JAPAN 101-0052

Design:

Tharanga Yakupitiyage



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Preface



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 in-depth news and analyses by IDN from April 2017 to March 2018.

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.

2017-2018 is the 2nd 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 third year of the INPS Group's joint media project with the SGI.

This compilation comprises 43 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 reflect the anxiety and tension resulting from President Donald Trump's erratic twittered foreign policy pronouncements violating diplomatic norms which were taken for granted even during the chilliest periods of the Cold War.

The concern and expectation April 2018 onwards is reflected in the article: In 2018, Who Will Speak Up for Peace in the Korean Peninsula? by Rick Wayman, Programs Director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF), based in Santa Barbara, California: "A possible summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un is just weeks away. Questions abound: Is it a good idea? When and where will it take place? What will they talk about? Who, if anyone, is preparing the U.S. president for this high-stakes meeting? Will it be a success?"

In Nuclear Deterrence Policy Gathering Steam in India, Sudha Ramachandran writes: "Though India is a reluctant nuclear power, nuclear deterrence will continue to play a crucial role in India's national security strategy over the next few decades," says Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal, Distinguished Fellow at India's Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA)."

Sudha Ramachandran continues: "In his recent book 'Sharpening the Arsenal: India's Evolving Nuclear Deterrence Policy', he explains the reason: Only when India's adversaries are convinced that India has both the necessary political and military will and the hardware to respond to a nuclear strike with punitive retaliation that will inflict unacceptable loss of human life and unprecedented material damage, will they be deterred."

This policy stance manifests the distressing trail the U.S. Nuclear Policy Review 2018 has left behind.

To conclude: I would like to express my gratitude to our network of correspondents for their insightful contributions, the Project Director INPS Japan President Katsuhiko Asagiri for his valuable support in implementing the project, and the SGI for the trusted and professional partnership. Sincere thanks also to Dr. Rebecca Johnson for the Foreword and to Mr. Kazuo Ishiwatari for taking the time to send a message.

Ramesh Jaura

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

Foreword

If we survive this turbulent period, histories may record that 2017-18 marked the end of the nuclear age and the beginning – we hope – of a new era of peace-building and security. For far too long petty nationalisms have weaponised an aggressive notion of masculinity, rewarding violent behaviour with power, conquest and material wealth.

Empires rose and fell, as patriarchal dominators poisoned and distorted the land, air and seas of the planetary habitat we all need to share. Nuclear weapons, capable of destroying all life on Earth, were treated as instruments of political authority, status and – bizarrely – security.

Now, with the UN's historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), negotiated, adopted and opened for signature last year, we have a new tool to change the patriarchal, mass destructive mind-set and save our world. If we are to survive, we need to transform our understanding of what constitutes security – not more weapons and national divisions, but more education and international sharing of resources and responsibilities to enable peaceful, sustainable ways of living.

The 2017 Nuclear Prohibition Treaty is the first multilateral nuclear treaty since the UN General Assembly adopted the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996. It comes fifty years after the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was concluded.

Like them, it derives its legal, moral and normative force from the risks, dangers and humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Its 21st century understanding of security are enshrined in its recognition of victims' rights, the gendered impacts of nuclear technologies and radiation, and its highlighting of the importance of women's contribution to sustainable disarmament, peace and security.

Today's world is still divided by wars and violence, with unscrupulous arms manufacturers and dealers profiteering from conflicts, pain and misery. But step by step, civ-



Rebecca Johnson with the
2017 peace prizemedal

Rebecca Johnson,
Founding President of the International
Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)
and Director of the Acronym Institute for
Disarmament Diplomacy

il society movements have persuaded UN Members to create agreements and mechanisms to outlaw and eliminate the most inhumane weapons systems, from landmines to cluster munitions, from biological to chemical and now, finally, nuclear weapons.

These Treaties, which synthesize humanitarian law and disarmament, stigmatise the weapons and create normative and legal pressures to loosen the national-military justifications so that they can be banned and eliminated. Once the TPNW enters into force – and ICAN is aiming to achieve the requisite 50 ratifications by 2020 – the moral recognition that using nuclear weapons constitutes a crime against humanity will become a legal reality, as it is for the use of chemical and biological weapons.

That legal reality becomes a potent tool for implementing the Treaty and deterring individual and institutional violators. The TPNW does not just ban the use of nuclear weapons but also “assisting” in prohibited acts leading to nuclear use, threats, acquisition, proliferation and deployment. Because the TPNW has clarified the legal responsibilities for everyone – states, companies and individuals – it is already eroding the financial and political incentives that have sustained nuclear programmes in the past.

The nuclear-armed states failed to derail the Treaty negotiations, but some are still declaring that they will never join. Such attempts to discredit and dismiss new treaties are familiar. Experience demonstrates that the more that we, the people, use these treaties to diminish the status and incentives that drive militarist ambitions, the stronger these legal, normative tools become. When citizens challenge nuclear proliferators in the courts and risk averse banks and companies pull out of investing, governments are forced to think again.

Our biggest challenge at the moment is that media in the major nuclear-armed states and NATO are colluding with those governments by ignoring the TPNW or pretending that it is somehow not a real treaty. We have to educate them to understand that the TPNW is real and here to – a multilaterally negotiated, substantive legal tool to accomplish the long-promised objectives of nuclear disarmament.

The TPNW builds on the NPT regime but applies to all states

equally, making it illegal to use, threaten to use, develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It echoes the NPT with prohibitions on transferring and receiving nuclear weapons and technologies, but goes further, making it illegal to allow or assist anyone to deploy or station nuclear weapons in states parties’ territories.

Recognising that each state has different political and military conditions, the TPNW provides two basic legal mechanisms by which nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent (umbrella) states can choose the most appropriate way to join and remove nuclear weapons from their arsenals and security policies. Verification can likewise be developed and adapted as most appropriate to particular states and changing conditions, times and technologies.

For all these reasons, the TPNW has the potential to become a very effective tool for moving forward with nuclear disarmament in areas that have seemed intractable, such as the Korean Peninsula, Middle East, South Asia and Europe. It’s time to make it work.



Message

Kazuo Ishiwatari,
Executive Director, Peace and
Global Issues,
Soka Gakkai International (SGI)



In July of last year, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by 122 governments at the UN Headquarters in New York, and it opened for signature and ratification on September that same year. The TPNW is a breakthrough agreement in which nuclear weapons have been clearly defined as weapons whose use is impermissible under any circumstances. The adoption of the TPNW is a historic and important step toward a world free from nuclear weapons, as well as a demonstration of the strong will for the elimination of nuclear weapons within the international community.

Civil society participated in and contributed to the treaty negotiating conference and played a significant role in the adoption of the TPNW. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017, took a lead role in coordinating the work of civil society at these negotiating processes. The SGI, as an international partner of ICAN, attended and worked together with ICAN to make positive contributions to the debates through statements that addressed the conference directly.

Now that the TPNW has been adopted, the focus lies on how to realize a world without nuclear weapons through successful utilization of the TPNW as an instrument of change. Our immediate challenge will be to realize the early entry into force and the universalization of the TPNW as there is a persistent perception of nuclear deterrence within the nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states which leads to a claim that the TPNW's approach is unrealistic. This is an uneasy challenge we face today and we need to come up with an effective strategy to address such an argument.

SGI recently issued a public statement toward the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference (NPT PrepCom) in April–May this year,

in which it urged all States parties to engage in constructive dialogue toward the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons at the session and to support the signing, ratification and early entry into force of the TPNW.

SGI also worked together with other faith groups to deliver an interfaith statement as part of the civil society presentations of the session. The statement stressed that any use of nuclear weapons would not only destroy the past fruits of human civilization, but would disfigure the present, and consign future generations to the grimmest of fates, stating: “We can never accept a conception of security that privileges the concerns of any state or nation over the good of the human and planetary whole.”

The role of faith communities is to send messages to the general public and offer them opportunities to reflect on their values and ways of thinking. The faith communities have been making significant contributions in this regard and this is the reason they have been making such strenuous efforts to present their views against nuclear weapons from ethical and moral perspectives over the years. I believe these efforts help tackle the uneasy question of the persistent notion of nuclear deterrence that exists among people living within the states that are against the TPNW.

Ultimately, not only the political leaders but also the citizens of these states need to be willing to adopt measures that ensure their national security which do not rely on nuclear weapons. In that sense, it is crucial that we make efforts to reach these people so that they can change their opinions regarding nuclear weapons. This is also a role that peace and disarmament education can play.

In order to support these efforts, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda declared a “second People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition” in his peace proposal this year following the first Decade launched in 2007. The second People’s Decade has an increased focus on peace and disarmament education in order to both support efforts to universalize the TPNW as well as to effect the real-world transformations that universalization can enable. In concrete terms, this means channeling the voices of the world’s people to support the treaty and to promote processes that will advance the cause of the

complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

SGI believes that the challenge of the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons concerns not only the nuclear-weapon states; but that it is in the interest of all countries and international organizations, and it must fully engage the interests of civil society.

I believe that in this regard the SGI/INPS media project can contribute to strengthening and expanding the kind of solidarity needed among citizens to lead to a world free from nuclear weapons through its provision of in-depth news, analyses and opinion.



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In 2018, Who Will Speak Up for Peace in the Korean Peninsula?

Viewpoint by Rick Wayman



SANTA BARBARA, CA (IDN) - A possible summit between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un is just weeks away. Questions abound: Is it a good idea? When and where will it take place? What will they talk about? Who, if anyone, is preparing the U.S. president for this high-stakes meeting? Will it be a success?

In the Trump era, it's impossible to even guess what the answers might be. However, there are some key issues that must be remembered if this unprecedented summit is indeed to make a lasting difference in the generations-old conflict on the Korean Peninsula.

Sovereignty

South Korea is a sovereign nation. Its president, Moon Jae-in, was elected in 2017 after campaigning on a platform of dialogue and reconciliation with North Korea. Moon stated unequivocally that he wants his nation to be "able to take the lead on matters on the Korean Peninsula."

The PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics and the associated Olympic Truce, which began on February 2 and runs through March 25, gave North and South Korea the opportunity to re-establish diplomatic efforts and military-to-military

communications. Much of the Western media spun North Korea's attendance at the Games and associated diplomatic efforts as an effort to drive a "wedge" between the U.S. and South Korea.

This U.S.-centric mindset discounts the South Korean president's knowledge of the situation and the South Korean people's desire for peace. President Moon's current 74% approval rating reflects that he is pursuing a course that the majority of South Koreans want.

An April summit between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un will precede the more hyped Kim-Trump summit. The two Korean leaders have an historic opportunity to ensure the security of their millions of citizens through dialogue and cooperative relations.

Denuclearize

A common demand of North Korea by the United States is that North Korea must give up its nuclear weapons. This is often referred to as a demand that North Korea "denuclearize," or that the Korean Peninsula will be denuclearized.

A statement from the South Korean envoys who visited North Korea earlier in March 2018 said: "The North made clear its will to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and clearly stated that if

military threats against the North are resolved and the security of its system is guaranteed, it has no reason to possess nuclear weapons.”

When we talk about denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, we must remember that in addition to North Korea’s nuclear weapons, the United States also has hundreds of nuclear weapons “locked and loaded,” in the words of President Trump. U.S. bomber aircraft, land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles all have the capability to “totally destroy” North Korea.

It’s unclear what would encompass a sufficient security guarantee for the North Koreans. Would it be an agreement by the U.S. and South Korea to cease joint military exercises practicing an invasion of North Korea? Would it be a promise for the United States to participate in good-faith negotiations, along with North Korea and the other seven nuclear-armed nations, to achieve complete nuclear disarmament?

A key element of any security agreement must be a peace treaty to finally end the Korean War. The war, which began in 1950, was paused in 1953 with an Armistice Agreement. Today, 65 years later, a peace treaty remains unsigned.

Speaking in Berlin in 2017, President Moon said, “We should make a peace treaty joined by all relevant parties at the end of the Korean War to settle a lasting peace on the peninsula.”

Women Waging Peace

It is essential to include the voices of women in any peace negotiations. In a March 7 webinar entitled “Women Waging Peace,” Christine Ahn of Women Cross DMZ and Medea Benjamin of CODEPINK discussed the indispensable role of women in peace negotiations generally, and specifically in the context of Korea.

Ahn said, “We now have 30 years of evidence that shows that when women are involved, it leads to an actual peace agreement, and it’s far more durable.”

Christine Ahn expanded on these thoughts in her excellent March

7 lecture for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation’s 17th Annual Frank K. Kelly Lecture on Humanity’s Future. She also announced that Women Cross DMZ will be organizing a DMZ crossing – subject to government approvals – in May 2018.

Stop Provoking

The U.S. and South Korea plan to resume joint military exercises, albeit on a somewhat reduced scale, in April. This is unnecessarily provocative, but seems to be happening regardless. The U.S. scheduled, and then quietly cancelled, a test of its Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile in early February in order to comply with the Olympic Truce.

North Korea, for its part, has agreed that “as long as talks continue, it will not resume strategic provocations, such as additional nuclear or ballistic missile tests.”

A formal resolution of the Korean War is unlikely to materialize unless people demand it. With a White House that touts a violent vision of “peace,” it is up to people in the U.S. and around the world to speak up in support of President Moon’s pursuit of a peace treaty. [IDN-InDepthNews – 23 March 2018]

Image: In May 2015, on the 70th anniversary of Korea’s division into two separate states by cold war powers, 30 international women peacemakers from around the world walked with thousands of Korean women, north and south, to call for an end to the Korean War, reunification of families and women’s leadership in the peace process | Credit. San Francisco based Niana Liu

U.S. Undermining the Global Nuclear Testing Taboo

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | GENEVA (IDN) – A new document that outlines U.S. nuclear policy, strategy, capabilities and force posture for the next five to ten years proclaims that the Trump Administration does not intend to ratify a global treaty banning nuclear weapons tests. Nor does it rule out resuming such tests.

The document, titled 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), proclaims that “the United States does not support the ratification of the CTBT.” But the U.S. will continue to support the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO).

The Vienna-based organization set up in 1996 when the Treaty was opened for signature has over 260 staff from over 70 countries and an annual budget of around US\$130,000,000 or €120,000,000.

According to the CTBTO, since 2005 the Commission’s Budget has been prepared using a split currency system aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of currency fluctuations. States Signatories’ assessed contributions are split between U.S. dollars and Euros in accordance with the projected expenses of the Commission in each of these currencies.

The main tasks of the CTBTO, headed by Executive Secretary Dr. Lassina Zerbo since August 2013, are the promotion of the Treaty and the build-up of the verification

regime so that it is operational when the Treaty enters into force.

The 2018 NPR, released by the U.S. Defense Department on February 2, 2018 stated that the United States would also continue to support “the related International Monitoring System and the International Data Center.”

The CTBTO website notes that the United States pledged two major voluntary contributions in September 2011. The first contribution valued at \$8.9 million underwrites in-kind projects implemented by U.S. agencies in coordination with the CTBTO that support the further development of the full range of CTBTO verification and monitoring activities to detect nuclear tests.

These include enhancing radionuclide and noble gas detection technologies, refining seismic detection techniques, and supporting auxiliary seismic stations. Highlighting the CTBTO’s monitoring activities, Zerbo told the High-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament on February 26 that the International Monitoring System (IMS) has been hailed as “one of the greatest accomplishments of the modern world.”

Ending explosive nuclear testing globally is vital to halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons – both vertically and horizontally, Zerbo told the 65-nation Conference, the multilateral disarmament negotiating forum

in Geneva where the CTBT was negotiated in the 1990s.

In the CTBT’s preamble, he said, the States Signatories have recognized that the cessation of all nuclear weapon test explosions and more generally all nuclear explosions by anyone constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in all its aspects. The IMS, which plays a crucial role in such measures, will when complete consist of 337 facilities worldwide to monitor the planet for signs of nuclear explosions. CTBTO sources say that around 90 percent of the facilities are already up and running.

The second U.S. contribution amounting to \$25.5 million was intended to reconstruct hydroacoustic station HA04 in the French Southern Territories, thereby completing the hydroacoustic network.

Though the CTBT banning nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere – on the Earth’s surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground – is almost universal it has been in limbo for nearly 22 years and has yet to become law.

The U.S. and 182 other nations have signed the Treaty, of which 166 have also ratified it. These include three of the nuclear weapon States: France, Russian and the United Kingdom. But 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries must sign and ratify before the CTBT can enter into force.

Of these, eight are still missing: China,

Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the U.S. Three of these countries, India, North Korea and Pakistan, have yet to sign the CTBT.

The 2018 NPR calls upon non-signatory countries not to conduct nuclear testing and states that the United States “will not resume nuclear explosive testing unless necessary to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the U.S. arsenal.” But adds that the U.S. will remain ready to “resume nuclear testing if necessary to meet severe technological or geopolitical challenges.”

The NPR also seeks “to reduce the time required to design, develop, and initially produce a warhead, from a decision to enter full-scale development.” The Arms Control Association (ACA), based in Washington D.C. points out that an annual National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) report released in November 2017 shortens the previous readiness timeline to conduct a “simple [nuclear] test” explosion from 24 to 36 months down to six to 10 months, undermining the global nuclear testing taboo.”

The ACA’s Issue Brief by Daryl G. Kimball, executive director, and Kingston Reif, director for disarmament and threat reduction policy, says: “This shortened timeline means that should the United States decide to conduct a ‘simple test’ explosion, it should be prepared to do so within six to 10 months.”

The Issue Brief adds: “While the NNSA report and the NPR both reaffirm that ‘there is no current requirement to conduct an underground nuclear test,’ the administration’s hasty rejection of CTBT ratification, combined with the NNSA’s revised testing readiness timeline suggests the Trump administration only wants to reap the benefits of the treaty, including the data from the monitoring system, while leaving the door open to resuming nuclear testing.”

In spite of the U.S. Administration’s decision not to ratify the CTBT, efforts toward its entry into force continue with the support of the majority of the UN member states. “We must bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force without delay,” UN Secretary-General António Guterres told the 65-nation Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament, emphasizing that

disarmament and arms control are central to the system for international security agreed in the United Nations Charter.

Six months earlier, on the International Day against Nuclear Tests, which is observed every year on August 29, he urged all countries to sign and ratify the Treaty.

“More than 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted over the past seven decades – from the South Pacific to North America, from Central Asia to North Africa. They have harmed some of the world’s most vulnerable peoples and pristine ecosystems,” Guterres said.

CTBTO Executive Secretary Zerbo told the Conference on Disarmament that the CTBT is a “low hanging fruit” and that “the success of any further actions taken to advance work on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament will depend on the international community’s resolve and political will to ‘finish what it starts’.”

He added: “This means to use dedicated and concerted efforts to get the CTBT into legal force; making sure that the billion dollar investment is preserved for the future generations to come; and providing a platform for progress by establishing a firm basis for the other disarmament treaties needed to close the circle.”

Looking ahead to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, Zerbo said, it is clear that trust and confidence are the key elements necessary to achieve a successful outcome. “We must take great care to preserve the integrity of the institutions and instruments we have and to build trust in them and around them. This means maintain and securing the NPT and its entire chain of responsibilities-of which the CTBT entry into force is an integral part.”

Referring to the situation in the Korean Peninsula, Zerbo said: “The spirit of the Olympics may give a boost to Pyongyang-Seoul relations. This could open up real avenues of opportunity for dialogue. The CTBT could serve as a tool for such dialogue: a unilaterally declared test moratorium moving towards eventual signature of the CTBT would be a start.”

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) honoured Zerbo’s indefatigable efforts aimed at eliminating nuclear testing by presenting him, on February 16, the 2018



Science Diplomacy award at its annual meeting in Austin, Texas.

The CTBTO Executive Secretary was chosen for “using his scientific expertise and leadership ability to tackle difficult challenges and promote world peace,” the AAAS said in announcing the award.

“Dr. Zerbo has repeatedly demonstrated his profound skill at promoting dialogue and interaction among scientists, policymakers, academics and civil society, and encouraging diverse groups to work collaboratively,” the AAAS declared. [IDN-InDepthNews – 12 March 2018]

Image: Early September 2017, the U.S. government conducted flight tests of the B61-12 nuclear gravity bomb over Nevada. More are required before it enters service in 2020 | Credit: TomoNews YouTube video

Nuclear Deterrence Policy Gathering Steam in India

By Sudha Ramachandran

BANGALORE (IDN) – “Though India is a reluctant nuclear power, nuclear deterrence will continue to play a crucial role in India’s national security strategy over the next few decades,” says Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal, Distinguished Fellow at India’s Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA).

In his recent book ‘Sharpening the Arsenal: India’s Evolving Nuclear Deterrence Policy’, he explains the reason: “Only when India’s adversaries are convinced that India has both the necessary political and military will and the hardware to respond to a nuclear strike with punitive retaliation that will inflict unacceptable loss of human life and unprecedented material damage, will they be deterred.”

It is against the backdrop of this perception that on January 18 India conducted a successful test-flight of Agni-V, a nuclear-capable, long-range intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

“This was the fifth test of the missile and the third consecutive one from a canister on a road mobile launcher. All the five missions have been successful,” India’s Ministry of Defense (MoD) said in a statement, adding that this further confirmed the credibility of India’s nuclear deterrence.

While the shorter-range Agni-I and II were developed with Pakistan in mind, Agni-V is expected to “provide India with much-needed dissuasive deterrence against China.” Agni-V has a strike range of over 5,000 km and can deliver a nuclear warhead to almost all of China.

Its repeatedly proven success suggests that Agni-5 will be incorporated into India’s Strategic Forces Command soon.

It will be “another step in India’s efforts to modernize its nuclear missile capability,” a senior official in the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) told IDN, adding that India has “reinforced yet again its belief in nuclear deterrence as the bedrock of its national security.”

The roots of such commitment, underlining India’s decades old



stated commitment to global nuclear disarmament, can be traced back to 1945. When the United States dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Mahatma Gandhi condemned its use as “the most diabolical use of science.” Independent India’s commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons was influenced by the perception of nuclear weapons as immoral.

Tracing the evolution of India’s disarmament policy through four broad phases, M. V Ramana, Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security at the Liu Institute for Global Issues at the University of British Columbia, and author of *The Power of Promise: Examining Nuclear Energy in India* told IDN that during the first phase i.e. the period when Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister (1947-64) India’s commitment to nuclear disarmament was strongest.

Nehru was “genuinely interested in doing what he could to further global nuclear disarmament” and contributed to initiatives that “have had long-term significance for nuclear disarmament,” he

said. Importantly, India under Nehru refrained from developing nuclear weapons.

This changed during the second phase (1964-74). Following its defeat in the 1962 border war with China and the Chinese nuclear test at Lop Nor in 1964, India began developing nuclear weapons and carried out a 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion' in 1974.

Simultaneously, India pushed for global nuclear disarmament in this period but these were "weak attempts" that "didn't amount to much," Ramana said.

The third phase of India's disarmament policy (1974-1998) began and ended with nuclear tests at Pokhran. India's nuclear weapons program "was slowly evolving" now, especially the development of the Prithvi and Agni missiles. But "there were self-imposed constraints on its nuclear weapons program," Ramana pointed out.

Simultaneously, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi, worked for global nuclear disarmament. In a speech at the UN General Assembly in 1988, Rajiv Gandhi proposed a time-bound 'Action Plan for Ushering in a Nuclear-Weapon Free and Non-Violent World Order'.

Unlike the first three phases, the fourth phase of India's nuclear disarmament policy, which began in 1998, has seen India making "no significant effort towards nuclear disarmament," Ramana said. Importantly, India has avoided supporting treaties that would restrain its own weapons programs.

For instance, India stayed away from the negotiations that led to the United Nations adopting the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July 2017.

The "little talk of disarmament that has happened is largely hypocritical," argues Ramana, as it has been accompanied by building up of its nuclear arsenal.

Manpreet Sethi, Senior Fellow and head of the National Security project at the New Delhi-based Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), disagrees. India's desire for disarmament "is not a sham," she told IDN.

"India's commitment to disarmament and its efforts at building credible deterrence, which includes operationalizing Agni-5, are two prongs of its security imperative," Sethi said.

Given its "nuclearized neighborhood", India doesn't have the luxury of abandoning deterrence in the present context. Consequently, India has to maintain nuclear deterrence in the short-term but in the long run, it realizes that its security is best served in a world free of nuclear weapons. There is no dichotomy between the two, she declared.

According to Sethi, till the world reaches a multilaterally negotiated, universal and verifiable disarmament agreement, India's pursuit of deterrence is the prudent way of achieving security – particularly as the importance of nuclear weapons in the strategies of five permanent members of the UN Security Council (Britain, France, Russia, China and the U.S.) has grown remarkably.

U.S. President Donald Trump's Nuclear Posture Review reveals that the U.S. is more willing than ever before to use nuclear weapons, including in response to "extreme circumstances," even non-nuclear attacks on infrastructure and civilians.

This has sent out "a bad signal to countries like India and China," Ramana said. If a country like the U.S. with a massive conventional weapon capability has to invest in more usable nuclear weapons, it would make military planners in India and China more inclined to similar ideas.

In India, calls to modernize its nuclear warheads and delivery systems are growing louder.

There are growing signs too that India could abandon its long-held 'no-first use' policy. This would make India more willing to use nuclear weapons against Pakistan before the latter does, so as to completely disarm it to ensure that Indian cities would not be exposed to Pakistani nuclear strikes. [IDN-InDepthNews - 06 March 2018]

Image credit: rediff.com

Striving to Build a Broader Support for the Nuclear Ban Treaty

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | TOKYO (IDN) – The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference in April and the UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament in May will draw the focus of the international community in the coming weeks as it moves toward paving the way for a nuclear-weapons free world.

Since the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted in July 2017, “these will be the first venues for debate and deliberation that will include both the nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states,” says eminent Buddhist philosopher Daisaku Ikeda, founder and President of Soka Gakkai International (SGI) with 12 million members in 192 countries and regions.

Nine nuclear-weapons states which stayed away from TPNW negotiations in 2017 include the five permanent members of the Security Council – United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China – and four non-official members of the so-called ‘nuclear club’, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel.

Among others who avoided the negotiations were Japan and South Korea, which enjoy the U.S. nuclear umbrella as part of the security alliance, Australia, and 29 member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The only exception was the Netherlands, which however voted against the TPNW.

Yet, “adoption of the landmark TPNW represents a breakthrough in a field that has been marked by seemingly unbreakable impasse,” says Ikeda in his 2018 Peace Proposal, ‘Toward an Era of Human Rights: Building a People’s Movement’.

“Moreover, the Treaty was realized with the strong support of civil society, including the survivors of nuclear weapons use, the hibakusha.”

Their contribution in raising awareness about the need to prohibit nuclear weapons was recognized when the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the civil society coalition that has continued to strive for a Treaty-based prohibition of nuclear weapons.

2018 Peace Proposal is the 36th in a series of sagacious documents published annually since 1983, shining in particular because its main theme this year is that an integrated human rights focused approach is key to resolving global issues, including the nuclear threat.

With this in view, in this year that marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Ikeda stresses the need to make the life and dignity of each individual a focal point – the fact that every human being is inherently precious and irreplaceable.

At the same time, he welcomes the adoption of the TPNW, and urges “all partici-

pants in the coming discussions to engage in constructive debate toward the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.”

He expresses the hope that “world leaders will take the opportunity to commit to steps that their governments can take in the field of nuclear disarmament in advance of the NPT Review Conference” from April 23-May 4 in Geneva.

This would also be a prime opportunity to make public which among the seven ‘acts’ proscribed by the TPNW they might consider complying with, Ikeda adds. The ban on the transfer of nuclear weapons, for example, or on assisting other states acquire nuclear weapons are among the steps to which the nuclear-weapon states could agree within the context of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The SGI President argues: The efficacy of international law is enhanced by the mutual complementarity of so-called ‘hard law’ such as treaties and ‘soft law’ in forms such as UN General Assembly resolutions and international declarations.

In the field of disarmament, he adds, there is the example of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), in which states that have not yet ratified it enter into separate agreements to cooperate with the international monitoring system.

Ikeda is of the view that alongside efforts to win over additional signatories and ratifications for the Treaty, it would be

worthwhile to secure voluntary commitments by non-parties to the TPNW to abide by specific injunctions the Treaty envisages, and encourage them include these in declarations of national policies.

To drive home the point, Ikeda says: “We must remember that the TPNW did not arise in isolation from the NPT. It was, after all, the 2010 NPT Review Conference that expressed – with the support of both the nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states – a renewed awareness of the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons use, and it was this awareness that accelerated momentum for a prohibition treaty. The TPNW, for its part, gives concrete form to the nuclear disarmament obligations under Article VI of the NPT and promotes their good-faith fulfilment.”

Against the backdrop of a lack of progress in nuclear arms reduction, ongoing modernization of nuclear arsenals and critical proliferation challenges, he adds, now is the time to seek synergies

between strengthening the foundations of the NPT and the prohibition norm clearly enunciated by the TPNW.

Ikeda earnestly hopes that Japan will take the lead in enhancing conditions for progress in nuclear disarmament toward the 2020 NPT Review Conference. “Japan should use the opportunity of May’s [May 14-16] High-Level Conference to stand at the forefront of nuclear-dependent states in declaring its readiness to consider becoming a party to the TPNW.” Ikeda implores: “Having experienced the full horror of nuclear weapons, Japan cannot turn away from its moral responsibility.”

The SGI President points out that the TPNW is imbued with the heartfelt desire of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that no country be targeted for nuclear attack and that no country ever decides to launch an atomic strike.

In this context, he refers to Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the



atom bombing of Hiroshima, who described her feelings on the adoption of the Treaty as follows: “It has also convinced us that our continued discussion of our experiences, which are painful to remember, is the right thing to do and will never be in vain.”

Ikeda recalls that at the first preparatory committee meeting for the 2020 NPT Review Conference May 2-12, 2017 in Vienna, the representative of Japan stressed: “The recognition of the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons underpins all approaches towards a world free of nuclear weapons.”

Accordingly, Japan’s stance on this issue must always be grounded in the spirit the hibakusha have embodied – that no one else would ever experience the suffering they have had to endure, notes Ikeda.

He pleads for mobilising the growing solidarity of the civil society arguing that the significance of the Treaty lies in its comprehensive outlawing of all aspects of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty stipulates that, in addition to states that have yet to join, civil society will be invited to participate as observers in the bi-annual conference of the parties and the review conferences that are to be held every six years.

This, in Ikeda’s view, is recognition of the importance of the role played by the world’s hibakusha in particular and civil society as a whole in the adoption of the Treaty. At the same time, it evidences that the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons is indeed a shared global undertaking that requires the participation of all countries, international organizations and civil society.

Besides, the Preamble of the Treaty stresses the importance of peace and disarmament education. This was a point that SGI repeatedly stressed in civil society statements and working papers submitted during the TPNW negotiations.

The SGI President is convinced that “peace and disarmament education can ensure the intergenerational heritage of knowledge of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.”

Such knowledge and the education that promotes it build the foundation for the active implementation of the Treaty by all countries, he adds.

To support efforts to realize the early entry into force and universalization of the TPNW, SGI has early this year launched the second People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition. This is intended to build on the work of the first Decade, which Ikeda suggested in a proposal released in August 2006 emphasising the need for reinvigorating the UN.

The Decade began in September 2007, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda’s declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Ikeda is of the view that in order to promote the universality of the TPNW, it is important, in addition to civil society efforts, to encourage the participation of more states, so that the global scale of support for the Treaty is made continuously visible.

The SGI President puts forward an inspiring suggestion asking “ICAN, Mayors for Peace and others” to collaborate on creating a world map in which the municipalities supporting the Treaty are displayed in blue, the colour of the UN, to widely publicize civil society voices backing the Treaty, and make these voices heard at the venues of UN or other disarmament conferences.

Likewise, he proposes efforts to build an ever-broader constituency in favour of the Treaty, with a focus, among others, on scientific and faith communities, women and youth. Civil society, the SGI President adds, should continue to urge states to participate in the Treaty and, following its entry into force, encourage states not yet parties to the Treaty to attend the meetings of the state parties and review conferences as observers.

Ikeda believes that the worldwide network which ICAN, Mayors for Peace and others have built, should underline the global popular will for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

“The weight of this popular will can eventually bring about a change in policy by the nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states and finally bring the era of nuclear weapons to an end.” This, the SGI President says, is his “belief and heartfelt conviction.” [IDN-InDepthNews - 28 February 2018]

Image: Dr. Daisaku Ikeda | Credit: Seikyo Shimbun

From Tlatelolco to the UN Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty

Viewpoint by Jorge Alberto López Lechuga

MEXICO (IDN) – On February 2, the Government of the U.S. published the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which includes the strategy to increase the role of nuclear weapons in national security. The NPR considers the need to double the military budget from 3% to 6.4% in order to modernize the U.S. arsenal.

This would mean an investment of 1 trillion USD over the next 30 years. It also states that expanding “flexible U.S. nuclear options now, to include low-yield options, is important for the preservation of credible deterrence against regional aggression”, a strategy that will raise “the nuclear threshold”.

The NPR mentions that including low-yield nuclear weapons will increase the capacity to respond to a possible attack – even a non-nuclear one – and that it “will help ensure that potential adversaries perceive no possible advantage in limited nuclear escalation, making nuclear employment less likely.”

The problem is that, as long as the reliance on low-yielded weapons increases, their impact will be perceived as more “tolerable” and the likelihood of using nuclear weapons will increase. Even so, those low-yield nuclear weapons are much more powerful than the ones used in 1945.

The NPR mentions “global threat conditions have worsened markedly since the most recent 2010 NPR”. It adds that there now exists an “unprecedented” range and a “mix of threats”, including: “major conventional, chemical, biological, nuclear, space, and cyber-threats, and violent non-state actors”. According to the document, these developments “have produced increased uncertainty and risk”, which is the reason why the U.S. must shape its policy and strategy, and initiate the “sustainment” and replacement of its nuclear forces.

It is not difficult to imagine a world without “uncertainties”, but it is impossible to achieve it. In fact, to attain a world without uncertainties is less realistic than a world without nuclear weapons.

If those “unprecedented” threats exist today, 21st century threats, it might be worse to face them relying on strategies of the 20th

century, specifically a strategy that endangers humankind. If we live in a world with more threats and uncertainties, nuclear weapons should not be in it. The mere existence of these weapons, no matter who possesses them, is a threat to everyone, even to nuclear weapon possessors.

Among the hypotheses of using nuclear weapons, the countries that possess them usually mention the need to use them if the existence of the State is at stake, generally in the face of possible nuclear attacks. The NPR includes more scenarios, which would make the use of nuclear weapons more permissible.

Of course, the problem is not limited to the U.S. arsenal. There are 8 additional countries with nuclear weapons and since the American arsenal is probably the most powerful, there is no guarantee that these countries will not be encouraged to increase their “nuclear options” in response to the 2018 NPR.

The idea that a world without nuclear weapons is desirable but unrealistic at this moment is still upon us. However, some countries think differently.

On February 14, 1967, 51 years ago, the Latin American and Caribbean countries opposed to this notion and, by means of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), established a legally binding prohibition of nuclear weapons in their region. [February 14, 2018 marked the 51st anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco.]

The model established by Tlatelolco (Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone) was so successful that it was subsequently adopted by other four regions: South Pacific (Treaty of Rarotonga); Southeast Asia (Treaty of Bangkok); Africa (Treaty of Pelindaba); Central Asia (Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia); and Mongolia (the country’s self-declared nuclear-weapon-free status has been recognized internationally through the adoption of UN General Assembly resolution 55/33S). Nowadays, there are 114 States parties and signatories to treaties establishing nucle-

ar-weapon-free zones.

On July 17, 2017, at the United Nations, 122 countries adopted the Treaty on The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, opened to all States for signature. The so-called “Ban Treaty” prohibits, inter alia, to “Develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”. Moreover, it also prohibits the “Use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices”.

The Treaty will enter into force when 50 countries ratify it. Since the opening for signature of the Treaty on September 20, 2017, five States have ratified the instrument. This might be seen as negative, but let’s remember that 122 countries, 63% of the UN membership, voted in favour of its adoption. Thus, we could say a majority of countries think that a nuclear-weapons-free world must be push forward.

It is no surprise that the nuclear weapon possessors and their allies oppose the Ban Treaty. They claim that the instrument will not be effective without the participation of countries with nuclear weapons. One wonder: if they believe that, then, why do they oppose the Treaty so feverishly? Perhaps they acknowledge that the Treaty will contribute to the stigmatization of their main instrument of power.

The NPR states that the Ban Treaty “is fueled by wholly unrealistic expectations of the elimination of nuclear arsenals without the prerequisite transformation of the international security environment”. The fact that it is even mentioned in the NPR acknowledges its relevance.

The supporters of the Ban Treaty do not agree with the idea that the elimination of nuclear arsenals needs a “prerequisite transformation of the international security environment”. On the contrary, they think that the elimination of nuclear weapons would be a positive “transformation” of international security.

It is clear that the Ban Treaty will not immediately guarantee the elimination of nuclear weapons; however, it is not realistic to try to achieve a world without nuclear weapons before the legal establishment of their prohibition. An international norm on the prohibition of nuclear weapons is a necessary step “leading towards their



total elimination”.

To ban nuclear weapons is needed in order to delegitimize them. This was the case with biological and chemical weapons. No country that supports the Treaty says that the instrument is an end in itself; it is a step further, not the final stage.

We should consider one lesson from the Treaty of Tlatelolco in the words of Alfonso García Robles (1982 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate), its head negotiator: “The system adopted in the Latin American instrument proves that, although no state can obligate another to join such a zone, neither can one prevent others wishing to do so from adhering to a regime of total absence of nuclear weapons within their own territories.”

No country can prevent another to make the decision, in the free exercise of its sovereign right, to reject a security system that puts humankind at risk. Tlatelolco was the first successful step on that road, the Ban Treaty is an additional one. [IDN-InDepthNews – 17 February 2018]

Image: Commemorating the 51st anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco on 14 February 2018 | Credit: OPANAL

Transforming Risks on the Korean Peninsula into Stable Peace in Northeast Asia

By Katsuhiro Asagiri



TOKYO (IDN) – ‘Building Stable Peace in Northeast Asia: Managing and Transforming Risks on the Korean Peninsula’ was the subject of a colloquium in which regional experts on peace and security, policy makers and civil society organizations from the United States, China, South Korea and Japan participated against the backdrop of a volatile situation in the region.

In the run-up to North Korea claiming that it had conducted its first successful test of an intercontinental ballistic missile that can “reach anywhere in the world,” 1995 Nobel Peace Laureate Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs expressed concern in a statement on May 4, 2017 that “the mounting confrontation with North Korea is raising grave dangers.”

Some nine months later, on January 25, 2018, the iconic Doomsday Clock moved 30 seconds closer to midnight, the closest to the symbolic point of annihilation that the Clock has been since 1953

at the height of the Cold War.

This disquieting situation added to the importance of the colloquium co-organised by the The National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, New Zealand, the Japanese think-tank Toda Peace Institute and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) on February 1, 2018.

This Second Tokyo Colloquium identified in the face of geopolitical instability, “the forces generating insecurity, and turbulence” and analysed “impediments to diplomatic and negotiated responses to North Korean challenges.” Furthermore: “It focussed on ways in which existential nuclear threat can be dealt with through preventive diplomacy, negotiations and collaborative problem solving.”

Two panels of influential experts and policy makers shared their insight and wisdom on “dealing with security threats in Northeast Asia” and “managing risks in the Korean Peninsula, breaking the

impasse with North Korea”.

Since the colloquium was held under Chatham House Rules, the press briefing by Kevin P. Clements, Director of Toda Peace Institute and Chair of the National Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Otago conveyed a gist of discussions.

According to the Toda Peace Institute director Clemens, the first panel focused on “tensions and challenges in Northeast Asia generally and how to respond to those creatively and non-violently”. In particular, the panel looked on “how to improve on relations, among others, between China and Japan which is considered to be a major bilateral relationship critical to many of the issues that were on table.”

Clemens added: The panel also looked at what kinds of regional security architecture might be necessary for managing disputes non-violently, and focussed attention on how to build trust and respect between China and Japan, Japan and Korea, and between North and South Korea.

The major focus of the second panel, he said, was on North Korea’s nuclear threat and how to respond to that “creatively, non-violently and without a military strike”.

The panellists also scrutinised “a whole range of different options that were on the table – in terms of building confidence between North and South Korea, between North Korea and the United States, how to facilitate constructive negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea, and find ways in which all of the countries of Northeast Asia can begin working towards creating an environment within which the challenges facing the region posed by North Korea can be dealt with creatively internationally.”

Asked what was North Korea’s real intention, its strategic and tactical goals while continuing with nuclear build-up, Ambassador Joseph Yun, U.S. Special Representative for North Korea, who joined the briefing, said what his interlocutors in Pyongyang had communicated to him was that “they want security, they want economic prosperity, and so on.”

North Korea’s desire was for security and economic prosperity, affirmed Yun Sun, Senior Associate with the East Asia Program at the Stimson Center and a non-resident fellow at the Brookings

Institution, China.

The North Koreans’ main objection, as they told Ambassador Yun, was “what they call U.S. hostile policies.” This was an occasion for him “to engage with them” and explain to them that the U.S. position had consistently been the disapproval of the “nuclearisation” of North Korea, its nuclear weapons”.

In an attempt to counter widespread speculation that a pre-emptive strike was Washington’s endgame, he said: “I don’t believe we are close to (a military strike), and I think we want to have credible negotiations. But we also have said, and we’ve been very consistent, that all options are on the table, and by all options, it has to include military options.”

These remarks came close on the heels of a former White House official who, once tipped to become the next U.S. envoy to South Korea, in a critical opinion piece in the Washington Post said that Washington’s “all options” pursuit was with the goal of delivering a “bloody nose” to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

“Some may argue that US casualties and even a wider war on the Korean Peninsula are risks worth taking, given what is at stake,” wrote Dr Victor Cha, a professor at Georgetown University and senior adviser at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies. “But a strike (even a large one) would only delay North Korea’s missile-building and nuclear programmes, which are buried in deep, unknown places impenetrable to bunker-busting bombs.”

U.S. Special Representative for North Korea, Ambassador Yun maintained that Washington’s “peaceful pressure” policy involved “very strongly piling on pressure as well as leaving the door open for a dialogue”, adding that the U.S. has a communication channel open with Pyongyang.

“Everybody wants to give diplomacy a good run,” he said, referring to talks between the two Koreas on the North’s participation in the Pyeongchang Winter Games in the South, which kicked off on February 9. Washington has also agreed to postpone until after the Games its annual joint Foal Eagle military exercises with South Korea, which Pyongyang sees as a dress rehearsal for invasion.

But Ambassador Yun cautioned that diplomacy is “not conducted by smoke signals”, and said the North had to make a firm commitment to stop provocation in order for the U.S. to agree to talks. U.S. President Donald Trump in his State of the Union address on January 30, said Pyongyang’s nuclear weapons might “very soon threaten” the U.S. mainland.

Against this backdrop, it was crucial to ensure that all countries imposed sanctions on the North as fully as possible to maximise pressure, he added.

While Beijing has already imposed sanctions on the trade of coal, iron ore, consumer goods and textiles, the U.S. and Japan have called on China time and again, as North Korea’s main economic benefactor, to do more to tighten the noose.

Ambassador Yun said: “We believe China has implemented the United Nations Security Council resolutions. But of course in terms of sanctions, there’re a number of things going on including smuggling and trade that the authorities don’t know about.”

Professor Shen Dingli, of Fudan University in Shanghai, and Yun Sun, of the Stimson Centre in Washington D.C., who also joined the briefing, pointed out that China had not cut off oil completely nor resolved issues such as the maritime interdiction of North Korean vessels as these have not been agreed under Security Council resolutions.

All the same, the general view among the colloquium participants reportedly was that UN sanctions have taken their toll on Pyongyang. This was indicated by North Korean leader Kim’s offer of his country to take part in the Olympic Games, widely regarded as an olive branch to Seoul. Also, North Korea’s winter military training has been smaller in scale.

The record 104 North Korean “ghost ships” that washed ashore in Japan in 2017 with 35 bodies and 42 survivors, also hinted at poor maintenance, fuel shortages, and a general desperation among fishermen, who are sailing further away, a colloquium participant indicated.

Stimson Centre’s Yun Sun indicated briefing the media that a

standoff was likely after the Winter Olympics. “It is a matter of regime legitimacy and national pride. With North Korea so close to achieving credible ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) capability, for them to give it all up now seems improbable,” she said. [IDN-InDepthNews – 12 February 2018]

Image: Toda Institute Director Kevin P. Clements briefing media on the Colloquium | Credit: Kotoe Asagiri/IDN-INPS

Kick Off To A Nuclear Race Threatening Doomsday

Viewpont by Sergio Duarte

NEW YORK (IDN) – As if by coincidence, almost simultaneously the world learned of the Doomsday Clock moving closer to midnight and of the release of the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) by the government of the United States.

Although based on very different world views, both actions respond to security concerns: the former is a dramatic reminder of the imminent dangers posed by nuclear weapons and of the need for their elimination; the latter stresses the role of nuclear armament as capable of dealing with international tensions and of avoiding such dangers through the expansion of the flexibility and diversity of existing nuclear capabilities.

The Doomsday Clock is a serious and timely warning demanding urgent national and international measures to control and finally ban nuclear weapons as the best guarantee against their actual use in conflict.

For many observers, the NPR would increase the likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons and could serve as justification for other nuclear armed States to improve the destructive potential of their own arsenals as a way to counter what they might see as an aggressive posture, thus triggering a new round of the nuclear arms race.

The central argument of the Nuclear Posture Review is that nuclear weapons have and will continue to play a critical role

in deterring nuclear and non-nuclear attack and are essential to prevent aggression now and for the foreseeable future.

Complementary and interrelated roles of these weapons are listed as: assurance to allies and partners, achievement of national objectives in case of failure of deterrence and maintenance of the capacity to hedge against an uncertain future.

According to the NPR, the deterrent role of the American nuclear arsenals would be extended through the enhancement of the flexibility and range of nuclear options, including low yield weapons, which would prevent potential adversaries from seeking advantages in a limited nuclear escalation.

Critics of the new nuclear posture have warned that smaller, low-yield atomic devices would in fact blur the distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear weapons and lower the nuclear threshold. Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the cycle of escalation would be limited once nuclear weapons of any size are introduced in the theater of war.

In addition, the NPR contemplates the use of nuclear weapons to respond to non-nuclear attacks on the United States and does not rule out first use. It is also possible to argue that some current non-nuclear nations might be tempted to acquire these weapons themselves if they become convinced that such a move would make them similarly able to achieve their

national objectives and to prevent attack from possessors.

Since the advent of the United Nations, the international community has made painstaking progress in its effort to deal with the terrifying prospect of nuclear conflict. That was the objective of the very first General Assembly resolution in 1946, which unfortunately did not achieve concrete results.

During the following decades a few States developed nuclear capabilities while the wide majority accepted a number of legally binding commitments not to acquire atomic weapons and placed their trust instead in increased confidence building measures and cooperative security undertakings as a hedge against the inherent uncertainties and unpredictability of international relations.

In spite of mutual accusations of violations, bilateral measures negotiated between the United States and the Russian Federation resulted in significant reductions of the staggering amount of weapons of mass destruction amassed during the Cold War.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently congratulated both countries on the successful reduction of their strategic nuclear forces to the levels established by the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and stressed that “efforts in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and



arms control are more vital than ever”.

[The Treaty was signed April 8, 2010 in Prague by Russia and the United States and entered into force on February 5, 2011. New START replaced the 1991 START I treaty, which expired December 2009, and superseded the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT), which terminated when New START entered into force.]

The total nuclear warhead count in the United States and Russia now stands at the lowest levels ever. This is truly a commendable effort that should be taken forward to achieve the long-sought goal of

the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Guterres went on to call on both States “to engage in the necessary dialogue that will lead to further arsenal reductions and to continue to display the historic leadership across the multilateral disarmament agenda.” Strong leadership by the two most heavily armed nations on Earth is crucial to further disarmament efforts and to the collective security of the world as a whole.

Current instruments in the field of disarmament recognize the possession of nuclear weapons only until they are completely eliminated and call for action to

achieve this objective. However, this basic premise has been increasingly misinterpreted by the pervading notion that those instruments somehow legitimize the exclusive and indefinite retention of such awesome means of destruction and condone the continued postponement of specific measures to abolish them.

In the absence of strong, legally binding commitments to nuclear disarmament with clear timelines, possessor States seem to feel entitled to keep their arsenals at least well into future decades at the same time that they deny any others the same means to ensure their own security.

There is no doubt that an increase in the number of nuclear weapon States would endanger international peace and security. The wide majority of the international community has repeatedly asserted, however, that the very existence of nuclear weapons is the real threat to peace and security, regardless of their possessors. Unequal standards cannot endure forever.

This became clear after the entry into force of the NPT, which limited the number of nuclear weapon States to the five that had acquired such weapons by an arbitrary date. Subsequently, four other countries managed to develop their own nuclear arsenals and a small number have been dissuaded by a variety of means from embarking on the same course.

In some others, sections of public opinion openly advocate the acquisition of independent nuclear forces in order to free themselves from the uncertainties of defensive arrangements. Indeed, the emphasis on nuclear deterrence provides encouragement for such sentiments. Most non-nuclear States, however, firmly believe that their security is better served by not acquiring nuclear weapons.

Over the decades since 1945 [the end of World War II] a number of multilateral agreements sought quite successfully to prevent the unbridled proliferation of weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, chemical and bacteriological. Despite their importance, however, two of those treaties are not yet in force.

The 1996 Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty

(CTBT) is one of them. Eight key States still hesitate either to sign and/or ratify it, a necessary condition for the entry into force of the instrument. Alone among those eight countries, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has carried out nuclear test explosions into the 21st century, in defiance of the UN Security Council and in spite of repeated and increased sanctions imposed by it. All others are observing voluntary moratoria on such tests.

According to the Nuclear Posture Review, the United States will not seek ratification of the CTBT but will continue to support its Preparatory Committee as well as the International Monitoring System and the International Data Center. Other outlying States are not as straightforward in the statement of their intentions. In any case, the leadership of the major nuclear powers is obviously needed to bring all recalcitrant countries into the fold.

The other important instrument not yet in force is Treaty on The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons leading to their complete elimination. It was adopted on July 17, 2017 by a large majority of States, but the pace of signatures and ratifications has been slower than expected, in part due to the active and fierce opposition of the possessors of nuclear weapons and their allies.

These countries have dismissed the treaty and attempt to portray it as a naïve and futile gesture that may even exacerbate tensions within the existing non-proliferation regime and ultimately undermine

efforts to prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons.

The supporters of the instrument, for their part, stress that it is not meant to contradict the NPT but rather to provide a path for the fulfilment of the commitment contained in its Article VI. Even if it does not reach the widest adherence possible, – as neither have several existing multilateral instruments in this field, including the NPT itself – the Prohibition Treaty remains a powerful expression of the support of a large number of members of the international community to concrete measures of nuclear disarmament.

Mainstream media in countries with the most powerful military forces, as well as in those that have predicated their security on weapons not under their own control continually publish stories and commentary about the need to counter external threats through the strengthening of their armed forces, but very rarely publicize peace initiatives. A culture of war seems to have taken precedence over a culture of peace. Nuclear-armed States are currently engaged in increasing and modernizing their arsenals, and insist that the current security conditions in the real world do not allow for nuclear disarmament, at least for the foreseeable future. Observers, for their part, point out that their very postures and deeds have the effect of increasing tensions and perpetuating the climate of mistrust and insecurity.

Nevertheless, the growing international awareness of the humanitarian,

environmental and social consequences of any use of nuclear weapons may provide opportunities for progress on nuclear-risk-reduction measures in order to prevent disasters caused by nuclear detonations by design or accident.

Experts and prominent former high-level officials from nuclear armed States have revealed multiple near-misses that brought the world to the brink of full-scale nuclear war that were averted by single individuals in the chain of command who took on their own shoulders the responsibility not to press the fatal button.

Civil society organizations and a number of States have been trying to change the status quo by promoting actions aimed at reducing the danger of a nuclear confrontation that could have catastrophic consequences for humanity as a whole.

One opportunity is provided by the current review cycle of the NPT. Another is the forthcoming United Nations High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, scheduled to take place in May in New York.

World leaders attending this conference are expected to take, or announce, a number of concrete actions, many of which suggested by those organizations, that would help facilitate further efforts toward nuclear disarmament, such as taking all nuclear weapons off launch-on-warning and high alert; adopting policies never to initiate nuclear war; agreeing not to develop new nuclear weapons systems; removing all forward-based nuclear weapons; commencing negotiations on the phased reduction and elimination of nuclear stockpiles; and reducing nuclear weapons budgets in order to release resources for climate protection and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

The president of Kazakhstan – a country that relinquished the nuclear weapons it once possessed – recently proposed at the UN Security Council the goal to achieve global elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations.

On the same occasion UN Secretary-General Guterres warned that “global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the Cold War” and announced the intention to explore opportunities to generate a new direction and impetus for the global

disarmament agenda. He is expected to launch a major initiative on disarmament encompassing several categories of weapons, including new technologies such as cyber warfare.

The translation of proposals made from several quarters into practical arrangements presupposes a considerable amount of political will. Enlightened world leaders know that the supreme interests of their countries involve also the interests of humankind as a whole. No nation, particularly those with large resources and wealth, can devote itself to the satisfaction of its national objectives without taking into account the legitimate needs and aspirations of humanity, of which their own populations are an indissoluble part.

The understanding of this simple, yet undeniable truth is essential for the success of efforts to achieve security for all through the complete elimination of the enormous risk posed by the existence of nuclear weapons. [IDN-InDepthNews – 11 February 2018]

Trump Awaits a 'Magical Moment' to Ban Nuclear Weapons

By Shanta Roy

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), released February 2, is a dangerous departure from the past, and appears to reflect a firm U.S. commitment to readily use the world's deadliest weapons of mass destruction – even if the United States is only a target of “significant non-nuclear strategic attacks”, including cyberattacks.

The new policy statement – reflecting a wide justification for a nuclear war – should also be viewed against the continued contradictory statements made by President Donald Trump on issues such as climate change, the Iranian nuclear deal, and most importantly, the use of nuclear weapons.

And, at the State of the Union address on January 30, a platform for major American policy declarations, he pointedly said: Perhaps someday in the future, there will be “a magical moment” when the countries of the world will get together to eliminate their nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, he said, “we are not there yet, sadly.” But that magical moment seems to be elusive – and at most, a political fantasy, particularly under a Trump administration.

Jayantha Dhanapala, a former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, told IDN that most commentaries on the Obama Administration's Nuclear Posture Review, as spelled out in previous years, bemoaned the fact that, for a vision-

ary leader who promised a nuclear weapons-free world, it did not go far enough to disavow any possible use of nuclear weapons.

“Trump's policy document goes further – by promising to build new weapons and actually use them. No wonder then that the Doomsday Clock was set at two minutes to midnight or Armageddon,” he noted.

“A sharp rise in the US military budget is predictable with other nuclear weapon states responding in equal measure,” warned Dhanapala, a former President of Pugwash (2007-17).

Justifying Trump's nuclear belligerence, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said the NPR makes sure “the United States remains flexible and well prepared for the unique threats we face today”.

“We want to see a world that is free of nuclear weapons, but our nuclear policy needs to be rooted in the reality of the world we live in, where aggressive regimes like North Korea threaten us and our allies with their pursuit of illegal nuclear and ballistic weapons,” she noted.

In an editorial titled ‘Playing with Fire and Fury on North Korea,’ the New York Times wrote on February 2 that “signs increasingly point to unilateral American military action” against North Korea.

“To which we say: Don't,” the Times warned, pointing out that Trump seems to be building a case for war on “emotional



grounds,” invoking the case of an American student, Otto Warmbier, who died last year after being detained in North Korea.

Besides the ominous threat to retaliate against perceived enemies with nuclear weapons, the latest NPR underlines several frightening scenarios, including a major upgrading of the U.S. nuclear arsenal; the development of two new sea-based nuclear weapons; a proposal to develop at least 12 new Columbia class submarines to be operational in 2031; and the development and deployment of 100 new land-based missiles to replace the Minute-man missile force.

The sea-based weapons will include a low-yield submarine-launched ballistic missile and a sea-launched cruise missile.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the new American nuclear programs could cost as much as \$1.2 trillion.

John Burroughs, executive director of the New York-based Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, said the NPR ignores international legal obligations of the United States and increases the risks of nuclear

war. The Trump NPR, he said, asserts in passing that the “conduct of nuclear operations would adhere to the law of armed conflict.”

Thus a 2013 Report on Nuclear Employment Strategy stated that all plans for use of nuclear weapons must “for instance, apply the principles of distinction and proportionality and seek to minimize the collateral damage to civilian populations and civilian objects.”

In public appearances last fall, Burroughs said, the present and former commanders of Strategic Command stated that orders to use nuclear weapons in violation of the law of armed conflict would be refused.

“The truth is that nuclear weapons cannot be used in compliance with that law, above all because their massive indiscriminate effects make it impossible to distinguish between military targets and civilian populations and infrastructure,” he noted.

Moreover, said Burroughs, the NPR expands the role of nuclear weapons by identifying new circumstances in which they could be used, namely in response to “strategic non-nuclear attacks” including cyberattacks.

“This change runs directly counter to an NPT commitment to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policies in order to facilitate disarmament. It is contrary to the requirement of good faith in pursuing disarmament. And it raises the risks of nuclear war.”

For example, he pointed out, hard-to-attribute apparent cyberattacks will be consid-

ered a possible reason to resort to nuclear weapons, a change that will be all the more risky if other nuclear powers emulate the U.S. policy.

Rick Wayman, Director of Programs at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, stated: “The review does not contain a single reference to Article VI of the UN Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which obligates the U.S. and the other nuclear-armed nations signatories to the treaty to negotiate in good faith for nuclear disarmament.”

This posture review signals such a radical and dangerous shift in U.S. nuclear policy direction NATO states will be forced to re-evaluate their positions to not automatically accept and support the U.S. in this changed nuclear policy, he added.

According to the Federation of American Scientists, Russia has about 4,300 nuclear warheads compared with 4,000 with the U.S., 300 with France, 270 with China and 215 with UK – all five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Trailing behind them are the world’s other four nuclear powers: Pakistan (140 nuclear warheads), India (130), Israel (80) and North Korea (15).

Kingston Reif, director for disarmament and threat reduction with the Arms Control Association, said the new NPR breaks with past U.S. policy and “aligns with President Trump’s more aggressive and impulsive nuclear notions.”

Joan Rohlfing, president of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, said the NPR makes no

mention of a U.S. vision of a world without nuclear weapons, as Washington has previously stated for decades. “The overall takeaway from this NPR is that we need more weapons and more roles for our nuclear weapons in our national security... [which] really undermines our nonproliferation objectives and it makes us less safe over time,” she warned.

David Krieger, President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation said: “The prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons is the only rational choice. World leaders must now take the right step and sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that opened for signatures at the United Nations on September 20, 2017.”

By doing so, he added, they would lead the world away from almost certain annihilation and toward the worthy goal of eliminating nuclear weapons and creating a safer and more secure world for all of humanity. [IDN-InDepthNews – 06 February 2018]

Image: Deputy Defense Secretary Patrick M. Shanahan, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas A. Shannon Jr., and Deputy Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette brief the press on the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review at the Pentagon, Feb. 2, 2018 | Credit: Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Kathryn E. Holm

Doomsday Clock Warning Makes UN High Level Conference Even More Important

By Alyn Ware

NEW YORK (IDN) – The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the hands of the symbolic Doomsday Clock to 2 Minutes to Midnight, on January 25, indicating that the threat of a nuclear war through accident, miscalculation or intent has risen to an alarming level, and that climate change is not being averted.

The Bulletin highlighted nuclear threats between the U.S. and North Korean governments, including “hyperbolic rhetoric and provocative actions on both sides.” They also lamented “the decline of U.S. leadership and a related demise of diplomacy under the Trump administration”.

The Bulletin expressed deep concern over a range of unresolved conflicts and increased tensions involving all the nuclear armed countries. And they decried the failure of the international community to roll-back carbon emissions in order to prevent catastrophic climatic consequences of increased atmospheric carbon.

The Bulletin put forward a number of actions that governments should take to ‘rewind the clock’ and prevent the destruction of civilization from nuclear war or catastrophic climate change. But such actions won’t occur unless there is sufficient political push. This is what makes the upcoming UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament so important.

UN High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament

Scheduled to take place at the United Nations from May 14-16, 2018 the conference will attract attendance from world leaders of most UN member states. They will be expected to take – or announce – actions to reduce the risks of a nuclear holocaust and to make progress on global nuclear disarmament.

Such actions could include: taking all nuclear weapons off launch-on-warning and high alert; adopting policies never to initiate nuclear war (no-first-use); agreeing not to develop new nuclear weapons systems; removing all forward-based nuclear weapons (such as U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in Europe); commencing negotiations on the phased reduction and elimination of nuclear stockpiles; and reducing nuclear weapons budgets in order to release resources for climate protection and phase-out of fossil fuels.

Such actions have already been laid out in various multilateral forums, such as the UN General Assembly and Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences. However, to-date there has been insufficient political will to adopt and implement these measures.

“The UN conference provides an opportunity for the UK and other nuclear-armed States to make progress on incremental disarmament measures to which they agreed in the

Non-Proliferation Treaty conferences but have not yet implemented,” said Baroness Sue Miller, Member of the UK House of Lords and a Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament.

Bridging the divisions

In 2010, States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – including both nuclear and non-nuclear States – agreed that any use of nuclear weapons would cause catastrophic humanitarian consequences, and that all States should make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.

This agreement should have led to cooperation on a range of nuclear disarmament measures. Unfortunately, the reverse happened. Nuclear-armed States retreated from their commitments, and non-nuclear States advanced without them on other initiatives not agreed in 2010, in particular to negotiate a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (ban treaty). 122 countries – all nuclear have-nots – adopted the treaty on July 7, 2017.

The division has been exacerbated on the one hand by non-nuclear States alleging that nuclear weapons provide no security role what-so-ever, and on the other hand by the nuclear armed and allied states refusing to reduce or replace

nuclear deterrence with other approaches to security.

The UN High Level Conference provides an opportunity to bridge these divisions and enable progress to be made on both strands – the comprehensive, ban treaty strand and the incremental, nuclear risk-reduction strand. (See Food for thought paper on the NPT, Ban Treaty and the 2018 UNHLC.)

Security Council session builds momentum for the UNHLC

On January 18, the UN Security Council held a special session on Weapons of Mass Destruction and Confidence Building Measures, chaired by Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan is a supporter of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and unilaterally relinquished the nuclear weapons they possessed in order to become a nuclear-weapon-free country. However, the Kazakh government realizes that other countries relying on nuclear weapons will need to have confidence in cooperative security mechanisms in order to eliminate this reliance and negotiate comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

President Nazarbayev therefore focused the Security Council session on confidence building measures and cooperative security mechanisms that support nuclear disarmament. (See President Nazarbayev leads UN Security Council Session.) The session also focused on building political traction

and commitments for nuclear disarmament through the NPT and the upcoming UN High Level Conference.

A key goal put forward by President Nazarbayev, and supported at the UN Security Council Session, is the goal to achieve the global elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. This target challenges the nuclear-reliant countries to make concrete time bound plans to phase out their reliance on nuclear deterrence. Yet it is far enough away to give them a realistic chance to achieve such plans.

A key contribution to the UN Security Council Session was made by UN Secretary-General António Guterres who warned that “global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the Cold War.” Guterres noted the nuclear threats between North Korea and the USA, but welcomed the “mini-thaw” that has permitted North and South Korea to field a joint team for the coming Winter Olympic Games (February 9-25, 2018).

Guterres also announced that he intends “to explore opportunities to generate a new direction and impetus for the global disarmament agenda.” It is expected that later this year he will launch a major proposal along these lines, similar to, but updating, the 5-point proposal for nuclear disarmament released by the previous Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on UN Day, October 24, 2008.

Political support for key measures

Government leaders attending the UN High-Level Conference in May are expected to elevate their support for nuclear risk reduction measures, as outlined above. Some are already being advanced at the United Nations, including through UN General Assembly resolutions such as those to move the nuclear-armed States to reduce their readiness to use nuclear weapons.

Support is coming from key parliaments and inter-parliamentary bodies. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (which includes the legislatures of the U.S. Russia, France and the UK), has adopted resolutions submitted by members of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (PNND) calling for a lowering of nuclear threat postures, de-alerting and the adoption of policies never to initiate nuclear war (no-first-use).

Initiatives in nuclear-armed States

In contrast to President Barack Obama who advanced the commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world and took measures to make progress toward this goal, the Trump Administration has reinforced its reliance on nuclear weapons and appears to be walking away from disarmament commitments. This is reflected in the current United States Nuclear Posture Review, a draft of which was leaked by the Huffington Post on January 11.



However, there has been renewed action by the U.S. Congress on key initiatives including by senators in the hearings of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on the President's authority to unilaterally use nuclear weapons. In addition, U.S. Senator and PNND Co-President Ed Markey, has introduced legislation into the Senate (with companion legislation in the House introduced by Ted Lieu) to restrict the authority of the U.S. President to launch a nuclear attack without first consulting congress.

Markey has also organized joint congressional letters to the U.S. Secretaries of State, Defense and Energy calling on the current Nuclear Posture Review to include measures to lower nuclear threat postures, reduce the risk of nuclear-weapons-use, and advance the goal of the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

In the UK, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who is also a leading PNND member, has announced that if he were to become Prime Minister, he would not authorize the use of nuclear weapons.

These actions, along with the increased international awareness of the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, provide openings for the UN High-Level Conference to address, and make progress on, nuclear-risk-reduction measures in order to prevent the use of nuclear weapons.

Connection to climate change

Up until recently, nuclear disarmament has been the poor second cousin to global action on climate change, with much less

public awareness and political traction. What is emerging for the UN High-Level Conference is not only that nuclear risks are as important to address as risks of climate change, but also that the two issues are connected. Nuclear weapons budgets consume resources required to phase out fossil fuels. In addition, nuclear weapons postures increase tensions between key countries, preventing the cooperation required to achieve global carbon emission targets.

Civil society participating in the UN High-level Conference will make these connections, including through a Move the Nuclear Weapons Money action and campaign, which aim to shift nuclear weapons budgets to climate protection and other social, economic and environmental needs.

Ban treaty at the UN Conference

Since the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is supported only by non-nuclear States, there is no expectation that the nuclear-armed States or those under extended nuclear doctrines, will announce at the UN High Level Conference that they will join the treaty.

However, the UN High Level Conference can provide a forum for non-nuclear States to sign. The treaty is deposited at the United Nations, the same venue as the UN High-Level Conference. 56 countries have signed the treaty so far. It might be possible to have another 30-40 countries signing during the UN High-Level Conference, something which would give greater strength to this new legal document. [IDN-InDepthNews – 29 January 2018]

Image: António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, at the Security Council meeting on Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea on December 15, 2017 | Credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elias

ICAN Chief Shows Japan the Way From a Blind Alley

By Katsuhiko Asagiri

TOKYO (IDN) – “I wish for all states, in particular Japan, to join the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. No more hibakusha,” wrote Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), on a message board at the opening of an exhibition on January 12 at the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum.

The exhibition marked the award of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN on December 10 in Oslo, “for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

Three days later, in Hiroshima, Fihn signed a petition placed in the Peace Memorial Museum calling for the early ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on July 7, 2017.

She also signed the museum’s guest book with a message: “The city of Hiroshima has experienced the worst of humanity. But in rebuilding and working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, it has responded with the best of humanity. Hiroshima is a city of hope, and ICAN will work with you to see the end of nuclear weapons.”

It was Fihn’s first visit to Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the two Japanese cities, which



suffered the first ever atomic bombings in history in 1945. She was invited by the University of Nagasaki, and travelled to Japan nearly four weeks after ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Fihn received the award on December 10 in Oslo together with Setsuko Thurlow, “as a member of the family of hibakusha who,” as she said in her acceptance speech “by some miraculous chance, survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” and for more than seven decades,

has been campaigning for the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

The Nobel Peace Prize was “for its [ICAN’s] work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

The treaty, adopted in the United Nations General Assembly by 122 countries, springs from unrelenting efforts of ICAN, backed by 468 partner organizations in 101

countries including the faith-based organizations (FBOs).

Japan, the only country to suffer nuclear bombings, did not take part in UN negotiations on the TPNW, stressing that such talks without nuclear-armed countries participating would not contribute to bringing about a world without nuclear weapons.

Fihn's one-week long visit to Japan from January 12 to 18 purported to win over the political elite and parliamentarians in favour of the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty and convince the government headed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to sign the agreement.

ICAN had requested a meeting with Abe to coincide with Fihn's visit. But the meeting could not take place because the Prime Minister left for a six-nation European tour on the day the ICAN chief arrived in Japan.

However her visits to the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum as well as encounters with activists engaged in the prohibition of nuclear weapons, have obviously left on her mind and heart an indelible impression prompting her to remark to reporters that her "determination" to strive to prevent nuclear weapons from ever being used again had been boosted by the visit.

Her resolve was evidenced at the news conference and discussions with parliamentarians in Tokyo.

"We need action and leadership from Japan...Japan can be moral authority on nuclear disarmament, and that can begin with Prime Minister (Shinzo) Abe joining the treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons," she told reporters.

Countering arguments that Japan needs U.S. nuclear deterrence to "protect the lives and properties of Japanese citizens in the face of growing and realistic nuclear threat from North Korea," Fihn said: "If nuclear deterrence creates peace, then, we should welcome North Korean nuclear weapons. Then, it should be peace, right now, right? But that's not the case . . . Instead, we have increased risk. So I think we see clearly evidence that nuclear weapons fuel crisis."

In an open forum with parliamentarians of nine political parties represented in the Diet and the government, organized by the NGO Network for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, she passionately



pleaded for Japan to reconsider its current security policy based on nuclear deterrence and start parliamentary debate on the possibility of joining the TPNW, and indicate the way from what appears to be a blind alley.

Warning that staying out of the UN nuclear weapons ban treaty would make the country an "outlier" of the global disarmament movement, Fihn said: "Japan can join this treaty while keeping the military alliance with nuclear armed states like the United States," adding that the treaty urges a signatory to commit "to not using, not producing, not possessing nuclear weapons and not encouraging or assisting the use of nuclear weapons."

"Every responsible state that respects human rights and humanitarian law should do that," she stressed, and added: "I urge (the Japanese parliament) to start an investigation that would look at the prohibition (treaty) and how that relates to the activities that

Japan is doing,” she said.

“The stakes are too high to not explore this option for nuclear disarmament and right now with the increasing threats of nuclear war (posed by North Korea) the treaty is the best path forward,” she added.

In this context, Fihn cited examples of Italy and Norway, members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as well as Sweden and Switzerland, which have started considering the treaty as an option for disarmament.

However, Masahisa Sato, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, reiterated the government’s stance against signing the treaty, citing the lack of its support by major countries possessing nuclear weapons and saying that joining the pact “would deny the legitimacy of the Japan-U.S. alliance and the nuclear deterrence.”

Keizo Takemi, representing the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) headed by Prime Minister Abe, was also cautious about the treaty, saying, “We must make diplomatic efforts morally, but at the same time respond to real military threats” posed by North Korea.

On the other hand, Tetsuro Fukuyama of the Constitutional Democratic Party favoured Fihn’s suggestion and said: “It would be good for Japan to study the effects that the nuclear weapons ban treaty may have. Our party plans to raise this issue in the Diet for discussion.”

Kazuo Shii, Chairman of the Japanese Communist Party said: “Stigmatizing nuclear weapons will become a big force to urge North Korea to renounce nuclear development.” Yuichiro Tamaki, President of the Party of Hope added: “We must fill the gap between real threat and the world free from nuclear weapons” but did not clarify if he supports the idea of joining the treaty.

Natsuo Yamaguchi, President of the New Komei Party, a coalition partner of LDP, said: “The fact that a norm of banning nuclear weapons was established internationally has a ground-breaking significance. New Komei Party gives our blessing to the treaty from long-term and broad perspectives.”

On the other hand, in consideration of the reality of the security environment facing Japan, Yamaguchi pointed out: “In the face of North Korea’s nuclear development and possession [of atomic ar-

senal], both nuclear states and non-nuclear states have to cooperate with each other in partnership to solve immediate problems.”

Yamaguchi then emphasized the significance of the global nuclear disarmament under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime, and said that the nuclear ban treaty has an impact to a certain degree and that Japan would like to play a bridging role so that it can gain acceptance among nuclear states. [IDN-InDepthNews – 21 January 2018]

Image (top): Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, close to the main building of Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which ICAN Chief Beatrice Fihn visited, and wrote in the Museum’s guestbook: “. . . Hiroshima is a city of hope, and ICAN will work with you to see the end of nuclear weapons.” | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Image (right in text): left to right – The Norwegian Nobel Committee Chair Berit Reiss-Andersen; ICAN campaigner Setsuko Thurlow who survived the bombing of Hiroshima as a 13-year-old; ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn | Credit: ICAN

Successful Test Firing of India's Agni-5 Evokes No Fury

By Kalinga Seneviratne

BANGKOK (IDN) – The successful launch of the nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) Agni-5 on January 18 has hardly been noticed in Asia. The western media however have given it coverage focusing on India's ability now to strike major Chinese cities including Beijing and Shanghai.

This partly adulatory coverage is in sharp contrast to hysteria in the western media in particular when North Korea tested a similar missile on November 28, 2017. While North Korea's tests are projected as threats to global denuclearization efforts, India's are not.

As HuffPost's Eric Margolis noted, "Delhi has masked development of an ICBM behind its space launch program" and when North Korea attempts to put a satellite into orbit, the US has "tartly noted" that the booster that can place a satellite in orbit can just as well deliver a nuclear warhead.

"For now, India is a close US ally, and the recipient of US and Israeli help in building its nuclear arsenal. Washington has closed its eyes to India's refusal to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and has tacitly blessed Delhi's extensive nuclear program as a regional counterbalance to China," writes Margolis.

This is an issue China is quick to dismiss. After the launch vehicle was successfully tested on December 26, 2016, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chuny-

ing took issue with media reports in India and outside focusing on the missile's ability to hit Chinese cities with nuclear warheads.

Pointing out that the UN Security Council has explicit regulation on whether India can develop ballistic missiles carrying nuclear weapons, she was reported by Hindustan Times as saying: "China and India have reached an important consensus that the two countries are not rivals for competition but partners for cooperation as two significant developing countries and emerging economies."

Hua added: "We also hope that relevant media can report in an objective and sensible manner and do more things to contribute to the mutual trust between China and India and regional peace and stability."

The January 18 successful firing of Agni-5 missile, comes a day after India's joint sea drills with Japan in the Indian Ocean. Recently, India, Japan, the U.S. and Australia announced the formation of a defense alliance that hopes to enhance cooperation among their militaries as a way of restraining China.

A recent editorial in China's Global Times called upon the Indian media to refrain from promoting harsh comments by the Indian military on the China threat. "Since the beginning of 2018, the Indian army has made harsh comments on China from time to time. Indian Army chief General Bipin Rawat said last week that



India needs to shift focus to the border with China," noted the editorial on January 16. "The Indian media has been magnifying everything obtained from the military, applauding hawkish army remarks and fabricating scenes of China infringing upon and provoking India."

"Coordinated interactions between the Indian army and media have fed many Indians' negative impressions of China," said the Global Times pointing out that this contradicts the view of the Indian External Affairs Ministry which has said that the status-quo prevails on the border following the Doklam standoff in 2017 on the Indian-China-Bhutan border.

The editorial made a very blunt assessment: "In learning about China, Indian society has been misled by the military's selfish desire to enlarge its budget and gain bigger clout in the country's foreign relations, and its media's market orientation toward eye-catching reports. As a result, a hardline approach to China is political correctness in India and the country is pushed to side with the US, Japan and Australia."

While, according to Chinese media re-

ports, Chinese nuclear experts have expressed scepticism about the Agni-5 missile's capability to hit Chinese cities with a nuclear warhead, they have pointed out the challenge posed to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty by this test.

The growing Indian nuclear capability and its military alliances in the region could make it a fighting force in the coming years, that could disrupt China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) argued Song Zhongping, a military expert and TV commentator, in an interview with Global Times.

He said that since the Indian Ocean is a "must enter" region for the BRI, as well as a part of the national strategy of building China into a maritime power, China should also enhance its military and economic presence in the Indian Ocean.

Proven ICBM capability currently exists only with the five major powers – the US, Russia, France, the UK and China – all permanent members of the UN Security Council. Thus, Margolis reflects on another reason for India's latest tests: "The most likely reason India would want an ICBM is prestige and a seat on the UN Security Council."

While the West may like to see Asia as a growing hotbed of nuclearization and military confrontations, the lack of coverage given to India's Agni-5 test in Asia reflects the view that economic cooperation is preferable to nuclear grandstanding.

With the Winter Olympics deterrence diplomacy between North and South Korea there is a sense of relief that this could lead

to the reduction of tension in the region – something most people in Asia tend to believe is perpetuated by the US and particularly President Donald Trump.

An opinion piece by Ravi Vellore, Associate Editor of Singapore's Strait Times reflects this mood: "[North Korean leader] Mr Kim [Jong-un] made his move after seeing through the essentials of a full-scale nuclear weapons programme calculated to build himself a fearsome deterrent."

He finds it "hard to decide whether one should be indignant about Mr Kim's audacity or admire his tenacity," and adds: "His peace overture came with his trademark bravado and he made it clear that it was not targeted at Seoul while he still considered the US an enemy, thus drawing a subtle but important distinction for his South Korean brethren to mull over."

Vellore believes: "It is time we acknowledged that far from being a reckless madman, Mr Kim is a shrewd operator with a keen sense of timing, and a rational mind that sizes up situations expertly. This places him in a different league from his opponent with the larger nuclear button."

He adds: "Mr Trump's instincts to tear up the nuclear agreement reached with Iran would have given pause to any other nation planning to hold similar denuclearisation talks with the US. Mr Kim probably reads his briefing papers carefully. And he may have reason to wonder what's the point if the most solemn assurances are not to be respected."

Observers find it remarkable that Singa-

pore, a traditional ally of the US has reservations about Trump's nuclear policies. In fact, Vellore points out that a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula cannot come without a concord between the US and China, and perhaps Russia as well. But neither Beijing nor Moscow was invited to talks hosted by Canada, which concluded on January 16. These included only those western allies who fought in the Korean War over 50 years ago.

"Indeed, some believe it is the hangover from the Cold War that really stands in the way of a solution," Vellore notes. "While the US insists it has withdrawn nuclear weapons from the peninsula, Beijing seems to believe that Washington is not sincere about finding a solution to the issue through talks because that would deprive it of an excuse to park powerful and potent weapons in China's periphery."

Furthermore he notes that in his New Year address, Kim heaped fulsome praise on the Pyeongchang Games, hailing it as a major event for all Koreans. "Since we are compatriots of the same blood as South Koreans, it is natural for us to share their pleasure over the auspicious event and help them," the North Korean leader said. [IDN-InDepthNews – 21 January 2018]

Image: India's longest range nuclear capable missile Agni-5 was successfully test fired from the Kalam Island off Odisha coast on January 18 by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) | Credit: NDTV

Kazakh President Offers Astana as Venue for Disarmament Negotiations with North Korea

By Santo D. Banerjee

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – In the run up to the fiftieth anniversary of the UN inviting nuclear haves and have-nots to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on July 1, 1968, Kazakhstan has proposed a set of six measures aimed at the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and offered a platform for disarmament negotiations with North Korea.

The initiative has been launched on January 18 at the high level briefing of the Security Council which focused on the theme of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction: confidence-building measures convened by Kazakhstan in its capacity as the Council President for the month of January. And this at a point in time when, as UN Secretary-General António Guterres says, “global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the Cold War.”

Addressing the Security Council, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said the confidence building measures have proven their efficiency throughout the history. For example, they helped prevent the mass destruction in the second half of the 20th century, when humanity was on the verge of a new, large-scale war.

“To save subsequent generations from the scourge of war,” as the UN Charter vows, “is our common goal,” he said, adding: “Kazakhstan has proven its commitment to the goal by voluntary nuclear disarmament,

which has been highly appraised by the world.”

As part of the now defunct Soviet Union, Kazakhstan had 1,410 Soviet strategic nuclear warheads placed on its territory and an undisclosed number of tactical nuclear weapons. One of the Soviet Union’s two major nuclear test sites was located at Semipalatinsk, where at least 460 nuclear tests took place. Kazakhstan relinquished its entire Soviet-era nuclear arsenal.

The Central Asian republic created a new model of international cooperation, Nazarbayev said, with the establishment of the IAEA Bank of Low Enriched Uranium in Kazakhstan, thus strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

Kazakhstan’s nuclear disarmament experience can serve as a guideline for those willing to join it, he added, stressing that the country had established and strengthened its independence, reached non-aggression pacts, and built its global recognition by denuclearization. “We call for the leadership of North Korea to follow this lead,” Nazarbayev said.

North Korea, better known as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, announced its withdrawal from the NPT on January 10, 2003 with immediate effect and since then conducted six nuclear tests: in 2006, 2009, 2013, twice in 2016, and 2017.

Against this backdrop too, the Kazakh President has proposed six measures:

First, making a withdrawal from the NPT more complex so that the example of North Korea may not push others to seek the possession of nuclear weapons. “Without questioning the NPT, I propose to draft a special resolution of the [UN Security] Council that would define the consequences, including sanctions and enforcement measures for NPT violators,” the Nazarbayev told the 15-nation Council of which Kazakhstan is one of the ten non-permanent members for the two-year period 2017-2018.

This is the first time that a Central Asian nation is a member of the Security Council and – for the first time – chairing an influential organ of the United Nations bearing primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

As a second measure, the Kazakh President proposed working mechanisms of applying tougher measures for the acquisition and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These, he said, should be strengthened by separate Council resolutions. Besides, countries voluntarily renouncing their atomic arsenal should receive robust guarantees of nuclear states.

“Third, either success or failure to update the global security system relies on our ability to overcome militaristic anachronisms: we shall leave behind the division into military blocs that became both provocative and meaningless,” Nazarbayev said,

adding that the international community could set a deadline for establishing mutual confidence and bringing about denuclearization by the 100th anniversary of the UN.

Nazarbayev spelt out this proposal in his Manifesto “The World. The 21st Century” on March 31, 2016.

Fourth, the President emphasized the need to create political trust and a systemic dialogue back to the international affairs, stressing the effectiveness of the Iran nuclear deal and expressing the hope that the signatories of what is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will succeed in overcoming difficulties and remaining it intact. Nazarbayev suggested resorting to a similar approach to settle the North Korean issue.

“We stand for granting by ‘the nuclear five’ security guarantees to the DPRK as an important condition for creating an atmosphere of trust for Pyongyang to return to the negotiating table,” Nazarbayev stressed.

Should the need arise, Kazakhstan is willing to provide a platform for negotiations, he said reminding the Council participants that Kazakhstan has successfully hosted talks aimed at ending the violence in Syria, and that seven rounds of Astana consultations have contributed to the noticeable decline in violence there.

Fifth, based on the experience of Central Asian countries in establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the region, Nazarbayev called for a Weapons of Mass Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East – banning nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and their delivery systems. Such a zone was envisaged as part of a package of decisions that resulted in the indefinite extension of the NPT, the 1995 NPT Review Conference.

Sixth, the Kazakh President impressed upon the international community to avail of the modern scientific achievements, and strengthen the control of arms race. “I believe that confidence-building measures are also needed in forging common approaches to prevention of militarisation of outer space,” he stressed, adding that this could be a theme for a separate round of discussion.

He underlined, however, that these initiatives and the issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction depend on



mutual understanding and trust between nuclear powers as well as between all the other nations of the world.

“The global community is a single body, strong in its diversity and pluralism that can survive and strive when there is balance and harmony among nations and peoples living on this planet,” Nazarbayev said, praising also the role and the historic mission of the Security Council.

He concluded his remarks by expressing his hopes in trust, will-power and intelligence of humankind multiplied by the energy of collective action in choosing the right direction of peaceful coexistence. [IDN-InDepthNews – 19 January 2018]

Image: Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan and President of the Security Council for the month of January, addresses the Security Council meeting on Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, with a focus on confidence-building measures. 18 January 2018. United Nations, New York | Credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.

NATO Demands Cause Headaches in Iceland

By Lowana Veal

REYKJAVIK (IDN) – In February 2016, the U.S. government started discussions with its Icelandic counterpart on the possibility of carrying out necessary changes to the doors of the NATO hangar at Keflavik airport so that newer, larger submarine reconnaissance planes could be housed there. The matter was eventually concluded in December 2017, when the U.S. government agreed to funding.

The hangar is located in the security zone of the old U.S. military base, “Naval Air Station Keflavik”, and the reconnaissance planes in question are of the Poseidon P-8A type, designed to track the increased presence of Russian nuclear and conventional submarines in waters around Iceland – the so-called Greenland, Iceland and United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap.

There are now more Russian nuclear and conventional submarines in the GIUK Gap than during the Cold War. According to Iceland’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs, surveillance flights were made from Iceland on 77 days in 2016, whereas in 2017 such flights were made on 153 days, using P-3 and P-8A surveillance planes operated by the United States and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) states. The P-3 is the predecessor of the P-8A.

“It was assumed from the beginning that the alterations would be funded by the U.S. government,” a Foreign Affairs ministry press officer said. In the United States 2018 Defence Budget, 14.4 million dollars was requested and allocated for “airfield upgrades” in Iceland, under Section 4602, Military Construction for Overseas Contingency Operations, and Section 2903, Air Force Construction and Land Acquisition Project. The latter allows the Secretary of the Air Force to acquire “real property” and carry out military construction projects for installations outside of the United States.

However, expenditure was also increased on the Icelandic side. In a report entitled Iceland’s Defence and NATO Operations in Iceland, dated March 8, 2017, the Icelandic Coastguard reports “increased maritime operations and capabilities”, while the Foreign

Affairs Ministry says that operational funding was increased by 34 percent in the 2017 Icelandic budget “due to the operation of structures and an air defence system at Keflavik airport”.

The topic has been controversial, partly because the U.S. military left Iceland in September 2006 and there are fears that they may be considering a return. Although much of the deserted base is now being used for educational and high-tech purposes, part of the base is still closed to the public. Here, the Coastguard is responsible for maintaining hangars and other military facilities intact, while also overseeing air traffic control over Iceland, both of civilian and military planes.

In July 2016, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) published a report in which it openly suggested: “NATO can optimise 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...”

After parliamentary elections in October 2017, Katrin Jakobsdottir became Prime Minister. Allegedly the most trusted politician in Iceland at the time, she is leader of the Left-Green party, the second-largest party in the Althingi [Iceland’s Parliament], which has always had Iceland’s withdrawal from NATO as part of its manifesto although the issue was hardly mentioned in the run-up to the elections.

Its policy, however, is not shared by the other two coalition parties, the centrist Progressive Party and the right-wing Independent Party, which holds the most seats in the 63-member Althingi.

Nevertheless, in early December 2017, shortly after becoming Prime Minister, she had asked the Foreign Affairs Minister, Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson, what exactly was involved in revamping of the hangar and reiterated the opposition of the Left-Greens to a military presence in Iceland. She was told that there was no intention of setting up a NATO military base in Iceland again.



US Navy P-8 at Keflavik 08/11/2017 © www.b737.org.uk

Early in 2017, Steinunn Thora Arnadóttir from the Left-Greens asked Foreign Affairs Minister Thordarson whether Iceland would take part in discussions leading up to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Thordarson explained that as a NATO member, it decided to boycott the talks because “Iceland considered it necessary that the nuclear states take part in the disarmament process and it was clear that this would not be the case.”

When the Left-Greens were part of the Opposition last year, Jakóbsdóttir was one of the seventeen Icelandic politicians who signed ICAN’s Parliamentary Pledge after the TPNW was adopted by the United Nations in July 2017. Most of the signatories were from the Left-Green and Pirate parties.

On their way back from accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in December 2017, Ray Acheson from Reaching Critical Will/WILPF and ICAN Australia’s Tim Wright visited Iceland. “Katrín [Jakóbsdóttir] came to the public talk that Tim and I gave at the university, and we also met with the rest of the Left-Greens, as well as the Pirate Party, the foreign ministry and the mayor of Reykjavík,” Acheson said.

Acheson is positive about Iceland in relation to the new Treaty, saying “there is always hope of any democratic government joining the nuclear ban treaty, as such governments are subject to the will of their people. But we do think, with Katrín Jakóbsdóttir as prime minister, Iceland is in a strong position to join the treaty and lead other NATO countries to support real steps towards nuclear disarmament.”

She believes that “while Katrín and others in the government who support the ban treaty face opposition from other colleagues, it’s going to be important for Iceland to reclaim its position as a country opposed to nuclear weapons, not one that hides behind the position of NATO or the United States and allows the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians to be threatened on its behalf.”

Acheson goes on to say that “the new government, with its principled positions on issues of humanitarianism and disarmament, must make it clear that Iceland does not agree that nuclear weapons are legal or acceptable weapons for anyone to have or to use.”

Tim Wright is optimistic. “I believe it’s inevitable that Iceland will sign and ratify the treaty. It would be irresponsible not to. Katrín Jakóbsdóttir has pledged her support, and I’m confident that other members of her government will do the same. Nuclear weapons serve no legitimate purpose whatsoever. Iceland should be unequivocal in its opposition to them,” he pointed out.

“As a nation with no military, Iceland has a proud history of supporting peace efforts. It should be leading global efforts to eliminate the worst weapons of mass destruction, not dragging its feet.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 15 January 2018]

*Image: U.S. Navy Poseidon P-8A at Keflavik. 8 November 2017 |
Credit: b737.org.uk*

Israeli Disarmament Movement Steers Through Nuclear Ambiguity

By Bernhard Schell



AMMAN (IDN) – The Israeli media ignored the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in honour of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) on December 10, 2017 in Oslo. The Israeli Ambassador to Norway however attended the event.

The silence of the Israeli media, according to observers, was not surprising though ICAN's eminent partner in the Middle East, the Israeli Disarmament Movement (IDM), founded and chaired by Sharon Dolev, has influenced the Israeli public discourse for the past six years.

ICAN also has partners in Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Yemen.

The legal identity of the IDM is the Regional Peace and Disarmament Movement (RPM), founded in 2010 and registered as an NGO (non-governmental organization) with the Israeli Ministry of Justice. Its main goals are a Weapons-of-Mass-Destruction (WMD) Free Zone in the Middle East and a Global Nuclear Ban.

RPM's goals as registered at the Israeli Ministry of Justice are:

the representation of international campaigns for nuclear disarmament, as part of international efforts towards a nuclear ban, and promoting the discourse in Israel regarding nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The RPM/IDM also aims at promoting Israel's integration in international initiatives and treaties banning nuclear weapons, the country's participation in international and regional initiatives calling for WMD Free Zones and in particular in the Middle East, the Arab Peace Initiative, and renewable energy initiatives in the region as Peaceful Energy.

Dolev is an experienced peace and human rights activist in several organizations. These include the Meretz Party, a left-wing, social-democratic, and green political party, also called the Movement for Civil Rights; Geneva Initiative; and Women in Black, a worldwide network of women committed to peace with justice and actively opposed to injustice, war, militarism and other forms of violence.

Dolev has served as Meretz's action coordinator, chaired Young Meretz, led the Peace and Disarmament/Nuclear Campaigns in Greenpeace, and was the Director of Greenpeace in Israel.

Asked how she would explain the Israeli media's silence on the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, and her role in the Disarmament Movement at home, Dolev said in an interview published in +972 Blog: "If I were speaking in the United Nations about human rights violations in the occupied territories, I would have been on the front page of the newspapers, and all the ministers would be attacking me."

On the other hand, she said, if she were to speak to the UN General Assembly about the Israeli nuclear programme and the ways to disarm, no one would criticize her. "No one will call me a traitor for daring to speak about the issue. The ambiguousness works in all directions."

Israel's decades-long policy of deliberate ambiguity is anchored in its refusal to admit it has weapons of mass destruction.

According to the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), Israel is widely understood to possess a sizeable nuclear arsenal, but maintains a policy of nuclear opacity. David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, clandestinely established the nuclear weapons programme in the mid to late 1950s with French assistance, to meet what Israel viewed as an existential threat from its Arab neighbors.

The programme is centered at the Negev Nuclear Research Center (Hebrew acronym, KAMAG) outside the town of Dimona, where a French-supplied plutonium production reactor went critical in the early 1960s.

"Israel reportedly assembled its first rudimentary nuclear devices in late May 1967 in the run-up to the Six-Day War. Based on some rough estimates of the plutonium production capacity of the Dimona reactor, Israel is believed to have manufactured around 840 kg of weapons-grade plutonium, enough for an estimated arsenal of 100 to 200 nuclear warheads," according to NTI.

At the same time, Israel remains a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). While Israel has supported the vision of a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, it has been reluctant to negotiate establishing such a zone, asserting that comprehensive peace in the region is a prerequisite to negotiating a WMD-free zone.

The Israeli Disarmament Movement has been rallying in favour of a WMD free zone in the Middle East but also for diplomatic and peaceful solution to the Iranian issue. It has been meeting and informing selected group of journalists in Israel in the disarmament efforts and the risk posed by WMD.

Explaining the outreach activities, IDM sources say: "The WMDs in general are not the topic of most informed salon talks; in Israel this is more so. The Israeli public discussion on the disarmament issues is narrowed down to the Iranian issue and framed to tailored fit one size discussion that does not mention the Israeli arsenal or the role Israel should take on the international disarmament efforts. Our education program offer courses given by academic experts, lectures and seminars."

The Israeli Disarmament Movement not only represents the ICAN campaign but also Mayors for Peace in Israel.

As a grass root organization the Israeli Disarmament Movement attaches importance to the inclusion of the public into its campaign. It seeks not just to reach them with printed materials but also with an opportunity to listen to the stories of the Hiroshima atomic bombing survivors, meet and discuss with international experts the issues of nuclear disarmament.

The Israeli Disarmament Movement founded the first disarmament lobby in the Knesset. The lobby hosts every year an expert lecturer and an open discussion in the Israeli parliament. It also posts queries and updates the lobby members with relevant information

"Our organization promotes the building and maintaining of an Israeli NGO coalition against WMD and nuclear weapons in particular," IDM sources say. It organized the Haifa Conference for a Nuclear Weapons and Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East in Haifa, in December 2013. The purpose of the conference was to further talks on the elimination of WMDs from the Middle East.

In Israel the ambiguity policy casts its shadow on what the traditional media would risk saying. In order to bypass such obstacles, the IDM is constantly translating information materials on the dangers posed by WMDs and about the alternative paths. Translations and publications are printed and handed to politicians, media outlets and shared to the public through the new media. [IDN-DepthNews – 27 December 2017]

Image: Demonstration in Tel-Aviv against nuclear weapons | Credit: The Israeli Disarmament Movement.

UN Chief Expects New Sanctions to Help Make 2018 'A Pivotal Year' for the Korean Peninsula

By J Nastranis

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres desires to make 2018 “a pivotal year” for the achievement of sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula.

In a statement attributable to his spokesperson, following the adoption of a new Security Council resolution (UNSCR 2397), he said: “The only way forward for a comprehensive peaceful and political solution requires de-escalation and open communication channels, now.”

The resolution was approved on December 22 in response to the latest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launch by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), widely known as North Korea, on November 28.

The Secretary-General welcomed “the continued unity of the Security Council,” which he said, “is essential to achieve the goal of denuclearisation and create the space for diplomatic initiatives aimed at achieving it in a peaceful manner.”

According to the statement, the Secretary-General supports the Security Council’s desire for a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation, as well as its urging of further work to reduce tensions.

“He reaffirms his commitment to working with all parties to this end. He calls upon all Member States to ensure the full implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and to redouble efforts to make 2018 a pivotal year for the achievement of sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula,” the statement added.

The Security Council’s new sanctions aim at increasing the depth of measures imposed on the country in the wake of its continued nuclear and ballistic weapons programme, including the latest ballistic missile launch.

In a unanimously adopted resolution, the 15-member Council decided to limit the DPRK’s imports of refined petroleum to 500,000 barrels for 12 months starting on January 1, 2018, with crude oil capped at the current levels for that period.



The Council resolved in particular to “prohibit the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the DPRK, through their territories or by their nationals, or using their flag vessels, aircraft, pipelines, rail lines, or vehicles and whether or not originating in their territories, of all crude oil, unless the [Security Council’s Sanctions] Committee approves in advance on a case-by-case basis a shipment of crude oil which is exclusively for livelihood purposes of DPRK nationals and unrelated to the DPRK’s nuclear or ballistic missile programmes or other activities prohibited by resolutions 1718 (2006), 1874 (2009), 2087 (2013), 2094 (2013), 2270 (2016), 2321 (2016), 2356 (2017), 2371 (2017) and 2375 (2017) or this resolution.”

The Council further decided “that this prohibition shall not apply with respect to crude oil that, for a period of twelve months after the date of adoption of this resolution, and for 12-month periods thereafter, does not exceed 4 million barrels or 525,000 tons in the aggregate per twelve month period.”

Furthermore, the Council asked all Member States supplying

crude oil to North Korea to report to the Sanctions Committee “every 90 days from the date of adoption of this resolution [December 22, 2017] of the amount of crude oil provided to the DPRK.”

The Security Council also decided that Member States shall repatriate all DPRK nationals earning income in that Member States’ jurisdiction and all DPRK government safety oversight attachés monitoring DPRK workers abroad “immediately but no later than 24 months,” unless the Member State determined that the national’s repatriation is prohibited under applicable national and international law, or if that national is a national of that Member State.

Further, in relation to maritime interdiction of cargo vessels, the Council decided that Member States shall seize, inspect, and impound any vessel in their ports if the Member State has reasonable grounds to believe that the vessel was involved in activities, or the transport of items, prohibited by relevant UN resolutions.

According to the New York Times, “Although the resolution won backing from all 15 council members, the weakened penalties reflected the power of Russia and China. Both had objected to the original language calling for an oil embargo and other severe penalties — with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia declaring last week that such additional sanctions would be counterproductive and possibly destabilizing.

“Either could have used their status as permanent members of the Security Council to veto the measure.”

On the political side, the Security Council expressed its “deep concern” at the grave hardship that the people in the DPRK are subjected to and condemns the country for pursuing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles instead of the welfare of its people.

Earlier, while expressing his profound concern over the risk of military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula, “including as a result of miscalculation,” Guterres stressed the need to disassociate the peace and security situation in the DPRK from the humanitarian needs in the country.

Seventy per cent of the country’s population is affected by food insecurity and 40 per cent are malnourished and some \$114 million is needed to meet urgent requirements. However, the 2017 DPRK Humanitarian Needs and Priorities appeal is only 30 per

cent funded, he told the Security Council on December 15.

In the resolution adopted on December 22, the Council affirmed that it shall keep the country’s actions under “continuous review” and that it is determined to take further “significant measures” in the event of a further nuclear test or launch.

Releasing the full text of the new resolution, the U.S. Permanent Mission to the UN said: The Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 2397 imposes strong new sanctions on North Korea’s energy, export, and import sectors with new maritime authorities to help shut down North Korea’s illicit smuggling activities. UNSCR 2397 builds on UNSCR 2375 (2017), which included the strongest sanctions ever imposed on North Korea, and prior resolutions. [IDN-InDepthNews – 26 December 2017]

Image: The Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 2397 (2017), condemning in the strongest terms the ballistic missile launch conducted by the DPRK on 28 November 2017 in violation and flagrant disregard of the Security Council’s resolutions on non-proliferation | Credit: UN Photo/Manuel Elias

Monitoring Dismantlement Key to Eliminating Nuclear Weapons

By Jamshed Baruah

NEW YORK (IDN) – Since the United Nations General Assembly adopted on July 7, 2017 the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, urging the prohibition and complete elimination of the atomic arsenal, the question of verification and the dismantlement of nuclear weapons has acquired particular importance. Because there are several areas where adequate technologies either need to be developed or re-engineered.

Over the past four decades, the United States and the Soviet Union as well as its successor the Russian Federation have used a series of bilateral agreements and other measures to limit and reduce their substantial nuclear warhead and strategic missile and bomber arsenals.

Among the questions they have been confronted with are: How can all countries, those with and without nuclear weapons, have confidence that nuclear weapons have been dismantled? How can countries with these weapons share enough information about the process to provide confidence – but not spread sensitive information that could contribute to proliferation? Are the tools to do this even available?

The International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) – a unique public-private partnership between the U.S. Department of State and the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), and more than 25 countries from around the world – have been addressing the concerns of the U.S. and Russia particularly since 2014.

The U.S. Department of State's Arms Control, Verification and Compliance (AVC) Bureau leads efforts to assess the adequacy of monitoring and verification resources, in prospective and existing nuclear arms control and disarmament agreements and commitments, as well as promotes the identification, development, and implementation of verification technologies.

NTI is a nonprofit and nongovernmental organization that works to prevent catastrophic attacks with weapons of mass destruction and disruption (WMDD) – nuclear, biological, radiological,

chemical, and cyber.

From its first meeting in March 2015, the IPNDV broke new ground in building a diverse international program of work. Working cooperatively together, the Partners have made valuable progress in identifying the challenges associated with nuclear disarmament verification and identifying potential procedures and technologies to address those challenges.

The Partnership's work also builds on the U.S.-Russia monitoring and verification experience, the U.S.-UK Program on Nonproliferation and Arms Control Technology and the UK-Norway Initiative on Nuclear Warhead Dismantlement Verification.

During its fifth plenary meeting – hosted by the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship in Buenos Aires from November 29 to December 1, 2017 – the IPNDV also defined a Phase II program of work to expand the scope of its activities. The work of Phase II will amplify the importance of verification in the run-up to the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, the Partnership sources said.

Specifically, working groups will address verification related to declarations and inventories; nuclear arms reductions; and technologies for verification. The first meeting of Phase II will take place in Sweden in March of 2018.

In opening remarks in Buenos Aires, Argentine Deputy Foreign Minister Daniel Raimondi noted that “by addressing the technical aspects involved in nuclear disarmament verification, this initiative constitutes an important step in the fulfillment of the primary obligations of nuclear weapon states that exist under Article 6 of the NPT...”

Raimondi added: “We also believe that we need to foster dialogue and confidence-building measures between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon countries. In this context, this initiative constitutes a clear example in different fora of how we could work together in reaching common understandings.”

Countries participating in the initiative are: Argentina, Australia,



Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China (observer), the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, the Holy See, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Russian Federation (observer), South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

While the decision to address nuclear weapon dismantlement in Phase I was based on the recognition that dismantlement is one of the most important, complex, and technically challenging tasks of nuclear disarmament verification, the outcome of Phase I is essentially a tool kit outlining technologies and procedures that could provide confidence in a future monitored dismantlement process, IPNDV sources say.

IPNDV website presents in-depth papers or “deliverables” from the three Phase I working groups. The working groups addressed monitoring and verification objectives (co-chaired by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom); on-site inspections (co-chaired by

Australia and Poland); and technical challenges and solutions (co-chaired by Sweden and the United States).

Papers tabled include a detailed assessment of potential monitoring and verification requirements as well as an assessment of countries’ existing capacity in this arena.

Based on the technology requirements identified by IPNDV’s Working Group 3 for weapon authentication, there are several areas where technologies either need to be developed or re-engineered for use specifically for this type of activity. [IDN-InDepth-News – 12 December 2017]

Image: A meeting of the IPNDV in session | Credit: IPNDV

No More Bluster, A Way Out of North Korean Nuclear Crisis

Viewpoint by Jonathan Power



LUND, Sweden (IDN) - When, soon after the election, President Barack Obama invited Donald Trump to the White House we didn't learn much about their conversation. But we were briefed on one thing: Obama had told Trump that North Korea would be the most pressing and difficult issue on his agenda.

How right that was. But the Americans have missed the boat. It's as simple as that. What's done is done. While Washington has dithered and dithered through three successive presidencies, missing opportunity after opportunity, North Korea has gone from zero nuclear weapons to an arsenal of at least 20. Its test of an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile, in the early hours of November 29, is said to be capable of striking the U.S. It doesn't have a nuclear tip yet but that will come sometime in the next two or three years.

Just before he left office President Bill Clinton believed he was on the cusp of a deal. His secretary of state, Madeleine Albright,

went to Pyongyang to prepare the way for Clinton's own visit during which, it was believed, a deal would be cemented. But then right at the end of his presidency Clinton got diverted by crucial Arab/Israeli negotiations that seemed like they would bring peace to Palestine. At the same time Republicans in Congress never stopped drilling holes into what had been already agreed with North Korea.

Today we now have a serious clash between presidents Trump and Kim Jong-un, both volatile personalities. What constraints they operate under are debated. Can either of them, despite their supposed omnipotence in the decision to use nuclear weapons, by-pass their military's doubts?

The American military know that if the U.S. fired nuclear weapons North Korea would aim south its arsenal of conventionally armed rockets and destroy Seoul. For its part the North Korean military

knows that a majority of American public opinion would back a retaliatory nuclear attack if, in 2-3 years' time when the North has mastered putting a nuclear weapon on top of a long range rocket, it decided to use them.

This gives the military brass on both sides pause. After all they have families that would be destroyed in any attack. They would end up with uninhabitable cities.

In this situation they would probably conclude that their president has no sense of responsibility and that, volatile to begin with, he'd lost his judgment under the pressure of events. No missile can be fired, even if the button is pressed, without it passing through the military's computers.

Of course there are always unknowables in any nuclear standoff. In the Cold War there were false alarms on both sides when it looked for some minutes that an attack by the adversary was underway. The U.S. has found that some of its rocket crews were taking drugs or drinking too much.

Nuclear disarmament by both sides is an imperative. However, realistically, this is not going to happen as long as the U.S. believes it must have a massive arsenal.

We are compelled to live with some degree of uncertainty just as we did through all the years of the Cold War. But, as with the Cold War, we need to be in touch with the other side, not ignoring it, not isolating it, not squeezing it till it begs for mercy.

This was never part of the plan in Clinton's "Agreed Framework". The U.S. started to build in the North nuclear light-water reactors that could only manufacture electricity. For a time North Korea was the major receiver of American economic aid in Asia. Clinton sent his secretary of state, Madeline Albright, to Pyongyang where she was received with honours. North Korea softened its attitude.

But then the next American president, George W. Bush, kicked this all aside, despite the views of his secretary of state and former military chief, Colin Powell and most of the academic political science and international relations community. (This was a worse mistake than going to war with Iraq.) North Korea then decided, and only then, to complete its work on building a nuclear bomb.

We can't wind the clock back to Clinton's "Agreed Framework"

but we can create another – slowly. But first the North has to be "warmed up" with some of the same techniques that in the end helped undermine the Soviet Union – cultural, educational and sporting exchanges – regular visits of U.S. soccer teams, the New York City Ballet, building a branch campus of Harvard that teaches mathematics and also political science and human rights (which is done by Westerners in some Chinese universities).

Then the U.S. must agree to two things Pyongyang really wants: to open talks on a peace treaty formally ending the Korean War, which terminated with only an armistice in 1953. Second, to limit American military exercises around the Korean peninsula.

We need no more bluster. We need to get on with searching for a peaceful solution. [IDN-InDepthNews – 05 December 2017]

Image: People in Pyongyang watch Kim Jong-un on North Korean TV, 2015 | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The Vatican Galvanizes Support For A Nuke-Free World

By Ramesh Jaura

VATICAN CITY (IDN) – The Vatican’s first international conference on the prospects for “a world free from nuclear weapons and for integral disarmament” on November 10-11 was not intentionally planned to overlap with U.S. President Donald Trump’s visit to Asia as the U.S. faces heightened tensions with North Korea. It has been in the works for several years, and the timing, as Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana quipped, is a coincidence that could be seen as an act of “divine providence”.

Eleven Nobel Peace laureates, UN and NATO officials and a handful of nuclear powers including Russia, the United States, South Korea and Iran, are together with the lay Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International (SGI) among participants in what is officially described as an international symposium that aims to galvanize support for a shift from the Cold War era policy of deterrence to one of complete nuclear disarmament.

The global gathering follows the adoption of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by 122 countries including the Holy See in New York on July 7, which determined that nuclear weapons are not only immoral, but also should be regarded as an illegal means of warfare. In recognition of its role in achieving the Treaty, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017.

Commenting on the recent Treaty calling for a ban on nuclear weapons, NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller warned that the ban treaty risks disregarding today’s security challenges, including the growing threat presented by North Korea’s illegal weapons programmes – a point that was stressed by France, Great Britain and the United States who did not take part in the negotiation of the Treaty.

In a joint statement they declared: “We do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it. Therefore, there will be no change in the legal obligations on our countries with respect to nuclear weapons. For example, we would not accept any claim that this treaty reflects or in any way contributes to the development of customary international law. Importantly, other states possessing nuclear weapons and almost all other states relying on nuclear deterrence have also not taken part in the negotiations.”

However, she added that NATO and its Allies have a long history of working to reduce nuclear weapons in the world. Since the end of the Cold War, NATO Allies have reduced their collective nuclear arsenal in Europe by more than 90%. She stressed the strong commitment of all NATO Allies to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as the best mechanism for achieving a world without nuclear weapons, through pragmatic and verifiable reductions in nu-

clear arsenals.

In a statement on November 10, addressed to Pope Francis on the occasion of the conference, five of the 11 Nobel Prize Laureates participating in the conference said they hope the event will help launch “a new international legal regulation and further stigmatize those weapons and the states that so far refuse to give them up.”

They commended the joint role of civil society, religious communities and various international organizations and states in advancing the Nuclear Ban Treaty, which aims to put an end to weapons “that are capable of obliterating life as we know it in the blink of an eye”.

An “inclusive and equitable” international security system which leaves no country feeling that they must depend on nuclear arms is needed, they said, and stressed the necessity to ask oneself “what ethical and moral human beings can possibly believe that it is fine to give machines the ability to kill humans.”

In order to avoid an “impending third revolution in warfare,” the weapons must be eliminated before they ever make it to battle, they said.

This, they added, requires prioritizing the human person over the creation of wealth and realizing that “real security comes from placing the focus on meeting the needs of individuals and communities – human security and promoting the common good.”

Signatories included former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Professor Mohamed El Baradei; Mairead Maguire; Professor Adolfo Perez Esquivel; Professor Jody Williams, and Professor Muhammad Yunus.

Cardinal Turkson stressed in his opening remarks that the symposium was “about the global will to encourage nuclear weapons States to persevere in, if not hasten, their ongoing strategic reduction of nuclear arms, and to dare to hope, eventually, for a world free of nuclear weapons.”

The conference was taking place in “a moment of human history when fear about potential global catastrophe has intensified to a point rarely experienced, since the days of the Cuban Missile Crisis.” Nuclear weapons have become again a global problem, affecting nations and impacting our future and future generations, he added.

“Our conversations are as critical; and the decisions made by the global human family about peace and war in the coming months and years, particularly those with political responsibility, will have profound consequences for the very future of humanity and our planet.”

Such conversations were urgently needed, given the current tensions among nuclear weapon states as well as between nuclear weapon states and states seeking to become nuclear weapon states, said Cardinal Turkson who heads the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, which has sponsored the symposium.

Against this backdrop, Pope Francis told the symposium participants on November 10 that nuclear weapons, “exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race.” Weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security, he added.

“International relations,” he continued, “cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and the parading of stockpiles of arms. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.”

Noting that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, in which Bl. Paul VI articulated the idea of integral human development and proposed it as “the new name of peace”, Pope Francis said, “We need, then, to reject the culture of waste and to care for individuals and peoples labouring under painful disparities through patient efforts to favour processes of solidarity over selfish and contingent interests.”

Izumi Nakamitsu, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), said: “Any gathering of world leaders and civil society actors and governments to discuss ways to pursue a nuclear weapons-free zone will be very helpful for the cause of UN disarmament activities.” She expressed eagerness to discuss what can practically be done to eradicate nuclear weapons.

Nakamitsu said the UN believes the only solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis is a political one, and that talks on disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation create much-needed “breathing space” for trying to find these political solutions.

“So we’re not giving up at all on disarmament, but quite the contrary, because the situation is very difficult, we think disarmament discussions are more important,” she added. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 November 2017]

*Image: Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana welcoming Vatican conference participants on November 10 |
Credit: Katsuhiro Asagiri/IDN-INPS*



Congressional Report Warns of Skyrocketing Costs of U.S. Nuclear Arsenal

By J C Suresh

TORONTO | WASHINGTON, D.C. (IDN) – A new study throws limelight on the skyrocketing costs of the current plan to sustain and upgrade U.S. nuclear forces and outlines several pragmatic options to maintain a credible, formidable deterrent at less cost.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) study published on October 31 estimates that sustaining and upgrading U.S. nuclear forces will cost taxpayers \$1.24 trillion in inflation-adjusted dollars between fiscal years 2017 and 2046. When the effects of inflation are included, the CBO expects the 30-year cost to exceed \$1.5 trillion. These figures are significantly higher than the previously reported estimates of roughly \$1 trillion.

“The stark reality underlined by CBO is that unless the U.S. government finds a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, the nuclear weapons spending plan inherited by the Trump administration will pose a crushing affordability problem,” said Kingston Reif, director for disarmament and threat reduction policy at the Arms Control Association.

The CBO study comes amid reports that the Trump administration’s Nuclear Posture Review, which is scheduled for completion by the end of the year, could propose new types of nuclear weapons and increase their role in U.S. policy.

“If the forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review by the administration does not scale-back current nuclear weapons spending plans – or worse, accelerates or expands upon them – expenditures on nuclear weapons will endanger other high priority national security programs,” Reif noted.

The CBO report evaluates roughly a dozen alternatives to the current plans to manage and reduce the mammoth price tag. For example, according to CBO, roughly 15 percent, or nearly \$200 billion, of the projected cost of nuclear forces over the next three decades could be saved by trimming back the existing program of record while still maintaining a triad of delivery systems. Additional savings could be found by shifting from a triad to a nuclear dyad.

“The report blows apart the false choice repeatedly posited by

Pentagon officials between the costly ‘all of the above’ plan to maintain and upgrade the nuclear force and doing nothing. There are cost-cutting alternatives that would still maintain a U.S. nuclear force capable of obliterating any potential nuclear adversary,” said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association.

“The trillion and a half dollar triad is not just unaffordable, it is unnecessary. The United States continues to retain more nuclear weapons, delivery systems, and supporting infrastructure than it needs to deter or respond to a nuclear attack,” Kimball added.

Over the past several years, the Arms Control Association has repeatedly raised concerns about the need and affordability of the current spending plans, argued that these plans pose a threat to other military priorities, and suggested more cost-effective alternatives.

In an issue brief titled ‘The Trillion (and a Half) Dollar Triad?’, posted on August 18, Reif referred to a tweet on August 9 by Donald Trump in which he said that his “first order as President was to renovate and modernize our nuclear arsenal. It is now far stronger and more powerful than ever before.” He reiterated this claim in a press briefing August 11.

“Like many of the president’s utterances, these assertions don’t come close to resembling the truth,” noted Reif. In fact the U.S. nuclear arsenal is no more, or less, powerful than when Trump took office January 20, 2017. The president did order the Pentagon to conduct a Nuclear Posture Review to examine and provide recommendations on U.S. nuclear weapons policy and posture, but that review, which officially began in April, is still ongoing and won’t be completed until the end of this year at the earliest, he added.

“In fact, it was President Barack Obama that set in motion plans to undertake a massive and costly rebuild of the arsenal. Much of this effort is still in its infancy, and will take decades to complete,” Reif stated. “Trump inherited this program, and his first budget



request, which has yet to be acted on by Congress, proposes to move full steam ahead with the Obama approach. This is not surprising, given that the administration has yet to put its own stamp on U.S. nuclear policy.”

Reif added: What has been lost in much of the important fact checking of Trump’s erroneous (and dangerous) nuclear saber-rattling is that while the capability of the U.S. nuclear arsenal hasn’t changed over the past seven months, the projected annual costs of the current all-of-the-above upgrade plans are rising significantly – and not because of anything Trump has done.

The Arms Control Association’s director for disarmament referred to Congressional Budget Office report in February, which estimates that the United States will spend \$400 billion on nuclear weapons from fiscal year 2017-2026. That is an increase of \$52 billion, or 15 percent, from the CBO’s previous 10-year estimate of \$348 billion, which was published in January 2015.

“The 10-year estimate captures the beginning of the major planned ramp-up in spending to recapitalize all three legs of the

existing nuclear ‘triad’ of submarines, missiles, and bombers and their associated warheads and supporting infrastructure, but even larger bills are still to come,” noted Reif.

The Arms Control Association is an independent, membership-based organization dedicated to providing authoritative information and practical policy solutions to address the threats posed by the world’s most dangerous weapons. [IDN-InDepthNews – 31 October 2017]

Image: F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft assigned to the Thunderbirds, the Air Force flight demonstration team, perform during the Thunder Over South Georgia air show at Moody Air Force Base, Ga., Oct. 28, 2017 | Credit: Senior Airman Daniel Snider

Will U.S. Congress Legally Restrain a Nuclear World War III?

By Shanta Roy



UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – U.S. President Donald Trump’s highly erratic behavior on nuclear weapons – and his public threats to “totally destroy” North Korea – have triggered a strong political backlash from anti-nuclear and anti-war activists.

“A central problem is that Donald Trump seems ignorant about what nuclear weapons really are, and the humanitarian catastrophe that would be unleashed if he fired even one at North Korea – or anywhere,” said Dr. Rebecca Johnson

of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, a founding co-Chair of the International Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the 2017 Nobel Peace Laureate.

As tensions continue to rise, two legislators, Senators, Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Representative Ted Lieu of California, both Democrats, are promoting a bill that would prevent the president from launching a first nuclear strike – one not in response to a nuclear

attack – without a declaration of war by Congress.

The proposed legislation, introduced early this year, is currently gaining traction following Trump’s hard hitting statements recently, including before the UN General Assembly in September, when he threateningly said: “The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.”

Over the last several months, Trump has also said if North Korea threatens the U.S., it will “face fire and fury like the world has never seen.” He also tweeted that the U.S. nuclear arsenal “is now far stronger and more powerful than ever before.”

Senator Bob Corker, a Republican and chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said on October 8 that Trump’s reckless behavior could set the nation “on the path to World War III.” What was left unsaid was – if there was such a war it may go nuclear.

Meanwhile, Trump has vehemently denied a news report on a U.S. TV network that he had called for a 10-fold increase in the country’s nuclear arsenal, at a July meeting of the National Security Council.

The U.S. currently holds about 4,000 warheads, reduced from a peak of some 30,000 in the 1960s, according to the Pentagon.

As the New York Times pointed out in its editorial on October 12, Trump during his presidential campaign “wondered why America had nuclear weapons if it didn’t use them.”

Dr. Johnson told IDN that both Trump and North Korea’s Kim Jong-un are like drunken teenagers playing “chicken” with fast cars, posturing for their followers as they both drive off a cliff.

Asked about the proposed legislation, she said: “In this situation, it would of course be helpful for the U.S. Congress to remove the keys with this new legislation, if they are able to get a bipartisan majority.”

Although it will be a hard sell in a Republican-dominated Congress, there are visible signs that many Republicans are openly opposing Trump on several laws, including barring him from unilaterally lifting sanctions on Russia.

However useful such a political constraint may be, said Dr. Johnson, it’s a fragile and temporary safety measure in a situation where the United States still keeps thousands of weapons actively on alert.

She pointed out that Trump is also bent on undermining a range of international nuclear disarmament and security agreements designed to get rid of nuclear weapons and prevent them being acquired or ever used again.

First, the U.S. has dismissed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted by 122 states on July 7, and now Trump is doing his best to destroy the confidence-building nuclear deal with Iran, thereby playing into the hands of hardliners who would like Iran to develop nuclear capabilities as North Korea has done, she added.

Asked about the pending legislation, Dr. M.V. Ramana, Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia, told IDN: “I think this is an important effort not so much because of the likelihood of its being passed but because it could represent the opening of a conversation about putting limits on the power of any U.S. President, not just Donald Trump, to

launch one or more nuclear weapons with catastrophic impacts.”

The ability to control such extreme destructive power should never rest with any single individual, and this is one of the chief ways in which nuclear weapons are undemocratic, said Professor Ramana, author of *The Power of Promise: Examining Nuclear Energy in India*.

The proposed legislation H.R. 669 and S. 200, is titled *Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2017*.

Congressman Lieu was quoted as saying: “It is a frightening reality that the U.S. now has a Commander-in-Chief who has demonstrated ignorance of the nuclear triad, stated his desire to be ‘unpredictable’ with nuclear weapons, and as President-elect (made) sweeping statements about U.S. nuclear policy over Twitter. Congress must act to preserve global stability by restricting the circumstances under which the U.S. would be the first nation to use a nuclear weapon.”

“Our Founders created a system of checks and balances, and it is essential for that standard to be applied to the potentially civilization-ending threat of nuclear war. I am proud to introduce the *Restricting First Use of Nuclear Weapons Act of 2017* with Sen. Markey to realign our nation’s nuclear weapons launch policy with the Constitution and work towards a safer world.”

Senator Markey said: “Nuclear war poses the gravest risk to human survival. Yet, President Trump has suggested that

he would consider launching nuclear attacks against terrorists. Unfortunately, by maintaining the option of using nuclear weapons first in a conflict, U.S. policy provides him with that power. In a crisis with another nuclear-armed country, this policy drastically increases the risk of unintended nuclear escalation.”

“Neither President Trump, nor any other president, should be allowed to use nuclear weapons except in response to a nuclear attack. By restricting the first use of nuclear weapons, this legislation enshrines that simple principle into law,” he added.

At a press conference in Boston on August 14, 2017 Markey told reporters: “No president should have the power to launch a nuclear first strike without congressional approval. Such a strike would be immoral, disproportionate and would expose the U.S. to the threat of devastating nuclear retaliation that could endanger the survival of the American people and human civilization.”

Dr. Johnson said: “In his ignorance, Trump seems to think that nuclear weapons are an exciting big weapon for wielding American power and showing off his personal machismo, while also possessing a magical property called deterrence that makes him irresistible and invincible.”

She said threatening to use them is supposed to deter, but deterrence isn’t magic. It’s a form of defence that only works when there is clear communication and no risk of miscalculation, mistakes or political or technical error.

“But he’s not alone in those illusions about nuclear deterrence, which have been used to justify nine countries still amassing 15,000 nuclear weapons. That is why for the past decade ICAN has mobilised governments and civil society to achieve the Nuclear Prohibition Treaty by showing the dangers inherent in deploying nuclear weapons for deterrence and the appalling humanitarian and planet threatening consequences if these abhorrent WMD are ever used in war.”

The fundamental message, she declared, is that there can be no safe hands for these unsafe weapons of mass annihilation. The Treaty now bans them.

“Deploying and threatening to use them should be treated as

illegal, in effect as preparations to commit a war crime and crime against humanity. The treaty removes any illusion of status or value, so the U.S., North Korea, Russia and all the other nuclear-armed countries need to get on board and start eradicating the weapons in their arsenals and communicating more effectively to solve the security challenges we all face.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 16 October 2017]

Image credit: National Nuclear Security Administration / Nevada Site Office

Nuclear Nightmare Persists as UN Treaty Awaits Ratification

By Ramesh Jaura

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – “They will continue to be guided by their solemn conviction that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought,” says the historic Joint Statement U.S. President Ronald Reagan and his counterpart from the then Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, signed on December 10, 1987 in Washington.

Thirty years on, Gorbachev – who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 1990 “for his leading role in the peace process which today characterizes important parts of the international community” – is “deeply concerned about the fact that military doctrines once again allow for the use of nuclear weapons”.

With this in view, he has welcomed the announcement of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize 2017 to the Geneva-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

“The Nobel Committee has taken a very good decision. It should be constantly reminded what the nuclear weapon is and strive for its abolishment. A world without nuclear weapons – there cannot be any other goal!” says a statement published on the website of the International Foundation for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (the Gorbachev Foundation).

Announcing the win on October 6, the Norwegian Nobel Committee said ICAN is “receiving the award for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons,” the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

For Daisaku Ikeda, President of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), it’s a profoundly joyous occasion. The Tokyo-based Buddhist network with 12 million members around the world has been working toward the abolition of nuclear weapons for 60 years, since the Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons issued by second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda on September 8, 1957.

A relentless advocate of the pressing need to usher in a world

free of nuclear weapons, the SGI President has expressed “heartfelt congratulations” to ICAN on behalf of SGI members in 192 countries and territories throughout the world.

“The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which occasioned the conferral of the Peace Prize, demonstrates the global impact that can be realized through efforts, sustained by hope, to take on seemingly impossible challenges,” he said in a congratulatory message.

“This recognition is a source of profound encouragement to all who have been working for the elimination of nuclear weapons, in particular the hibakusha [the Japanese word for the surviving victims of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki] and the members of global civil society who share bonds of solidarity with them,” the SGI President added.

He pointed out: “Since ICAN’s launch in 2007, the SGI has been proud to work as an international partner toward the realization of a world free from nuclear weapons. The conferral of the Nobel Peace Prize on ICAN is a cause for unmatched joy.”

“The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and today’s award mark the opening of a new phase in the effort to abolish nuclear weapons, a rising tide of energy and commitment,” Ikeda said in his congratulatory message on October 6.

“The members of the SGI are determined to make all efforts to promote awareness and acceptance of the Treaty and move forward without cease toward the elimination of this gravest of threats to each individual’s right to life and to humankind’s shared right of survival,” he emphasized.

The “new generation” of campaigners

ICAN’s Executive Director Beatrice Fihn says, the award represents a special recognition for the efforts of the “new generation” of campaigners – “people who grew up after the Cold War and don’t understand why we still have the [nuclear] weapons.”

In particular, she adds, it is also a huge recognition of the efforts of the Hibakusha in realizing the Treaty. Adopted on July 7 at a UN

conference in New York, the Treaty is the first multilateral legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament in two decades. Quoting Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, Fihn says: “7th of July marks the beginning of the end for nuclear weapons.”

“Of course a Nobel Peace prize isn’t going to make Trump give up nuclear weapons,” Fihn said at a press conference at the UN Headquarters in New York on October 9. “But what we are trying to do is make nuclear weapons unacceptable in the mindsets of people . . . In the end, governments have to do what their people say.”

The treaty, which opened for signature on September 20, has been signed by 50 nations and ratified by three. But 47 more countries need to ratify the treaty for it to have legal force within those countries. ICAN’s ambitious goal is to get the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ratified by 50 countries before the end of 2018,” she told media representatives.

ICAN Asia-Pacific Director Tim Wright said Japan’s failure to sign and ratify the nuclear ban treaty is a betrayal of the surviving victims of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. “They have issued a dire warning to humanity and we must listen to their testimony and heed their call,” he said. Japan has no nuclear weapons of its own, but is protected under the U.S. nuclear weapon umbrella.

In a statement on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Press Secretary Norio Maruyama responded: “Although

ICAN’s activities to date are different from the Japanese government’s approach, we share the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. It would be welcomed to see increased global awareness of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation with this award.”

Quoting the Nobel Committee’s announcement of the award for ICAN, which refers to North Korea’s nuclear development, Maruyama said: “North Korea’s nuclear and missile development poses unprecedented, grave and imminent threat. We must work with the international community to maximize pressure using all means to change the policy of North Korea.”

The statement added: “Japan believes that realistic and practical efforts on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation are essential in truly pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons, through cooperation with both the non-nuclear and the nuclear-weapon states, based on the clear understanding of such a severe security environment as well as the correct understanding of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.”

In addition, Maruyama said, the Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have conveyed to the world the reality of the atomic bombings for realizing a world free of nuclear weapons. “Taking this opportunity, I would like to renew my respect towards the longstanding efforts by Hibakusha and two atomic-bombed cities towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.”

Explaining the Nobel Committee’s decision, Berit Reiss-Andersen said, ICAN has been the leading civil society actor in the endeavour to achieve a prohibition of nuclear weapons under international law. On July 7, 122 of the UN member states acceded to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. As soon as the treaty has been ratified by 50 states, the ban on nuclear weapons will enter into force and will be binding under international law for all the countries that are party to the treaty.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee is aware, Reiss-Andersen added, that an international legal prohibition will not in itself eliminate a single nuclear weapon, and that so far neither the states that already have nuclear weapons nor their closest allies support the nuclear weapon ban treaty.

In fact, the United States lost no time in issuing a statement asserting: “Today’s announcement does not change the U.S. position on the treaty: the United States does not support and will not sign the ‘Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.’”

Reiss-Andersen said: “The Committee wishes to emphasize that the next steps towards attaining a world free of nuclear weapons must involve the nuclear-armed states. This year’s Peace Prize is therefore also a call upon these states to initiate serious negotiations with a view to the gradual, balanced and carefully monitored elimination of the almost 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world.”

Five of the states that currently have nuclear weapons – the USA, Russia, the

United Kingdom, France and China – have already committed to this objective through their accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of 1970, she recalled. “The Non-Proliferation Treaty will remain the primary international legal instrument for promoting nuclear disarmament and preventing the further spread of such weapons.”

ICAN has brought democracy to disarmament

A coalition of non-governmental organizations in one hundred countries, ICAN has “now brought democracy to disarmament,” says Vidya Shankar Aiyar, an anti-nuclear weapons activist and a partner of ICAN in India since 2013. By harnessing the power of the people, it has worked to

bring an end to the most destructive weapon ever created – the only weapon that poses an existential threat to all humanity.

ICAN considers the prize for ICAN “a tribute to the tireless efforts of many millions of campaigners and concerned citizens worldwide who, ever since the dawn of the atomic age, have loudly protested nuclear weapons, insisting that they can serve no



legitimate purpose and must be forever banished from the face of our earth.”

It is a tribute also to the survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the victims of nuclear test explosions around the world, whose searing testimonies and unstinting advocacy were instrumental in securing this landmark agreement.

As part of the coalition of organisations forming the ICAN, Kazakhstan’s ATOM Project Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov thanked ICAN for its work with the organization and other non-proliferation partners to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Kuyukov said the ATOM Project had received the support of many anti-nuclear activists in various countries of the world thanks to the cooperation with the anti-nuclear campaign group, which started immediately after Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev initiated the project on August 29, 2012.

He added, “this award is an opportunity to remind the world about the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons tests and to encourage the broad international community to take decisive action to finally ban it.” This is exactly what President Nazarbayev and Kazakh people have been seeking to achieve since 1991.

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (NAPF) President David Krieger said the Nobel Peace Prize was “an immense honor for the hundreds of ICAN partner organizations and campaigners around the world

who have worked tirelessly for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, which was finally adopted this year. I am particularly happy for the Hibakusha – survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – who have dedicated their lives to the abolition of nuclear weapons.”

Rick Wayman, NAPF’s Director of Programs, took an active role in ICAN’s efforts during the negotiations of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the United Nations earlier this year. As part of ICAN’s diverse international team of campaigners, Rick assisted with lobbying countries to support strong language in the treaty, as well as with amplifying ICAN’s message in the media and social media.

Wayman said: “The recognition by the Nobel Committee of ICAN’s outstanding work is well-deserved. Achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has been a collaborative effort that involved bold strategy, lots of hard work, and even some fun. There remains much work to be done to finally achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons, particularly in the United States, which continues to maintain thousands of nuclear warheads. I hope that this Nobel Peace Prize will awaken many more people around the world to the urgent need to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons. We can, and will, achieve this goal.”

NATO wary, UN pleased

NATO, the transatlantic military alliance, does not agree. Expectedly, it gave a cold shoulder to nuclear disarmament group ICAN’s Nobel Peace Prize win, saying ef-

forts to end the atomic bomb must take into account the “realities” of global security.

NATO, which has three of the world’s nuclear powers (USA, Britain and France) in its ranks, strongly criticised the nuclear ban treaty, saying it risked undermining the international response to North Korea’s atomic weapons programme.

Jens Stoltenberg, the alliance’s secretary-general, welcomed “the attention given to the issue” of disarmament by the Nobel Committee and said NATO was committed to creating conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. But he restated his criticism of the nuclear ban treaty – which was shunned by all nuclear powers – saying it put years of progress on non-proliferation at risk.

“What we need is verifiable and balanced reduction of nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which all NATO Allies have signed, remains the cornerstone of international efforts to do so,” he said in a statement, adding that NATO would remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons existed.

“NATO regrets that the conditions for achieving nuclear disarmament are not favourable today, but efforts towards disarmament must take into account the realities of current security environment,” the statement said.

However, top United Nations officials said that ICAN’s recognition was reminder of the need to attend to grim threats posed by nuclear weapons to humanity.

“This Prize recognizes the determined

efforts of civil society to highlight the unconscionable humanitarian and environmental consequences that would result if [nuclear weapons] were ever used again,” read a statement attributable to the spokesperson of the Secretary-General (António Guterres).

“At a time when nuclear anxieties are at the highest level since the Cold War, the Secretary-General calls on all countries to show vision and greater commitment for a world free of nuclear weapons,” it added, noting the urgency to end the threat of a “nuclear nightmare.”

Concerted efforts by ICAN as well as many other civil society organizations contributed to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, in July, the first multilateral legally binding instrument for nuclear disarmament in decades.

Also the UN’s top disarmament official offered her congratulations to ICAN and underscored that achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world continues to be an urgent priority for the UN. Expressing hope that the Nobel Peace Prize would give new momentum to the agenda, Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs called for “serious efforts by the international community to pursue disarmament as a means for preventing conflict, reducing international tensions and achieving sustainable peace and security.”

More than 15,000 nuclear weapons remain in global stockpiles, with many on high levels of alert. Furthermore, tensions have flared over the nuclear weapons

development programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea since past few months.

Nuclear disarmament has been an objective for the UN since the very first General Assembly resolution in 1946, which established the goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass destruction.

The European Union’s foreign and security policy chief, Federica Mogherini, who was touted as a possible peace prize winner this year alongside the Iranian foreign minister for their work on the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which is an anathema to President Trump, declared: While the world is confronted with new nuclear tests and the risk of a nuclear crisis, award of the Nobel Peace Prize to ICAN makes strongly the case for non-proliferation and disarmament as a goal of the entire international community, the way to secure long term peace and security.

She assured: “The European Union [which includes Britain and France as nuclear weapons states] shares the commitment to achieve a world free from nuclear arms and we will continue our daily work for non-proliferation and disarmament with all our partners in the world. We are constantly engaged for the full implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and its review, and for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. We are working to seek a peaceful political pathway towards the de-nuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. We will continue to make sure that

the deal with Iran is fully implemented by all sides.”

In view of the mixed reactions and the volatility surrounding U.S.-North Korea relations, a world free of nuclear weapons is nowhere within closer reach than it was when U.S. President Barack Obama promised “concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons” in his historic speech in April 2009 in Prague. Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2009 “for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples”. [IDN-InDepthNews – 14 October 2017]

Image: (left to right): Austria’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Jan Kickert (standing); Brazil’s Permanent Representative to the UN Mauro Luiz Iecker Vieira; ICAN Asia-Pacific Director Tim Wright; ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn; ICAN Steering Group member Ray Acheson; and Costa Rica’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Juan Carlos Mendoza | Credit: UN

UN Treaty Signing a Significant Step Towards a World Free of Nuclear Weapons

By Shanta Roy



UNITED NATIONS (IDN) -- The international community took its first significant step towards a world free of nuclear weapons when over 50 countries signed a landmark treaty, which was adopted by UN member states on July 7.

The signing ceremony, which began September 20 on the sidelines of the 72nd session of the General Assembly, is expected to continue, as more countries will join the list of signatories to a treaty that was overwhelmingly voted on by 122 countries, with one against (Netherlands) and one abstention (Singapore).

The treaty has taken added significance against the backdrop of a possible military confrontation – and triggered by nuclear threats – by two nuclear powers, the United States and North Korea.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, UN Secretary-General

António Guterres summed it up when he said: “It is an honour to oversee this historic treaty’s opening for signature – the first multilateral disarmament treaty in more than two decades.”

He said, “the heroic survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – the Hibakusha – continue to remind us of the devastating humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.”

“The Treaty is an important step towards the universally-held goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. It is my hope that it will reinvigorate global efforts to achieve it,” Guterres added.

“There remain some fifteen thousand nuclear weapons in existence. We cannot allow these doomsday weapons to endanger our world and our children’s future,” he declared.

The nuclear ban treaty explicitly outlaws the use, threat to use, development, testing, production, manufacturing, acquiring,

possession, stockpiling, transferring, receiving, stationing, installation, and deployment of nuclear weapons. It also bans states from lending assistance, which includes such prohibited acts as financing for their development.

The treaty will enter into force 90 days after 50 or more countries have ratified, accepted, approved or acceded to it.

But the world's nine nuclear powers – the U.S., UK, France, Russia and China, along with India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea – have neither participated in the negotiations nor have they pledged to sign or ratify the treaty.

Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Tokyo-based Buddhist lay organization which has relentlessly campaigned for a nuclear-free world, said the Treaty was designed with due consideration for the circumstances of the nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states.

“Thus, complete elimination of a country's nuclear arsenal is not a prerequisite for accession to the Treaty; states can become parties to the Treaty by taking their nuclear weapons off-alert and submitting a plan for the elimination of their nuclear programs,” he added.

Dr. Ikeda also argued that nuclear weapons can no longer be debated and determined only on the basis of any one country's security needs. The peace of humankind as a whole and the collective right to life of all the world's people must be the starting point – the foundation from

which we work to eliminate nuclear weapons and develop a new security paradigm for the 21st century.

“The essence of the issue is not the confrontation between states that possess nuclear weapons and those that do not; it is the confrontation between the threat of nuclear weapons and humanity's right to life,” he declared.

Greg Mello, executive director of the Los Alamos Study Group and a leading expert on nuclear policy, described the signing ceremony as a moment of high drama in disarmament affairs.

“For the UN to mandate negotiations to ban nuclear weapons – a process being led by non-nuclear states – is unprecedented. We believe it is the most significant development in nuclear disarmament since the end of the Cold War.”

Alice Slater, the New York Director of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, and who serves on the Coordinating Committee of World Beyond War, told IDN that while none of the nine nuclear weapons states attended the negotiations, as well as the NATO states – except for the Netherlands and the Pacific allies of the U.S., Australia, Japan, and South Korea – the promising response to the opening signing ceremony is an indication that the 50 countries needed to ratify the treaty in their legislatures for it to enter into force should be accomplished relatively swiftly, hopefully within the next year.

Meanwhile, the stigmatization of nuclear weapons, she said, has begun even in the

so-called “umbrella” states, which hypocritically support nuclear disarmament but rely on U.S. protective services to wreak catastrophic nuclear annihilation in their defense.

A series of anti-nuclear weapons actions after the ban treaty was signed at Germany's air base in Buchel, where the U.S. deploys nuclear weapons, prompted a discussion in that NATO state, and Martin Schultz, the leader of the opposition Social Democrat Party, and candidate for Chancellor in the upcoming elections, called for the removal of the U.S. weapons.

Slater said there have been other demonstrations in many NATO and nuclear states around the world pressuring their governments to sign the ban treaty and people are organizing financial divestment campaigns in nuclear weapons states and nuclear sharing states.

Responding to President Trump's threats against North Korea, Kevin Martin, President of Peace Action and the Peace Action Education Fund, said: “North Korea is a country of 25 million people. Its regime is odious, but Trump is putting out the fire with gasoline in threatening to obliterate an entire country. Such a threat contradicts the very mission of the UN. The threat to rip up the multilateral Iran nuclear agreement is also dangerous and irresponsible. Diplomacy, not inflammatory rhetoric, is needed to resolve the Korea nuclear crisis.”

He said 122 countries that voted for the treaty understand the need to move toward a world free of nuclear weapons, rather

than threaten a regional war that could turn nuclear.

Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), said for decades nuclear weapons have remained the only weapons of mass destruction not yet prohibited despite their immense destructive power and threat to humanity, and nuclear-armed states are still threatening to use them to wipe our cities and hundreds of thousands of civilians.

She said states that sign the treaty will demonstrate their commitment to a world without nuclear weapons by making them illegal.

Asked about the ratification process and the effectiveness of a treaty minus the participation of the world's nuclear powers, Dr Palitha Kohona, a former Chief of the UN Treaty Section, told IDN ratifications must follow signatures and must take place within a given time period.

Those who miss out, he explained, can accede and, if the treaty permits, approve. It is important to follow the prescriptions of the treaty itself.

Usually, he said, internal procedures of each country specify the manner of ratification. In some, cabinet approval will suffice but not in others where the approval of the legislature may be required, especially if existing laws have to be enacted or amended.

In the U.S., the Senate must approve a treaty before it is ratified. We find that the U.S. has not ratified the Law of the Sea Convention or the CTBT for this reason although both were signed with much fanfare.

There is an international legal obligation, now codified in the Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties, requiring ratified treaties to be implemented domestically.

If a party to a treaty breaches its obligations, other parties may take appropriate action, including retaliatory action, as specified in the treaty. By and large, countries comply with their treaty obligations. No country likes to be branded as a country that breaches its treaty obligations, said Dr Kohona, a former Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations.

Asked about the future of the treaty, he said: "The nuclear treaty's chances are not bright." For it to be effective, the nuclear powers

must become parties. But the treaty sends a clear message to the nuclear powers that the world wants to see a nuclear free world with or without a treaty, said Dr Kohona, an authority on international treaties with a doctorate in international trade law from Cambridge University.

"One day we may realise this aspiration and let's hope that it will happen before "The Day After", a 1983 U.S. television drama recounting a fictional pre and post nuclear attack between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. [IDN-InDepthNews – 21 September 2017]

Image: The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons opened for signature at United Nations headquarters in New York on 20 September 2017 and will remain open indefinitely. Once 50 nations have ratified or acceded to it, it will enter into force | Credit: ICAN

Opening for Signature of the UN Treaty a Milestone for Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons

By Sergio Duarte, Ambassador, former U.N. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) - The opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibitions of Nuclear Weapons on September 20 at the United Nations in New York marks a milestone in the long history of efforts by the international community to eliminate the most destructive and cruel of all weapons invented by man.

The wide adherence to the negotiating process of the Treaty, carried out with the strong support of civil society organizations, reflected a growing global recognition that a ban on nuclear weapons is an integral part of the normative framework necessary to achieve and maintain a world free of such weapons. It is not a hasty or impromptu movement born out of frustration for the protracted lack of concrete progress on nuclear disarmament or by humanitarian considerations. Rather, it responds to a longstanding aspiration of humanity.

Humanitarian concerns were responsible for the first agreements on chemical weapons, concluded after the end of World War I. The multilateral process that led to the complete outlawing of such means of warfare took several decades: bacteriological (biological) weapons were outlawed in the 1970's and the Convention on chemical weapons entered into force in the 1990's.

For its part, the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons has long been the subject of international debate at the United Nations since 1946. Unfortunately, however, it did not yet reach a fully satisfactory solution. The very first Resolution of the General Assembly decided to create a Commission charged with, *inter alia*, "making specific proposals for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons".

The rivalry and mistrust between the two major powers of the time prevented any progress and efforts were abandoned a few years later. Since then, a number of partial measures were negotiated, all of them dealing with the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons. However, the conclusion of irreversible, legally binding multilateral agreements on the elimination of such weapons has proven elusive. According to estimates, over 15,000

nuclear weapons still remain in the possession of nine countries – the United States and Russia together accounting for 13,800.

The quest for the elimination of nuclear weapons continued over the decades. A notable effort was the proposal by Costa Rica and Malaysia of a draft Nuclear Weapons Convention in 1997, which was updated in 2007. Former Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon brought this idea again to the fore in his 5-point nuclear disarmament plan in 2008. All States agree on the need to do away with nuclear weapons, an objective also recognized in the NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) and in many other international agreements.

The possessors of nuclear arsenals and most of their allies have so far taken a negative attitude toward the Prohibition Treaty. But the new instrument does not seek a ban in isolation of other measures. Neither does it disregard the consideration of the global security environment in the action leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

No one disputes that the international community faces serious security challenges. Incidentally, many of such challenges result in fact from the very existence of nuclear arsenals. Early involvement and participation in the ban process would have enabled nuclear weapon States to raise and explain the security concerns that seem so overwhelmingly important to them.

The assertion that the conditions that would make the negotiations realistic do not exist right now has served to justify the indefinite maintenance of the current status quo. Such conditions, by the way, have never been clearly formulated. An open discussion with the States holding that view would have been useful to clarify many points of mutual interest.

Another allegation against the negotiations on a ban was that they would not be based on a consensus and would therefore risk increasing the schism between haves and have-nots. That schism is an inherent feature of the NPT, which instituted a division of the world into two groups of States.



The Prohibition Treaty is meant to apply erga omnes and aims at eliminating the gulf between the two groups of States. The credibility and effectiveness of the NPT is being undermined not by calls to implement Article VI but by the perceived lack of compliance by the armed States with their commitments to nuclear disarmament. The obligation contained in Article VI was clarified by the International Court of Justice in 1996. It requires not only that its Parties engage in good faith negotiations for the achievement of nuclear disarmament, but also to bring them to a conclusion.

Over seventy years since nuclear weapons first appeared and forty-seven years after the entry into force of the NPT, the words and deeds of the nuclear weapon States amount to an indefinite postponement of the fulfillment of that obligation.

The United Nations General Assembly decided to establish September 26 as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. This year's celebration of that date follows the opening for signature of the Prohibition Treaty. The General Assembly also decided to convene a UN High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament no later than 2018 in order to evaluate progress and advance further the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Recent UN High Level Conferences have been very successful, such as the ones on Climate Change, on Oceans and on Migration. States must avail themselves of the opportunity to participate in a process aimed at bringing new impetus to the non-proliferation and disarmament debate and at promoting concrete progress in this field, with the active participation of civil society organizations. Rather than dismissing the newest instrument, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as unhelpful or counterproductive, States are expected to ensure that it is used as a new and effective tool toward the common objective of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. [IDN-InDepthNews – 20 September 2017]

Image: Applause for adoption of the UN Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons on July 7, 2017 in New York | Credit: ICAN

Heed the Voices of the Hibakusha Urging All States to Sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

By Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, President, Soka Gakkai International (SGI)

TOKYO (IDN) - The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted this past July at the United Nations, will soon be opened for signature. The negotiations that produced this Treaty saw the participation of nearly two-thirds of all UN member states, and it is deeply moving to witness the first concrete steps toward the Treaty's entry into force. I earnestly hope that the initial 122 countries that supported its adoption will be joined by other states becoming signatories to the Treaty, so that it can become international law as quickly as possible.

The quest for a world without nuclear weapons was the focus of the first UN General Assembly Resolution adopted in January 1946, soon after the birth of the United Nations. In the more than seven decades since, nuclear disarmament has been the subject of repeated resolutions.

The impetus for the recent breakthrough was provided by a newly heightened awareness within the international community of the deeply inhumane nature of nuclear weapons. The world's hibakusha, or victims of nuclear weapons, have repeatedly expressed their intense desire that no one else should ever suffer what they endured, and this was a key element in transforming the discourse surrounding nuclear weapons.

The accumulated impact of efforts of the

international community formed the foundation for the Prohibition Treaty. The centrality of their voices is testified to by the fact that the Treaty's Preamble makes two separate references to "hibakusha."

The real significance of the Treaty is found in its prohibition of nuclear weapons in all their phases and aspects – from possession, to use and threat of use. No exceptions or mitigating circumstances are recognized. This overcomes the lack, noted in the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, of an explicit legal prohibition against nuclear weapons.

This stance parallels the one underlying the statement made 60 years ago, on September 8, 1957, by Josei Toda, second president of the Soka Gakkai and my personal mentor. In it, he declared that any use of nuclear weapons was impermissible and could not be justified for any reason. It was on this basis that he called for their prohibition.

Taking Toda's declaration to heart, members of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) have in recent years worked with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in supporting the process of drafting the Treaty and have collaborated with other faith-based organizations (FBOs) to issue a series of eight joint statements as Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons.

These joint statements have sought to foreground the ethical dimensions of the nuclear issue: "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."

At the core of the doctrine of deterrence that has locked humanity in a spiral of mistrust since the start of the Cold War is a chilling disregard for life, one that accepts truly unspeakable suffering on the part of countless ordinary citizens as potentially unavoidable.

As Josei Toda stressed in his declaration, the very existence of nuclear weapons represents the greatest imaginable threat to each individual's right to life and to humanity's shared right to survival.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons embodies a profound critique and rejection of this way of thinking, this disregard for life. As Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica, President of the negotiating conference, has stated, the prohibition norm formalized in the Treaty can help shape a "new security paradigm for the 21st century."

The Treaty was designed with due consideration for the circumstances of the

nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states. Thus, complete elimination of a country's nuclear arsenal is not a prerequisite for accession to the Treaty; states can become parties to the Treaty by taking their nuclear weapons off alert and submitting a plan for the elimination of their nuclear programs.

As Austria's representative to the negotiating conference stated, it was not the wish of any of the negotiating conference participants to make any state less secure or any person less safe.

Peace and security are a paramount concern of any country and its people. The question that needs to be posed, in the light of the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, is whether the continued possession of nuclear weapons is indeed necessary to national security.

Japan is the only country to have experienced the use of nuclear weapons in wartime. It embraces the three non-nuclear principles—of not possessing, manufacturing or allowing nuclear weapons on its national territory. The survivors of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki have struggled to the utmost in the hope of seeing the realization of a world without nuclear weapons in their lifetimes. For all these reasons, Japan should join the Treaty; and I strongly urge that deliberations on how to achieve this be undertaken promptly and in earnest.

Any use of nuclear weapons and subsequent retaliation would produce catastrophic consequences that would

overwhelm all efforts to contain or ameliorate the damage. Further, the impacts would cross national borders and would continue to be felt far into the future. Such are the realities made clear over the course of a series of international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, including the one held in Vienna in December 2014, in which the United States and the United Kingdom, both nuclear-weapon states, took part.

This discourse was at the heart of the process that resulted in the Treaty. It brings to light the need to differentiate the continued possession of nuclear weapons and the achievement of legitimate security objectives.

Nuclear weapons can no longer be debated and determined only on the basis of any one country's security needs. The peace of humankind as a whole and the collective right to life of all the world's people must be the starting point – the foundation from which we work to eliminate nuclear weapons and develop a new security paradigm for the 21st century. The essence of the issue is not the confrontation between states that possess nuclear weapons and those that do not; it is the confrontation between the threat of nuclear weapons and humanity's right to life.

This is the new awareness that needs to take hold among the world's people, and I am convinced that the driving force for this kind of transformation is a global mobilization of the voices of civil society. Today, more than 7,400 cities in 162 countries and

territories belong to Mayors for Peace. This fact illustrates the depth and breadth of support for a world without nuclear weapons, including in the nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states.

It seems clear that, without the powerful impetus provided by the hibakusha and by civil society as a whole, the drafting process for the Treaty would not have moved forward. As the representative of Egypt put it: "Although members of civil society are traditionally seated at the back of our hall rooms ... their passion and devotion to the cause of abolition of nuclear weapons place them nonetheless at the forefront of respect for their collective spirit and outreach."

With the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the effort to abolish these weapons has entered a new phase. The key now is to promote widespread awareness of the Treaty and its significance, building a truly solid and expansive base of support for it and its objectives.

Article 12 of the Treaty calls on all States Parties to work for its universalization. To this end, it is vital that an accurate awareness of the realities of nuclear weapons experienced and communicated by the hibakusha be shared and sustained widely among the people of all countries and across generations. In this regard, peace and disarmament education are vital.

Such education and learning can form a basis enabling the peoples of the



nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states to join in the global enterprise of bringing a world free from nuclear weapons into being.

In light of the special characteristic of the Treaty, which was negotiated with the participation and contributions of civil society, it seems clear that global civil society must play a central role in promoting universal accession to the Treaty through peace and disarmament education.

We take the September 20 opening for signature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as an opportunity to renew our commitment to working with such partners as ICAN and other civil society organizations to encourage universal accession to the Treaty and move forward powerfully toward the achievement of a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

[IDN-InDepthNews – 18 September 2017]

Image: Dr. Daisaku Ikeda | Credit: Seikyo Shimbun

Ulaanbaatar Conference Stresses the Role of Individual States in Nuclear Disarmament Process

By Jamshed Baruah

NEW YORK | ULAANBAATAR (IDN) – While unanimously agreeing on tougher sanctions against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) in response to the country’s sixth and most powerful nuclear test early September, the UN Security Council called for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks.

By pleading for the multilateral negotiations involving China, DPRK, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and the United States, the 15-member Council expressed its “commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic and political solution to the situation on the Korean Peninsula”.

The issue also drew the focus of the ‘International Conference on Nuclear Disarmament Issues: Global and Regional Aspects’ on August 31-September 1 some 10,150 kilometres away in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia, bordered by China to its south and the Russian Federation to its north.

The conference was organised by the Mongolian non-governmental organization, the ‘Blue Banner’, chaired by Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan, former Permanent Representative of his country to the United Nations. It marked the 25th anniversary of Mongolia’s initiative to turn its territory into a single-State nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ).

Mindful of the lessons of the Cold War period, speaking during the general debate

at the UN General Assembly in September 1992, Mongolia’s President Punsalmaagiin Ochirbat declared the country a NWFZ and pledged to have that status internationally guaranteed.

The proposal’s aim was to declare clearly to the world that Mongolia did not have nuclear weapons on its territory and that henceforth it would be nuclear-weapon free so that, unlike during the Cold War, no country near or far would be allowed to place such weapons on its territory, and that it would work to acquire security assurances from the five NWS (nuclear weapon states) – China, the Russia Federation (then the Soviet Union), the United States, Britain and France who are also the five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council.

Mongolia’s drive for international recognition of its status yielded fruit in Resolution 53/77 D, which was adopted by the General Assembly on December 4, 1998 that welcomed Mongolia’s goal, and put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

On February 28, 2000, the Mongolian Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Enkhsaikhan presented a letter outlining the Mongolian de-nuclearization law, which was then circulated as A/55/56 S/2000/160 – thus completing the international recognition of Mongolia’s nuclear-weapons-free status.

The Ulaanbaatar conference adopted a

statement describing the SS-NWFZ move an important national measure to ensure Mongolia’s security. “It is also a novel international measure to fill a possible grey area in the emerging nuclear-weapon-free world,” the statement noted.

Today Mongolia enjoys international recognition and support for its active policy of promoting its nuclear-weapon-free status that strengthens peace and regional stability through political and diplomatic means, through persistent dialogue and negotiations on the basis of sovereign equality of states, mutual respect and working jointly for a common cause, the statement added.

The five nuclear-weapon states (P5) – China, Russia, the United States, Britain and France, who are also permanent members of the Security Council – in fact made a joint declaration in 2012, committing themselves to respect Mongolia’s status and not to contribute to any act that would violate it.

“This pledge implies that none of the P5 would try to use Mongolia’s territory for their nuclear-weapons systems including for communication, surveillance, intelligence gathering, training of weapons and other purposes,” the statement stressed.

The participants – from not only Northeast Asia but also from the United States and Europe – expressed their support for Mongolia’s policy of making its nuclear-weapon-free status an organic part of the East



Image credit: The Blue Banner

Asian security architecture as well as for its readiness to share its experience in promoting the goal of establishing a Northeast Asian NWFZ.

The conference was open to the public, which enabled also political science students of Ritsumeikan University of Japan to attend, especially the session on the role of individual states in nuclear disarmament process. Since Japan enjoys the U.S. 'nuclear umbrella', it stayed away from negotiations leading to the UN adopting on July 7 the Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

The statement noted: "Mongolia has demonstrated that efforts of every state are important in promoting the common goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Its example serves as a source of inspiration for other states not only to address issues of common concern through dialogue and innovative approaches, but also for states that due to their geographical location or for political reasons cannot be part of traditional (regional) NWFZs."

Enkhsaikhan said the conference was purported "to encourage effective strategies to move jointly towards the common goal of achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world".

These included the adoption the UN nuclear weapons ban treaty, its possible impact on nuclear disarmament negotiations, what should be the next logical and practical steps and the important role of non-nuclear-weapon states. "There was an interesting discussion about the possible impact of Iranian and North Korean cases on the NPT, the Treaty on the Non-Pro-

liferation of Nuclear Weapons, and the non-proliferation regime in general," noted Enkhsaikhan.

On the regional level, the participants shared their views on how to address the North Korean nuclear weapon issue. Many participants underlined the need to proceed to direct unconditional negotiations between the U.S. with the DPRK with a view to de-escalating the tensions and ruling out the use of force or the threat of the use of force.

Aware of the relations between the parties to the Six-Party Talks, some conference participants proposed that it might be worthwhile to try a new format in Ulaanbaatar with the participation of Mongolia as a small state with active foreign policy and experience in addressing nuclear security issues. A suggestion was even made that perhaps Mongolia could play some positive role under current conditions.

The statement adopted by the conference underlined the importance of the role of Mongolia by pointing out that though the Cold War has ended more than two decades ago, the peace dividend has been short of the high expectations.

As the statement pointed out, continuous modernization of nuclear weapons systems is alarming the international community. The number of nuclear-weapon states has almost doubled. Development of newer types of nuclear weapons and more advanced conventional weapons is blurring the difference between not only these two, but also between strategic and non-strate-

gic nuclear weapons.

The possibility of "adjusting" nuclear weapons to variable yields and thus lowering of the threshold of their use makes these weapons more "useable". "In these circumstances the only effective guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons and to ensure 'no more hibakusha' is their complete elimination," the statement stressed.

It added: The existence of nuclear weapons, and their detonation, whether intentional, accidental or otherwise, threatens humankind, will gravely affect global health, food security, and the world climate. The nuclear weapon states have a direct and ultimate responsibility of eliminating their arsenals.

However, pending their elimination the non-nuclear-weapon states also have an important role to play, as demonstrated by the adoption of the Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons in July, the conference participants said.

"Establishment of NWFZs are effective regional measures for nuclear disarmament. By prohibiting nuclear weapons in the regions concerned they go beyond the NPT commitments to promote peace and stability and thus contribute to greater regional confidence and stability," the Ulaanbaatar conference statement added. [IDN-In-DepthNews – 13 September 2017]

UN Panel Remains Sceptical about Sanctions on North Korea

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) – Six days before the UN Security Council unanimously agreed to impose harsher sanctions on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), it received a far from encouraging report on the implementation of sanctions slammed so far.

The report submitted to the Council on September 5 by the UN Panel of Experts monitoring the implementation of Security Council sanctions against North Korea says: “Lax enforcement of the sanctions regime coupled with the country’s evolving evasion techniques are undermining the goals of the resolutions that the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea abandon all weapons of mass destruction and cease all related programmes and activities.”

It adds: “Despite an increased rate of Member States’ submission of national implementation reports to the Security Council, the actual implementation of the sanctions lags far behind what is necessary to achieve the core goal of denuclearization.”

These remarks reaffirm the gist of the UN Panel’s report in February 2017, which said: “The unprecedented frequency and intensity of the nuclear and ballistic missile tests helped the country to achieve technological milestones in weapons of mass destruction capability, and all indications are that this pace will continue.” It predicted: “The stated goals of the resolutions of achieving denuclearization and a peaceful solution to the situation seem increasingly remote.”

The UN Panel of Experts’ latest report says: “The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has made significant technological advances in its weapons of mass destruction capability in defiance of the most comprehensive and targeted sanctions regime in United Nations history.”

It adds: “Following two nuclear tests in 2016 which led to the adoption of resolutions 2270 (2016) and 2321 (2016), the country has greatly accelerated its ballistic missile testing schedule with as many as 14 launches in 2017, including two reported intercontinental ballistic missile launches.”

The UN Panel notes that, in 2017, the DPRK tested “new ballistic missile systems showing significant progress in diversification of systems, range, and a shortened time span between unveiling and testing new missiles, adding: “The country is reportedly continuing prohibited nuclear activities with weapons-grade fissile material production at Yongbyon and construction and maintenance at Punggye-ri (North Korea’s only known nuclear test site).”

According to the UN Panel, the DPRK continues to flout the arms embargo and robust financial and sectoral sanctions through the export of almost all of the commodities prohibited in the Security Council resolutions, generating at least \$270 million in revenue during the period from February 2 to August 5, 2017, “showing that as the sanctions regime expands, so does the scope of evasion.”

The Panel coordinated by the UK’s Hugh Griffiths of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) comprises: Benoit Camguilhem, Dmitry Kiku, Stephanie Kleine-Ahlbrandt, Youngwan Kim, Maiko Takeuchi, Neil Watts, and Jiahu Zong.

The UN Panel’s latest report notes, the DPRK continues to violate the financial sanctions by stationing agents abroad to execute financial transactions on behalf of national entities. “Financial institutions in numerous Member States wittingly and unwittingly have provided correspondent banking services to front companies and individuals of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea engaged in prohibited activities.”

Moreover, foreign companies maintain links with financial institutions of the country established as subsidiaries or joint ventures in violation of the resolutions. “Involvement of diplomatic personnel of the DPRK in commercial activities and the leasing of embassy property generate substantial revenue and are aided by multiple deceptive financial practices,” says the report.

Among the countries the Panel mentions are: Bulgaria, Germany, Poland and Romania. Germany, says the report, has taken necessary steps to halt the DPRK diplomats’ such activities.

These illicit financial activities, the UN Panel says, benefit from



*Image: Army-People Rallies Hail Success in H-bomb Test |
Credit: The Rodong Sinmun*

the lack of appropriate domestic legal and regulatory frameworks which would give effect to the resolutions, including in many States in Asia.

As a case in point, the report says: Following China's suspension of coal imports from the country in February 2017, the DPRK has been rerouting coal to other Member States including Malaysia and Viet Nam, and has shipped coal through third countries. The Panel's investigations reveal that the country is deliberately using indirect channels to export prohibited commodities, evading sanctions.

"The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, led by its Maritime Administration Bureau, continued to hone its evasion tactics as Member States took action to reduce the number of the country's vessels under foreign flags." This has also led to an increase of the DPRK's Korea-flagged vessels, many of which are formally owned or operated by foreign companies in violation of the resolutions."

The Panel informs that it continues to investigate "the widespread presence of nationals of the DPRK in Africa and the Middle East, particularly in the Syrian Arab Republic, acting on behalf of or at the direction of designated entities, including their involvement in prohibited activities such as trade in surface-to-air missile systems."

The pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile programmes by the DPRK appears likely to continue at a rapid pace, says the Panel, judging by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's statements, including his 2017 New

Year's address in which he claimed that "in 2016 the Democratic People's Republic of Korea achieved the status of a nuclear power, ... conducted the first H-bomb test, test-firing of various means of strike and nuclear warhead test" and "entered the final stage of preparation for the test launch of intercontinental ballistic missile."

Apparently responding to some suggestions by the UN Panel, the Security Council decided on September 11 to impose a raft of new sanctions on the DPRK - including a ban on the sale of natural gas liquids to the North-East Asian nation, and on its textile exports – while also prohibiting Member States from providing work authorizations to its nationals.

By the terms of resolution 2375 (2017), the Council condemned in the strongest terms Pyongyang's nuclear test of September 2, saying that action stood "in flagrant disregard" of its resolutions, and reaffirmed that the DPRK must immediately suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile and nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

Among the new sanctions imposed is a ban on the supply, sale or transfer of all condensates and natural gas liquids to the DPRK, as well as a ban on its exports of textiles such as fabrics and apparel products.

The Council further decided that all Member States would prohibit the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to Pyongyang of all refined petroleum products beyond 500,000 barrels during an initial period of

three months – beginning on October 1, 2017 and ending on December 31, 2017 – and exceeding 2 million barrels per year during a period of 12 months beginning on January 1, 2018 and annually thereafter.

In addition, Member States would not supply, sell or transfer crude oil to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in excess of the amount supplied, sold or transferred by that State in the 12-month period prior to the adoption of the resolution. On September 11.

Further, the Council decided to extend a number of existing sanctions, including the freezing of one additional individual's assets, and both a travel ban and assets freeze to be imposed on three additional entities, both annexed to the text. [IDN-In-DepthNews – 12 September 2017]

Use Sanctions Pressure and Diplomacy with North Korea: Expert

By J C Suresh

TORONTO | WASHINGTON, DC (IDN) – U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration have failed to competently execute their own stated policy of “maximum pressure and engagement” with North Korea, says the Arms Control Association (ACA), which is dedicated to promoting public understanding of and support for effective arms control policies.

In a statement on North Korea’s 5.9 to 6.3 magnitude nuclear test explosion on September 3, ACA’s Executive Director Daryl G. Kimball says: “Trump has greatly exacerbated the risks through irresponsible taunts and threats of U.S. military force that only give credibility to the North Korean propaganda line that nuclear weapons are necessary to deter U.S. aggression, and have spurred Kim Jong-un to accelerate his nuclear program.”

The nuclear test explosion, he adds, “marks a new and more dangerous era in East Asia.” Because: “The explosion, which produced a yield likely in excess of 100 kilotons TNT equivalent, strongly suggests that North Korea has indeed successfully tested a compact but high-yield nuclear device that can be launched on intermediate- or intercontinental-range ballistic missiles.”

Still more nuclear tests are likely and necessary for North Korea to confirm the reliability of the system, adds Kimball, but after more than two decades of effort, North Korea has a dangerous nuclear strike capability that can hold key targets outside of its region at risk. “This capability has been reached since U.S. President Donald Trump threatened North Korea with ‘fire and fury’ if Pyongyang continued its nuclear and missile pursuits Aug. 8.”

The inability of the international community to slow and reverse North Korea’s nuclear and missile pursuits, says Kimball, is the result of missteps and miscalculations by many actors, including the previous two U.S. administrations – George W. Bush and Barack Obama – as well as previous Chinese, Japanese, and South Korean governments.

“The crisis has now reached a very dangerous phase in which the risk of conflict through miscalculation by either side is unac-

ceptably high. Trump and his advisers need to curb his impulse to threaten military action, which only increases this risk,” warns ACA’s Executive Director.

Kimball opines further: “A saner and more effective approach is to work with China, Russia, and other UN Security Council members to tighten the sanctions pressure and simultaneously open a new diplomatic channel designed to defuse tensions and to halt and eventually reverse North Korea’s increasingly dangerous nuclear and missile programs.”

Kimball urges all sides “to immediately work to de-escalate the situation” adding:

1. Washington needs to consult with and reassure its Asian allies, particularly South Korea and Japan, that the United States, and potentially China and Russia, will come to their defence if North Korea commits aggression against them.
2. As the United States engages in joint military exercise with South Korean and Japanese forces, U.S. forces must avoid operations that suggest the Washington is planning or initiating a pre-emptive strike on North Korea, which could trigger miscalculation on the part of Pyongyang.
3. Proposals to reintroduce U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea are counterproductive and would only heighten tensions and increase the risk of a nuclear conflict.
4. The United States must work with the world community to signal that international pressure – though existing UN-mandated sanctions on North Korean activities and trade that can support its illicit nuclear and missile activities – will continue so long as North Korea fails to exercise restraint. Better enforcement of UN sanctions designed to hinder North Korea’s weapons procurement, financing, and key sources of foreign trade and revenue is very important.
5. Sanctions designed to limit North Korea’s oil imports should now be considered. While such measures can help change North Korea’s cost-benefit calculations in a negotiation about the value



of their nuclear program, it is naive to think that sanctions alone, or bellicose U.S. threats of nuclear attack, can compel North Korea to change course.

6. The United States must consistently and proactively communicate our interest in negotiations with North Korea aimed at halting further nuclear tests and intermediate- and long-range ballistic missile tests and eventually to verifiably denuclearize the Korean peninsula, even if that goal may no longer be realistically achievable with the Kim regime in power.

7. Washington must also be willing to do more than to simply say it is “open to talks,” but must be willing to take the steps that might help achieve actual results. This should include possible modification of U.S. military exercises and manoeuvres in ways that do not diminish deterrence and military readiness, such as replacing command post exercises with seminars that serve the same training purpose, dialling down the strategic messaging of exercises, spreading out field training exercises to smaller levels, and moving exercises away from the demilitarized zone on the border.

Kimball stresses that the latest North Korean nuclear test once again underscores the importance of universalizing the 1996 Com-

prehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The ACA Executive Director warns: “Unless there is a more serious, more coordinated, and sustained diplomatic strategy to reduce tensions and to halt further nuclear tests and long-range ballistic missile tests in exchange for measures that ease North Korea’s fear of military attack, Pyongyang’s nuclear strike capabilities will increase, with a longer range and less vulnerable to attack, and the risk of a catastrophic war on the Korean peninsula will likely grow.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 4 September 2017]

Image: People in Pyongyang watch Kim Jong-un on North Korean TV, 2015 | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Kazakhstan Joins UN's Nuclear Watchdog in a Milestone Step Toward Non-Proliferation

By Ramesh Jaura

ASTANA (IDN) – While a moment of silence was observed on August 29 at 11:05 a.m. local time in Kazakhstan's capital city Astana to honour the memory of the victims of all nuclear weapons tests, some 2713 miles (4365 kilometres) away, North Korea fired an intermediate range ballistic missile that flew over Japan: The same day a new facility was inaugurated in Kazakhstan under the auspices of the UN's nuclear watchdog that could open a fresh chapter in non-proliferation.

In the five decades between July 1945, when the United States exploded its first atomic bomb, and the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, over 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out all over the world. After the CTBT was opened for signature in September 1996, nine nuclear tests had been conducted until 2016. Since then, only North Korea is known to have been conducting nuclear tests.

And this despite the fact that on December 2, 2009, the United Nations established August 29 the International Day against Nuclear Tests by unanimously adopting a resolution initiated by Kazakhstan together with several sponsors and cosponsors. The resolution 64/35 commemorated the closure of the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site on August 29, 1991. Also known as The Polygon it

was the primary nuclear testing site for the Soviet Union.

The ATOM Project – “Abolish Testing. Our Mission” – and meanwhile its Honorary Ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov, who is an armless artist and anti-nuclear weapons activist, played a crucial role in closing down of the nuclear test site. More than 1.5 million Kazakh citizens had been seriously exposed to nuclear weapons tests there, and to this day children are born with severe deformities, illnesses and a lifetime of health challenges.

“... the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site was closed down by the historic decree of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev [on attaining independence in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union] who all these years has been playing a key role in global efforts in non-proliferation and disarmament areas,” said Parliament Senate Chairman Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, closing the 62nd annual gathering of the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs which together with its co-founder, Sir Joseph Rotblat, were awarded the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize.

The Pugwash Conference commemorated its 60th anniversary by focussing in its annual gathering from August 25 to August 29 in Astana on ‘Confronting New Nuclear Dangers’. The organisation draws its inspiration from the Russell-Einstein Manifesto of 1955, which urged leaders of



the world to “think in a new way”: to renounce nuclear weapons, to “remember their humanity” and to find peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them.”

The Pugwash Conference, which brings scientific insight and reason to bear on namely, the catastrophic threat posed to humanity by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, has been headed by former UN Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala over the past ten years. The incoming President is Sergio Duarte, also a former UN Under-Secretary-General.

August 29, 2017 has the potential of unfolding a new chapter in nuclear non-proliferation with the inauguration of a facility, known as the low-enriched uranium (LEU) Bank of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at the Ulba Metallurgical Plant (UMP) in the

eastern city of Oskemen. It will store up to 90 tonnes of the fuel, enough to power a large city for three years, and sell it to IAEA members if they are unable to procure it elsewhere.

“The LEU Bank will serve as a last-resort mechanism to provide confidence to countries that they will be able to obtain LEU for the manufacture of fuel for nuclear power plants in the event of an unforeseen, non-commercial disruption to their supplies,” IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano said in a statement.

“I am confident that the IAEA LEU Bank will make a valuable contribution to international efforts to ensure the availability of fuel for nuclear power plants,” he added during the inauguration event, presided by Kazakh President Nazarbayev, which the representatives of IAEA Member States and donors attended.

Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), also participated in the event dedicated to the opening of the LEU Bank.

“While we are proud of the many successes, 29 August also serves as a reminder that banning nuclear tests remains unfinished business. As we work to consign nuclear testing to history, we must not forget the importance of trust at the regional and international levels,” said Zerbo indirectly referring to the challenges ahead.

According to Tariq Rauf, a former Director of SIPRI’s Disarmament, Arms Control and

Non-Proliferation Programme, the Astana event will mark an important milestone in the long march for the IAEA to set up an IAEA owned and operated nuclear fuel bank as envisaged in the 1957 IAEA Statute.

This initiative was proposed in September 2006 by the Washington, D.C.-based Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) which offered US\$50 million to the IAEA, provided by global investor Warren Buffet, to set up an IAEA LEU Bank by raising an additional \$100 million.

By early 2009, the IAEA had accomplished the goal of getting funding support from the European Union (€50 million), Kuwait (\$10 million), Norway (\$5 million), United Arab Emirates (\$10 million) and the United States of America (\$50 million). Kazakhstan was the only country to offer to host the IAEA LEU Bank on its territory and pledged nearly \$500,000 for the project.

IAEA Director-General Amano is convinced that the establishment and operation of the IAEA LEU Bank are fully funded by voluntary contributions from IAEA Member States and other donors totalling US \$150 million – sufficient to cover estimated costs for 20 years of operation – and has no impact on the Agency’s budget or other activities.

Addressing the inauguration event, he said he was grateful to all donors “whose generous financial contributions have made this project possible.” He also thanked China and Russia for their cooperation regarding agreements for the transit through

their countries of LEU for the IAEA LEU Bank.

Stressing that nuclear energy helps to address the twin challenges of securing sufficient energy for economic growth and mitigating the effects of climate change, Amano said around 30 countries are interested in introducing nuclear power. This is in addition to the same number of countries currently operating 447 nuclear power reactors around the world. Another 58 reactors are under construction, mostly in Asia.

“It is therefore very important that a last-resort mechanism such as the IAEA LEU Bank is established to give countries confidence that they will be able to meet their future needs for nuclear fuel,” he said.

According to the IAEA, the IAEA LEU Bank is part of global efforts to create an assured supply of nuclear fuel to countries in case of disruption of the commercial market or of other existing LEU supply arrangements.

Other assurance of supply mechanisms established with IAEA approval include a guaranteed physical reserve of LEU maintained by Russia at the International Uranium Enrichment Centre in Angarsk in Russia and a UK assurance of supply guaranty for supplies of LEU enrichment services. [IDN-InDepthNews – 30 August 2017]

Image: IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano (left) with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev with the symbolic key to the IAEA-LEU Bank | Credit: Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Iceland, Norway Debate UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

By Lowana Veal

REYKJAVIK (IDN) – With a population of 344,000, Iceland does not have a military of its own. Nevertheless, it is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and as such was one of the countries that boycotted the discussions leading up to the potentially groundbreaking UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted on July 7.

Prior to the start of the conference leading up to the Treaty, Foreign Affairs Minister Gudlaugur Thor Thordarson replied to a parliamentary question by Left-Green MP Steinunn Thora Árnadóttir on whether Iceland would take part in the UN discussions about banning nuclear weapons, as she felt that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation Nuclear Weapons (NPT) had not been very successful.

Thordarson replied that like other NATO countries, Iceland considered it necessary that the nuclear states take part in the disarmament process and it was clear that this would not be the case.

“On the other hand, I can easily agree that the process is going too slowly in these matters and there are various ominous forebodings concerning security matters ... This does not revolve around the aim – a world without nuclear weapons ... but rather the means to this goal. We do not believe in the means involved here,” Thordarson explained.

“Moreover, our Permanent Representative

at the UN in New York will obviously keep a close eye to the progress of this issue,” he added.

Sverrir Jakobsson, professor of history and former chairman of the Icelandic peace organization Campaign Against Military Bases, is scathing in his critique of Thordarson’s statements. “Their [NATO States] actual position seems to be that THEY ALONE should decide everything concerning if and how nuclear weapons should be abolished... If it is a question of aims, why are there no proposals from the nuclear states which can be measured against those of the majority of countries which support abolition?” he points out.

After the Treaty was signed, Thordarson said that “Iceland’s position towards nuclear weapons is very clear: that the aim shall be a world without nuclear weapons, and that these weapons shall be destroyed in a systematic, mutual manner. The most realistic way to do this, which is also the way which we believe will be most effective, is to continue to rely on the agreements and processes that already exist, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).”

“For its part,” reports a Foreign Ministry official, “NATO agreed the aim of a world without nuclear weapons in its 2010 Strategic Concept, but specifies at the same time that nuclear weapons remain part of the deterrence and defence preparations while

nuclear weapons exist. The minister says that this is a natural position of a defence alliance, but it must also be remembered that NATO states have reduced their nuclear arsenals by up to 95% since the Cold War.”

To which Jakobsson comments: “Almost the whole arsenal of the USA has been ‘modernized’, which is a pretty clear violation of the NPT treaty.”

In an interview with the Icelandic State Broadcasting Service after 122 countries adopted the Nuclear Ban Treaty, Thordarson said that the measures outlined at the UN Headquarters in New York were not realistic. When nuclear weapons were dismantled, “it was done on the premise that it was done mutually, in such a way that NATO member states and other countries are not left with some countries, such as North Korea, being the only countries with nuclear weapons. I don’t think anyone would want that to happen.”

“If the reason for the NATO refusal to work towards abolition is connected with North Korea, why then has NATO made no commitment not to use nuclear weapons pre-emptively against North Korea or any other country? Whatever people think about North Korea, they cannot be faulted for rejecting a deal that has never been on offer. The recent tension in Korea has been stoked by both sides, including the U.S. decision to place the THAAD anti-missile



Image: A candle-floating ceremony in memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in which three officials of the Japanese embassy in Reykjavik participated. One of the speakers said there was now a great need for the Icelandic peace movement to encourage the Icelandic government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons | Credit: Lowana Veal/IDN-INPS

system in Korea (and it could be argued that the whole anti-missile project is a violation of NPT, as their only conceivable purpose is to be able to make a nuclear attack without fear of repercussions),” Jakobsson pointed out.

Despite the lack of a military, Iceland was one of the Coalition of the Willing countries for invading Iraq. It also sends people on peacekeeping operations and one Icelander is currently working in Afghanistan as a NATO press officer. NATO routinely carries out air policing operations in Iceland.

Iceland was the only Nordic country that did not take part in the recent BALTOPS (BALTIC OPERATIONS) 2017 (June 1-16) naval exercise – an annual recurring multinational, maritime-focused exercise designed to provide high end training for the participants. This year 14 countries (Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States and NATO’s Enhanced Opportunities Partners: Finland and Sweden) participated.

Norway is another Nordic country in NATO. In 2016, it proposed a resolution in the UN General Assembly on the verification of disarmament that was “overwhelmingly supported”, according to the country’s Foreign Minister Børge Brende. “Our efforts for verification are essential to lay the groundwork for future reductions in nuclear weapons networks,” he said in an op-ed Norwegian newspaper article about Norway’s position to the Nuclear Ban Treaty.

In Brende’s opinion, “Unilateral winding up of NATO’s nuclear deterrence did not increase our security, but has led to strategic instability. The Netherlands participated in the bargaining negotiations, but concluded that the new treaty was not compatible with the country’s NATO membership. Should Norway, as the only NATO country, have joined the new ban, we would have distanced ourselves from a common allied security policy that has given us security for almost 70 years. That would be irresponsible.”

However, Jakobsson says: “No one is asking NATO to disarm unilaterally, only to take any steps in some direction towards disarmament, which the alliance is refusing to do... Nuclear weapons are unique in many respects, including the universal annihilation their use would undoubtedly result in. There have been plenty of

wars for the last years, including several initiated by aggressive countries who possess nuclear weapons.”

“An argument that is used for a ban is that it will delegitimize nuclear weapons. Some draw comparisons to other disarmament processes and the effect of these. Nuclear weapons are unique in their deterrent effect and can not be compared with other weapons. They add a completely different strategic and political significance and are weapons that have never been used since Nagasaki. This threshold must be maintained,” Brende continued.

Jakobsson disagrees. “Again, a very ingenious argument. Nuclear weapons are unique in many respects, including the universal annihilation their use would undoubtedly result in. Their deterrent effect is one of the few things that can be doubted, as they have not prevented wars for the last 70 years,” he says.

One of Brende’s political advisors, State Secretary Marit Berger Røsland, wrote another op-ed piece in response to ICAN Norway’s Anne Marte Skaland, in which Skaland asks “What’s the problem?” Røsland points out: “There is also a problem that the treaty negotiated at the UN in New York on July 7 does not require membership of the NPT or accession to the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) Supplementary Protocol with robust control mechanisms. This could undermine the existing global non-proliferation regime.”

Skaland’s question was part of a letter she wrote that was published in the Norwegian daily newspaper Klassekompen. She concludes by saying: “Brende focuses only on the fact that nuclear weapons states are not included. I would also like him to value that previously underrepresented players take place, take power and set a standard for what is right and wrong. History has shown us that when change occurs, those who lose power, legitimacy and privileges will resist. But eventually you get used to it. Eventually, the new norm is established and accepted.” [IDN-InDepth-News – 23 August 2017]

UN Nuclear Ban Treaty and the Vital Role of Nuclear Have-Nots

By Dr. Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikan

ULAANBAATAR (IDN) - An event of truly historic importance has taken place at the United Nations Headquarters: On July 7 the text of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was approved at the final session of the General Assembly mandated conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading towards their total elimination. It is the first legally binding instrument for nuclear disarmament to have been negotiated since the end of the Cold War more than two decades ago.

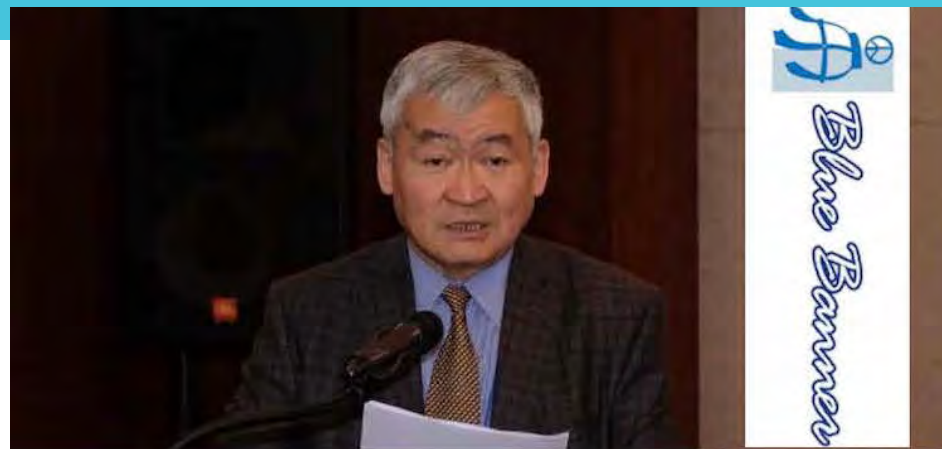
It was adopted by 122-1-1 votes thus marking a major milestone in multilateral efforts to abolish nuclear weapons since the first resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1946 asking for proposals for “the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.”

Though the two nuclear-weapon states – USA and Russia – with nearly 95% of the atomic arsenal have reduced their stocks of such weapons of mass destruction, the issue of outlawing nuclear weapons has not been on the nuclear agenda. On the contrary, the number of nuclear weapon states has increased to nine, while nuclear modernization is underway and new nuclear arms race is increasing.

Statements by some leaders of nuclear-weapon states confirm that they may not necessarily be pursuing a “rational or sane” path and that nuclear weapons don’t belong in anyone’s hands. The most reliable way to protect from the horrors of such weapons is to eliminate them.

Therefore there is a growing concern about the increasing risks of nuclear weapons with the surge of threatening rhetoric. The three international conferences held in recent years in Norway, Mexico and Austria have also reminded of the devastating humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons detonation, whether deliberate, by accident or due to negligence.

On the other hand, there is a growing frustration with the nuclear-weapon states for not fulfilling their commitments undertaken



by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) as well as by the understandings reached in the 2000 NPT Review Conference regarding the 13 practical steps or in the 2010 NPT Review Conference on the 64-point Action Plan. All these have led the vast majority of the international community to start negotiations on the prohibition of nuclear weapons with the final goal of their elimination.

An important role in calling for such negotiations was played by non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWSs) of Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa. However support of other NNWS was decisive for the General Assembly to mandate the international negotiations and adopt the text of the treaty.

Civil society organizations – national and international, especially the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) – played a vital role in raising awareness of the necessity of taking concrete measures to start the negotiations as well as disseminating information regarding the issues involved.

Also the Costa Rican Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez, President of the conference, as well as the entire leadership of the conference should be highly commended for their persistence and the needed flexibility to agree on the content of the treaty.

The treaty is a product of compromise. As such it cannot fully satisfy interests of any one or group of states that participated in the negotiations. Though it will not bring about nuclear disarmament

in the immediate future, the treaty's adoption marks a concrete collective action in launching that process.

It marks a beginning of a new stage that creates a space for NNWSs to be more involved in the process that directly affects their vital interests. This would strengthen international norms of nuclear disarmament, reinforce public standing on the issue affecting the interests of all states and not only of the nuclear-weapon states, and delegitimize such weapons, as was the case of other weapons of mass destruction and some conventional weapons.

Looking at the issue from a legal point of view, the treaty is in accordance with the principles and objectives of the United Nations as reflected in its Charter. It is also in accordance with Article VI of the NPT, whereby more than 190 states have committed 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 ... under strict and effective international control". In that sense implementation of the treaty would strengthen the NPT.

Implementation of the treaty, when it enters into force, would be a challenging task since nuclear-weapon states and their allies are not on board. However, its entry into force would create a new situation and environment that would stigmatize the hold-out states to eventually recognize the emerging political and legal environment.

In that sense it is commendable that the treaty leaves the door open for later accession. It will take time, patience and enormous efforts of NNWSs to expand the treaty's membership. Even the NPT did not enjoy wide support when it was opened for signature, ratification or accession. However, today 191 states are parties to it.

As a compromise, the treaty is not a consensus document; some would have preferred it to have stronger provisions on specific issues while others would have wanted to have some ambiguous provisions with the hope to make it acceptable for the hold-out states.

From Mongolia's perspective, Article 1 (g) and the reference to the "threat" of use of nuclear weapons are seen as important provisions, with the latter directly challenging the concept of "nuclear

deterrence" and "extended deterrence". The lack of definition of a nuclear weapon or a timeframe for removal of nuclear weapons from the territories of states that are not nuclear-weapon states make the treaty somewhat weak.

As mentioned above, the role of NNWSs in initiating the negotiations, and actually drafting the treaty was enormous. However, their role will be even more important in signing the treaty and ratifying it in the near future so as to maintain this positive momentum and bring the treaty into force. That would not be easy due to the position of the nuclear-weapon states and their allies, possible attempts to influence policies of NNWSs and discourage any step to bringing the treaty into force. Hence mutual support and cooperation of NNWSs would be vital.

Likewise, the role of civil society both at the national and international level would be highly useful. Implementation of Article 4 (4) would narrow the geographical spread of nuclear weapons, while meeting of states parties would reinforce its application and implementation. The role of NNWSs in ensuring verification of implementation of the treaty, interpretation of its provisions or settlement of possible disputes would be important.

Any positive action needs to start with national policies. In this regard national implementation of the treaty, as per Article 5, would reinforce its provisions reflecting the specifics of that particular state-party. Hence adoption of national legislation would be useful. This is the area where exchange of information and experience would be useful for the treaty's effectiveness.

Another group of NNWSs – those that are under nuclear umbrella or are hosting nuclear weapons – can play a unique role. As allies of nuclear-weapon states, they have a direct access to them and, instead of supporting their policies or participating in nuclear-war planning, they could work to reassess the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines in today's closely interdependent world. This could be their contribution to implementing Article VI of NPT and promoting the goals of a world without nuclear weapons until their own accession to the treaty. [IDN-InDepthNews – 28 July 2017]

*Image: Dr. Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan,
Chairman of 'Blue Banner'*

What After the Adoption of the UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

By Susi Snyder



UTRECHT, The Netherlands (IDN) - It's nearly impossible to believe: nuclear weapons are banned. Outlawed. Making their way to where they belong, the dustbin of history. Since July 7 2017, that is a new reality. There is now a treaty that makes it illegal to make, have, get or use nuclear weapons. But what's the next step for the nuclear ban?

The treaty itself provides the first answer. It will open for signature on September 20 at the UN headquarters in New York. From then on the treaty will remain open for signature and States will begin the national processes to ratify. Three months after the fiftieth State has ratified, the treaty will enter into force and become binding on all those who have ratified it.

In principle, even before a treaty enters into force, it can have a normative effect. Think of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); it's over 20 years since it first opened for signature and it hasn't entered into force. Yet anytime any country plans a nuclear weapons test – or as in the case of North Korea – carries it out, the world reacts, condemns it, and imposes sanctions. Building that norm around what the nuclear ban treaty prohibits is the next step.

For decades, efforts to change the way we talk about nuclear weapons – to brand them as immoral and illegitimate – have been going on. Now, a new tool exists that codifies their illegitimacy, adds clout to the efforts to change the debate. Now, when we talk about nuclear weapons activities we can talk about them as prohibited by an international treaty.

In what ways can this new prohibition have an impact? How can the treaty be leveraged to eradicate nuclear weapons from the planet?

National legislation

States will be responsible for putting in place national legislation to ratify the treaty. Article 5 of the Treaty requires legal, administrative and other measures including penal sanctions to prevent and suppress activity prohibited by the treaty. In developing national implementation legislation, States have the possibility to further elaborate the provisions of the treaty, and incorporate components to develop and codify their understanding of the treaty, to build on its stigmatizing power. This could include prohibiting financing of nuclear weapon producing companies.

When designing national legislation the inclusion of a clear prohibition on financing nuclear weapon producing companies will provide clarity about how the financial sector should respond to the prohibition on assistance in Article 1 of the treaty. This signalling function is important to financial institutions. Many in the financial sector now use the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a reason to keep investing in companies that produce key components for nuclear weapons. They say that it's okay for some countries to keep nuclear weapons, but that has all changed in the new reality.

Financial institutions provide crucial and necessary support to companies so that they are able to produce key components for nuclear weapons. Most nuclear-armed states rely on private companies for the production, maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapons. Publicly available

documentation shows private companies are involved in the nuclear arsenals of, at least, France, India, Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States.

When financial institutions invest in companies associated with nuclear weapon production, they provide the financing that is needed for the projects that are currently making these weapons more likely to be used while increasing their killing capacity. This can be made illegal, and the new treaty ratification process offers the best opportunity to do so.

Previous experiences have shown that states are well placed to implement general financing prohibitions in their national contexts. For example, research by PAX shows that 10 states have already adopted national legislation prohibiting investments in cluster munitions[i], understood to be prohibited by the 'assistance' provision in the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Some states have also already done so for the financing of nuclear weapons. In Australia and New Zealand it is a crime for a person or company to facilitate nuclear weapons manufacture anywhere in the world. In both countries, a company is also prohibited from providing services, including lending money, to another company if it can reasonably suspect that the services provided will contribute to a WMD (weapons of mass destruction) programme. In Switzerland, the Swiss War Materials Act prohibits direct investment in nuclear weapons producers. Liechtenstein

implements the same legislation.

Implementing a prohibition on financing in the national ratification process as an elaboration of the assistance clause of the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty allows states to consolidate their obligations under other existing prohibitions and restrictions on financing, ranging from the UN Security Council Resolution 1540 to the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Best practices on national implementation could be shared at meetings of states parties and assistance with implementation measures could be asked for and provided, should States choose to do so.

No profit from illegal weapons

It is important to recognize that existing prohibitions on financing do not restrict purchasing other goods produced by companies that might also be involved in prohibited activities. The same should apply here. In practical terms, a prohibition on financing would apply to all types of investments and financing, including providing loans, investment banking services (such as underwriting bond or share issuances), and asset management activities such as shareholding.

A prohibition on financing does not require a boycott of nuclear weapon producing companies; it only prohibits investing in them. Financing and investing are done with the intention of making a profit. Investing in the producer of nuclear weapons is therefore not only a form of assistance for the production of these

weapons, it also means profiting from an activity that is prohibited because of its inhumane consequences.

What next?

When thinking about what comes next for the Nuclear Prohibition Treaty, bringing it into force and encouraging good national ratification legislation is a distinct path forward. Along the way, it will be necessary to clearly identify and describe prohibited acts as illegal, and to elaborate the assistance provision to stop financial institutions from profiting from nuclear weapons production. The majority of the world's governments have unquestioningly rejected nuclear weapons, and now we need to work to give that rejection more teeth. [IDN-InDepth-News – 17 July 2016]

Image credit: Susi Snyder

Finally, Nuclear Weapons Are Outlawed

By Jayantha Dhanapala

KANDY, Sri Lanka (IDN) – On July 7 2017, seventy two years after the most inhumanely destructive weapon was invented and used on hapless Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a Conference of the majority of member states in the United Nations decided – by a vote of 122 for; one abstention: and one against – to adopt a Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

It had been a long journey from January 1946 when the newly established United Nations Organization, located temporarily in London, adopted its very first resolution calling for nuclear disarmament signifying the undisputed priority of this issue. Since then, at every session of the UN General Assembly, resolutions with various nuances on nuclear disarmament were adopted with varying majorities.

Meanwhile the number of nuclear weapon armed countries grew to nine – of which only five were recognized as nuclear weapon states in terms of the 1968 Treaty for the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Many other states huddled under their nuclear umbrellas the main one being the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

For these states and the concept of deterrence and extended deterrence there is the specific prohibition contained in the new Treaty to host nuclear weapons belonging to some other country. For the NPT as a whole, belying the fears of the opponents, the norm of non-proliferation has been greatly strengthened in the new Treaty.

Three clearly discernible strands merged in the final thrust of the nuclear disarmament movement to achieve the adoption of the July 7 Treaty text. They were: (a) the process over seven decades in the UN itself led by a dedicated group of countries; (b) the work of civil society; and (c) the “Humanitarian initiative” which has made an indelible stamp on the disarmament field and influenced the Preamble paragraphs of the July 7 treaty especially.

Milestones

Historic landmarks at the UN included the 1978 first Special Session of the UN General Assembly devoted to Disarmament (SSO-



DI) the Final Document of which remains the high watermark of the international consensus reached on disarmament clearly identifying as a priority the goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

A group of parallel treaties both global and regional upheld this objective. These include the most widely subscribed to disarmament treaty - the 1968 Treaty for the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) which under Article VI provides, ineffectively, for negotiations “in good faith” for nuclear disarmament and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which remains unratified by eight nations before it can enter into force.

A slew of regional nuclear weapon free zone treaties from the Antarctic Treaty covering the uninhabited South Pole region; the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco for Latin America and the Caribbean; the Treaty of Rarotonga for the South Pacific; the Treaty of Pelindaba for Africa; the Treaty of Bangkok for South-east Asia came into force insulating vast geographical areas from the stationing of nuclear weapons. With most of them supplemented by Protocols signed by the NPT nuclear weapon states pledging to respect these zones a major advance was made as voluntary “affirmative

action” by non-nuclear weapon states.

On the international legal front, the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice was a major success in calling for the declaration of the illegality of the possession and use of nuclear weapons but the feasibility of its implementation was questioned. A series of distinguished international commissions such as the Canberra Commission also called for the elimination of nuclear weapons in their cogently argued reports with significant impact on global public opinion.

The debate

Broadly speaking the debate between the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) and their allies on the one hand, and the Non Nuclear Weapons States (NNWS) on the other, was around the wisdom of achieving the seemingly common objective of a nuclear weapon free world through a “step by step” process of achieving security before disarmament or by agreeing on an outright nuclear weapon ban followed by its gradual implementation under credible international verification procedures.

The latter school of thought supported politically by the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) countries in the UN and the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and civil society faced rising levels of frustration by the obstructionism of the NWS and their supporters. The precedent established by the outright ban on the two other categories of weapons of mass destruction – Biological Weapons through the Biological Weapons Conven-

tion (BWC) of 1972 and Chemical Weapons by the Chemicals Weapons Convention (CWC) of 1993 – as legal norms was relevant.

In the case of the CWC the norm was supported by an international organization and an intrusive verification system. The reported violations in the fog of the ongoing Syrian conflict by the Syrian Government and by irregular armed groups supported by major powers in a proxy war does not invalidate the verification system.

Article VI of the NPT had long been the banner under which NNWS had fought its battle for nuclear disarmament. After the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995 that appeared an increasingly frustrating avenue when agreements reached by consensus at the NPT Review Conferences in 1995, 2000 and 2010 were brazenly violated by the NWS. Nuclear weapon proliferation by India and Pakistan, who stayed out of the NPT, seemed to be rewarded by their NWS friends while the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) remains under increasingly tough sanctions in a tense stand off with the NWS in the UN Security Council.

In that context, Austria and Switzerland, supported by the ICRC with its impeccable humanitarian credentials, initiated the “Humanitarian Initiative” from within the NPT with growing support in the UN behind a series of resolutions highlighting the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. This grew into a broad campaign with conferences in Oslo

(March 2013), Nayarit (February 2014) and Vienna (December 2014) the logical conclusion of which led to the 2016 resolution at the UNGA calling for the decisive 2017 Conference.

Bold initiatives

In the buildup of frustration over failed and unimplemented NPT Review Conferences and decisions, civil society grew more strident and bold in its demands. Initiatives adopted by NGOs like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and the move to abolish Cluster Munitions led to treaties outside the UN framework at first before they were brought within the UN confirming their legitimacy and enlarging their circle of adherents.

On nuclear weapons where the stakes were higher and the opposition of the NWS more formidable the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) led a coalition of NGOs energetically succeeding first with the adoption of the UNGA resolution in 2016 and then the 2017 Conference.

The holding of the conference was met with opposition and a boycott from the NWS and their allies including Australia and, surprisingly, Canada. Only the Netherlands from NATO participated in the Conference – if only to vote against the final resolution adopting the text of the Treaty

The election of Ambassador Elayne Whyte-Gomez – the able woman diplomat from Costa Rica – as President was significant. Her country – one of the very few without a standing army and with former-



President Oscar Arias as a Nobel Laureate – had laudable credentials quite apart from her own diplomatic skills.

The conclusion of the Conference coincided with the G20 meeting in Hamburg with its stormy protests and the media focus on the first Trump-Putin meeting and the dissonance of Trump's policies with the rest of the G20 especially on climate change. International media attention, which, at the best of times, is niggardly when it comes to the question of nuclear disarmament, was even more so in reporting on the July 7 climax of the conference.

In favour of the Treaty

The sparse commentary was largely skeptical with regards to the implementability of the Treaty, which comes before the UNGA for adoption in September. Several factors operate in favour of the future of the Treaty.

First it has set a modest target of 50 ratifying states for entry into force rather than the 44 specifically named states in the CTBT including the USA. Second a history of comparable treaties shows

that the lapse of time between the first surge of signatories and the totally inclusive nature of the Treaty may be long but the validity of the treaty as international law is undisputed.

In the particular case of the NPT when the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 2373 in 1968, endorsing the draft text of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the vote was 95 to 4 with 21 abstentions. The 122 countries that voted for the adoption of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are thus pioneers on a bold and exciting path combining security concerns with humanitarian interests.

We are at a transformational moment. Violence and conflict triggered by extremist ideologies and an arms race among great powers has resulted in a total of \$1676 billion of military expenditure in 2016. Nine nuclear weapon armed states with a total arsenal of 15,395 warheads, 4120 of them operationally deployed, threaten the catastrophe of nuclear war declared intentionally or by accidents like computer error or hacking. Nuclear weapon arsenals are being modernized all the time with reckless nuclear doctrines increasing the danger of actual use.

Populism – a counterfeit brand of democracy – is being enthroned in the West and other parts of the world while increasing economic disparities and growing intolerance of minorities is spreading, triggered by the largest wave of human migration of refugees and displaced people since World War II. In contrast the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a ray of hope for our troubled times. [IDN-InDepthNews – 12 July 2017]

Image (top): The remains of the Prefectural Industry Promotion Building, later preserved as a monument - known as the Genbaku Dome - at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial | Credit: UN Photo

Image (bottom): Jayantha Dhanapala | Credit: UNODA.

A Landmark Achieve for Nuclear Disarmament

By Sergio Duarte, Ambassador, former High Representative of the UN for Disarmament Affairs



UNITED NATIONS (IDN) - A large majority of the international community, together with governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions, achieved an important milestone in the treatment of disarmament questions by concluding a landmark Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The instrument was adopted on July 7, 2017 by 122 votes in favor, 1 against (Netherlands) and 1 abstention (Singapore).

Between March 15 to 31 and June 17 to July 7 the United Nations Conference negotiated a legally binding instrument for the prohibition of nuclear weapons leading to their elimination, in accordance with the mandate contained in General Assembly of Resolution 71/258 of December 23 2016. Participants benefitted from several years of studies, proposals and initiatives taken by

States, academic institutions and organizations of the civil society on means to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Ambassador Elayne Whyte-Gómez of Costa Rica presided over the work of the Conference and was generally praised for her ability and diplomatic skill. The Conference adopted a report to be submitted to the forthcoming Session of the General Assembly which will decide the way forward. The General Assembly is expected to adopt a resolution at its 72nd Session commending the Treaty and opening it to the signature of States as from September 20, 2017. The participants in the negotiations have every reason to believe that it will be expeditiously signed and ratified by the necessary number of States for its early entry into force.

The President submitted a first draft on March 22 and new drafts

were released on June 27 and July 3 as the debates of the Conference progressed. Amendments to articles 7, 8 and 13 of the latter, based on comments by States during the July 5 meeting were presented by the President on July 7 in document A/conf.229/2017.CRP.3. The final text of Treaty was adopted on July 7 and appears in document A/CONF.229/2017/L.3/Rev.1. Active debates

There was considerable level of convergence on the main aspects of the Treaty. Nevertheless, the debates were quite active and a large number of suggestions and proposals for changes were presented, particularly during the three weeks of the second part of the negotiations. These suggestions and proposals dealt with practically every aspect of the Treaty, but mainly with the scope of the prohibitions, methods of verification, declarations by States Party, meetings of Parties, relations with other agreements, peaceful uses, duration and conditions for withdrawal, among others.

Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa, which had promoted the drafting and adoption of Resolution 71/258 participated actively in the work of the Conference. Practically all delegations intervened in the debates with constructive observations and proposals, particularly Algeria, Argentina, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Holy See, Guatemala, Liechtenstein, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and Thailand.

Among the nuclear weapon possessors and their allies, the Netherlands was the only State that sent a delegation to the Conference. At the start of the work its delegation stated that it would not be able to agree to any text incompatible with the Netherlands' obligations under NATO or with its commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and explained its comments during the debate and its negative vote accordingly.

Explaining their affirmative votes, some delegates pointed out perceived shortcomings in the text but decided to support the text because of the overriding importance they attributed to the codification of a clear rejection of nuclear weapons in international law.

There was considerable discussion on many aspects of the draft Treaty. The following examples, which are not exhaustive, will suffice to give an idea of the extent and substantive depth of the debates:

- a) A few States questioned the mention to the "inalienable right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes" but it was retained in the final text;
- b) Some States pressed for including an explicit prohibition of preparations, transit and financing of nuclear weapons while others considered that this was contained in the prohibition to "assist, encourage and induce" engagement in prohibited activities;
- c) Others argued for more stringent standards of verification such as the

Additional Protocol. In the view of some, the expression "nuclear weapons programmes" needed definition;

- d) The comparative high level of detail for the accession by States possessing nuclear weapons of hosting them in their territories contained in Article 4 was the subject of long discussions and finally was considered necessary in view of the general acceptance of the "join and destroy" option;
- e) Some were disappointed at the lack of a definite timeframe for the removal of nuclear weapons stationed in the territory of other States (Article 4.4) but seemed content with the expression "as soon as possible". There is, however, no independent mechanism for the verification of compliance with this requirement;
- f) The question of relationship with other agreements was debated at length. A proposal to include a mention to the fact that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was not yet in force received some support but did not prosper;
- g) Several States criticized the final form of Article 17 on withdrawal and argued for the explicit deletion of the reference to "extraordinary events" that may have jeopardized the "supreme interests" of a Party. Others thought it would be wise to omit mention to withdrawal in view of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties on the subject. Consensus was achieved on the formulation finally adopted in paragraph 3 of Article 17, according to which withdrawal will take effect 12 months

after the date of notification, with the proviso that if on the expiry of that period the withdrawing State party is engaged in armed conflict it shall continue to be bound by the obligations of the Treaty until no longer party to that conflict.

The final result of the Conference showed that the overwhelming majority of the participants were undoubtedly satisfied with the result of the process that led to the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Once the Treaty comes into force, all three recognized categories of weapons of mass destruction – chemical, bacteriological (biological) and nuclear – will have been banned under international law. Many pointed out that the efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament started over 70 years ago at the General Assembly, with the adoption of Resolution no. 1 in January 1946.

Categorical rejection of nuclear weapons

Most participants agree that although the Treaty may indeed have some deficiencies and shortcomings, it is the first clear expression, in positive international law, of the categorical rejection of nuclear weapons by a large section of the international community, both on moral grounds and on the humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use of such weapons and it is a welcome addition to the corpus of international law relating to disarmament, non-proliferation and international security.

The complexity of the subject matter of

the Treaty and its unprecedented character explain many of the difficulties that had to be overcome by the negotiating States. The overriding desire to conclude a multilateral legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons leading to the elimination, in accordance with the mandate received from the United Nations General Assembly in the historic Resolution 71/258 of December 23 2016, together with the encouragement and substantive contribution from governmental and non-governmental organizations, was decisive for the success of the negotiation and subsequent adoption of a negotiated text.

Even without having achieved consensus, the only negative vote came from one member of a military alliance with a nuclear weapon State that attended all the meetings of the Conference and offered detailed explanations of its views on the Treaty, including specific drafting proposals.

This should be understood as a demonstration of the interest of public opinion in matters related to nuclear disarmament, including in countries possessing nuclear weapons and those having defense agreements involving their possible use. This can also be seen as a reminder of the need for relevant governmental and civil society organizations to step up their efforts to present the case for nuclear disarmament to the public worldwide.

Much work remains to be done to achieve the desired universality of this Treaty. All

participants in this historic undertaking realize that the Treaty will not achieve nuclear disarmament overnight, but it is an important and necessary first meaningful and concrete step in that direction.

Together with governmental and non-governmental organizations and institutions, that cooperated in the drafting and adoption of the instrument, civil society has an indispensable role to play in disseminating knowledge about this achievement and helping in the promotion of worldwide awareness of the risks posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the catastrophic and unacceptable consequences of their use. Support by public opinion everywhere, including in the States that still rely on nuclear weapons for their security is indispensable for the full realization of the aims and objectives of the Treaty. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 July 2017]

*Image: Moment of UN nuclear ban treaty adoption 7th July 2017 |
Credit: Clare Conboy/ICAN.*

Civil Society Rejoices at the New UN Treaty Marking the Beginning of the End of Nuclear Age

By Ramesh Jaura

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – When the United Nations member states adopted on July 7, 2017 a legally-binding treaty banning nuclear weapons and prohibiting a full range of related activities, it was a historic and highly emotional moment not only for Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica, president of the UN conference. It was also a moment of profound rejoicing for a diverse range of civil society organisations (CSOs).

Twenty-five years after UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali opened the doors for the CSOs and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to contribute to the success of the Earth Summit in June 1992 that stressed the inexorable link between environment and development, the CSOs have successfully exercised their ‘soft power’ to help usher in a world free of nuclear weapons.

It was not surprising therefore that conference president Whyte Gómez and one delegate after another commended the vital role civil society organisations have played in the UN adopting a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, thus marking an important step toward their eventual elimination.

One of the leading CSOs that has been working for a nuclear-weapons-free world for a decade is the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Its Executive Director, Beatrice Fihn, said: “We

hope that today marks the beginning of the end of the nuclear age. It is beyond question that nuclear weapons violate the laws of war and pose a clear danger to global security.”

Until now, nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction without a prohibition treaty, despite the widespread and catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their intentional or accidental detonation. Biological weapons were banned in 1972 and chemical weapons in 1992. “It is time for leaders around the world, she added, to match their values and words with action by signing and ratifying this treaty as a first step towards eliminating nuclear weapons.”

The treaty also creates obligations to support the victims of nuclear weapons use (known in Japanese as “hibakusha”) and testing and to remediate the environmental damage caused by nuclear weapons.

Fihn noted that as has been true with previous weapon prohibition treaties, changing international norms leads to concrete changes in policies and behaviors, even in states not party to the treaty. “The strenuous and repeated objections of nuclear-armed states is an admission that this treaty will have a real and lasting impact,” she said.

Commenting the adoption of the treaty, David Krieger, President of the Santa Barbara-based Nuclear Age Peace

Foundation (NAPF), said: “This is an exciting day for those of us who have worked for a world free of nuclear weapons and an important day for the world . . . What this represents is humanity finally standing up for sanity and its own survival 72 years into the Nuclear Age.”

This effort to ban nuclear weapons has been led by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons . . . The movement has benefitted from the broad support of international humanitarian, environmental, nonproliferation, and disarmament organizations that have joined forces throughout the world, added Krieger.

While the United States chose to boycott the negotiations, their repeated objections demonstrate that this treaty has the potential to significantly impact U.S. behavior regarding nuclear weapons issues, noted Krieger. “Previous weapon prohibition treaties, including the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, have demonstrated that changing international norms leads to concrete changes in policies and behaviors, even in states not party to the treaty.”

Rick Wayman, Director of Programs at NAPF, said, “This treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons is truly a joint effort between the majority of the world’s countries and many dedicated non-governmental organizations.”

Echoing similar sentiments, Hirotsugu Terasaki, Director General of Peace and Global Issues of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), said: “We have long worked toward the abolition of these most inhumane of weapons, and would like to express our deepest respect to all the hibakusha, governments, UN and other international organizations and nongovernmental organizations around the world who have made dedicated efforts to realize this treaty.” SGI is a lay Buddhist organisation based in Tokyo.

The adoption of this treaty is a concrete step toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons, the common wish of all humanity, Terasaki said, adding: “The next challenge will be to make the significance of the treaty widely understood, and to ensure broad and solid support going forward. We strongly hope that nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-dependent states who did not participate in this conference will come to work with us in this global endeavour to create a world free from nuclear weapons.”

Terasaki pointed out that SGI President Daisaku Ikeda urged back in September 2009 the need for ‘Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition’. This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons made by Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda in September 1957, in which he described nuclear weapons as an absolute evil. “It is of great significance for us that a treaty prohibiting these weapons

has become a reality at this time,” added Terasaki.

Kimiaki Kawai, SGI Director of Peace and Human Rights, who was in New York participating in the final session of negotiations at the UN, commented: “The adoption of this treaty feels like a momentous step forward. Even if the nuclear-weapon states and most nuclear-weapon dependent states have not participated, the moral norm has been declared very clearly, with the united will of the world’s people behind it. Nuclear weapons in any hands are wrong.”

Another leading organisation that has actively participated in the negotiations at the United Nations in New York is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). “Today, the world has taken an historic step towards de-legitimising these indiscriminate and inhumane weapons, which is a crucial basis for their future elimination,” said ICRC President Peter Maurer speaking in Geneva.

“The agreement is an important victory for our shared humanity,” he added. For too long nuclear weapons have remained the only weapon of mass destruction not explicitly prohibited in international law. The treaty adopted today fills this gap.”

Speaking at the negotiations, the Head of the ICRC’s Arms Unit, Kathleen Lawand, praised States for reaching agreement. She said, “The treaty will reinforce the stigma against the use of nuclear weapons. Yet, we know that the adoption of this treaty by itself will not make nuclear weapons

disappear overnight. Our collective work is far from complete.”

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association, said: “The new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons marks a new phase in the seven-decade-long effort to prevent nuclear war...The treaty also requires states to provide assistance to those affected by nuclear weapons use and testing.”

While the treaty itself will not immediately eliminate any nuclear weapons, Kimball added, it can, over time, further delegitimize nuclear weapons and strengthen the legal and political norm against their use.

In his view, the new Treaty aims to reinforce the key disarmament component (Article VI) of the 1968 NPT, which requires its 190+ 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”.

Under the new treaty, states may not “test” nuclear weapons or any other nuclear explosive devices. Kimball said: “This simply reinforces the 1996 Comprehensive CTBT, which “prohibits any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion” and has been signed by 183 states, including the United States, Russia, the U.K. France, and China. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 July 2017]



*Image: Civil Society Applauds UN nuclear ban treaty adoption 7th July 2017 |
Credit: Clare Conboy | ICAN*

Faith Groups Urge Universal Adoption of UN Nuclear Ban Treaty

By Jamshed Baruah



UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – While welcoming the adoption of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons “as a vital step toward the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons”, Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons have in a ‘public statement’ called for its universal acceptance and implementation.

The Treaty, adopted on July 7, 2017 at the UN Headquarters in New York, lays out detailed provisions stipulating a comprehensive ban on the development, production, possession, stockpiling, testing, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. It is the result of intensive negotiations at the UN involving more than 120 governments and many civil society representatives.

Some 40 faith groups and individuals recognize in the statement issued together with Pax, the World Council of Churches and Soka

Gakkai International (SGI) their special responsibility to awaken public conscience to the dire humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

The statement declares: “Having repeatedly voiced our grave concerns about the humanitarian and environmental consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, we wholeheartedly welcome the adoption of this Treaty as a vital step toward the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.”

It points out that the respective faith traditions of the signatories of the statement advocate the right of people and all living beings 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,”

vows the statement, and declares: “Nuclear weapons are entirely incompatible with these values and commitments, and manifest a total disregard for the principles of humanity.”

The faith communities applaud the courage demonstrated by the states represented in the negotiations, the invaluable efforts by the world body and other international organizations, as well as of civil society, which have resulted in the realization of this Treaty.

“We offer our particular respect to the hibakusha (a-bomb survivors), victims of nuclear tests and others suffering from the effects of radiation from the manufacture of nuclear weapons and environmental degradation of their homelands, whose experiences and advocacy have demonstrated that the fundamental purpose of this Treaty must be to prevent the unacceptable suffering and harm they have endured from being visited on any other individual, family or society,” the faith groups say.

The statement considers it vital that the principles and norms of the Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons are widely disseminated among the world’s peoples in order to achieve its universal adoption and implementation.

“As people of faith we accept as our special responsibility the work of raising awareness of the risks and consequences of nuclear weapons for current and future generations, awakening public conscience to build a global popular constituency in support of the Treaty in order to achieve and sustain a world free from nuclear weapons,” the statement concludes.

The endorsers of the statement include: Buddhist Relief, the Buddhist Council of New York, Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, the Church of Sweden, and the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces.

Friends Committee on National Legislation, Insight Meditation Community of Washington, International Buddhist Committee of Washington DC, Islamic Society of North America, Muslim Peace Fellowship, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Pax Cristi International, Pax Cristi USA, and Pax have also endorsed the statement.

While the complete list of endorsers is available on page 2

at <http://www.sgi.org/content/files/resources/ngo-resources/peace-disarmament/ptnw-joint-statement-july-2017.pdf> some of the other others are: Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Religions Initiative, United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries, United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, Quakers in Britain, the World Bosniak Congress, and the World Council of Churches. [IDN-InDepthNews – 8 July 2017]

Image: Faith groups’ representatives in front of the Isaiah Wall across the street from the United Nations Building in New York City with the Bible verse “...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” |

Credit: ICAN

'Combination of Reason and Heart' Results in UN Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons

By Ramesh Jaura

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – In what was a “historic” and a highly emotional moment at the United Nations, member states adopted on July 7, 2107 a legally-binding treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

“The world has been waiting for this legal norm for 70 years,” since the use of the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 at the end of World War II, said Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica, president of the UN conference to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

“We feel emotional,” she told a news conference at the UN Headquarters in New York, “because we are responding to the hopes and dreams of the present and future generations.”

It is the first multilateral legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament to have been negotiated in 20 years. With the Treaty, the world is “one step closer” to a total elimination of nuclear weapons, the conference president Whyte Gómez said.

The treaty – adopted by a vote of 122 in favour to one against (Netherlands), with one abstention (Singapore) – prohibits a full range of nuclear-weapon-related activities, such as undertaking to develop, test, produce, manufacture, acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. The prohibitions also include any undertaking to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons or other nuclear

explosive devices.

Whyte Gomez said 129 countries signed up to take part in drafting the treaty, which represents two-thirds of the 193 member states. But all nuclear states – the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China, which are permanent members of the Security Council as well as India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea (DPRK) – and NATO members enjoying the nuclear umbrella have boycotted the negotiations.

The only exception was the Netherlands, which despite U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory participated because the Dutch parliament asked it to send a delegation to the negotiations.

The treaty will be open for signature to all States at UN Headquarters in New York on September 20, 2017, six days ahead of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, and enter into force 90 days after it has been ratified by at least 50 countries.

“The treaty represents an important step and contribution towards the common aspirations of a world without nuclear weapons,” the spokesperson for Secretary-General António Guterres said following its adoption.

“The Secretary-General hopes that this new treaty will promote inclusive dialogue and renewed international cooperation aimed at achieving the long overdue objective of nuclear disarmament,” Stéphane

Dujarric added.

In a joint press statement issued on July 7, the delegations of the United States, United Kingdom and France, however, said they “have not taken part in the negotiation of the treaty... and do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it.”

“This initiative clearly disregards the realities of the international security environment,” they said. “Accession to the ban treaty is incompatible with the policy of nuclear deterrence, which has been essential to keeping the peace in Europe and North Asia for over 70 years.”

Responding to questions on the joint statement, Whyte Gómez recalled that when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was adopted, it did not enjoy a large number of accessions.

Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970. On May 11, 1995, the Treaty was extended indefinitely. A total of 191 States have joined the Treaty,



including the five nuclear-weapon States. In the beginning, it was unimaginable that those States would be parties to the NPT, Whyte Gómez. “But the world changes and the circumstances change.”

She added that the hibakusha, survivors of nuclear bombs, have been the driving force in the creation of the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty. The experiences they have been sharing “touch the human soul,” she said, adding that the negotiations were a “combination of reason and heart.”

In a recent interview, the newly appointed High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, said in an interview with UN News that “nuclear-weapon States and some of their allies are not able to join the negotiations at the moment, but hopefully a treaty will be something they will be able to join eventually.” She said that “the door must be open to all States, and this inclusiveness will have to be built into the treaty.”

The draft treaty does include various pathways for nuclear-armed States to join. For instance, a State must first eliminate its nuclear weapons programme prior to joining. That State would then need to cooperate with the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in verifying the correctness and completeness of its nuclear inventory, thus following the same path as South Africa in the 1990s.

“Since this is a negotiation, no delegation can leave having gained everything they asked for from their national perspective,” noted Whyte Gómez in a news conference

on July 6, while adding that she was confident that “the final draft has captured the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of those participating in the conference, including civil society, whose enthusiasm, knowledge and collective experience have been a key driver of this process.”

Responding to questions, according to UN News, Whyte Gómez stressed the importance of putting an international legal norm in place as a first step towards achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world, explaining that when conditions later become ripe for those nuclear-armed States to join, an architecture by which to do so exists.

All humanity expects that nuclear-armed States join the treaty “sooner than later,” but “I have no dates,” she said. Responding to a question by IDN, Whyte Gómez said she would continue to dialogue with countries that had stayed away from the negotiations.

Asked about the impact on the negotiations of the current tensions over the DPRK’s nuclear programme and ballistic missiles activities, she said that having a norm in place does influence the behaviors of a State. It also plays a fundamental role in shaping a new security paradigm for the 21st century, she added.

“The treaty, no doubt, will compliment and strengthen the global architecture on nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation regime. This is a historic event for humanity.” The origins of this event go back to the General Assembly resolution 71/258, convening in 2017 a United Nations confer-

ence to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

The Assembly encouraged all member states to participate in the Conference and decided that it shall convene in New York, under the rules of procedure of the General Assembly unless otherwise agreed by the Conference, with the participation and contribution of international organizations and civil society representatives. The Conference was held at the UN headquarters in New York from March 27 to 31 and from June 15 to July 7.

The decision to convene the Conference followed from the recommendation of the open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations, convened pursuant to resolution 70/33.

The open-ended working group, chaired by Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi (Thailand), specified in its report that a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons would establish general prohibitions and obligations as well as a political commitment to achieve and maintain a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The primary mandate of the open-ended working group was to address concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms that would need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. [IDN-InDepthNews – 7 July 2017]

Image: Conference President Elayne Whyte Gómez of Costa Rica after consensus adoption | Photo: Xanthe Hall | ICAN

Conference Pleads for Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Becoming Law

By Ramesh Jaura

NEW YORK | VIENNA (IDN) – At a crucial point in time when the United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination has submitted a draft treaty and the international community is focussed on the North Korean ICBM threat, an international conference has underlined the need for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) becoming law without any further dithering.

Experts from around the world, joined by young professionals, attended the Science and Technology Conference of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) from June 26 to June 30, 2017 in Austria's capital Vienna.

The call for early entry into force of the CTBT twenty-one years after it was opened for signature was based in the fact that the Treaty has been signed by 183 countries and ratified by 166, including three of the nuclear weapon States: France, Russia and the United Kingdom.

However, 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries – also known as Annex 2 states – are blocking its becoming international law. They must sign and ratify before the CTBT can enter into force. Of these, eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA. India, North Korea and Pakistan have

yet to sign the CTBT.

Addressing the first Preparatory Committee Session for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 2020 Review Conference in May 2-12 in Vienna, CTBTO Executive Secretary Dr Lassina Zerbo emphasised that the status quo is not secure enough in an unstable geopolitical climate.

“This was a key point on which NPT States Parties were in agreement,” he said in his opening remarks to the CTBTO Science and Technology Conference on June 27. “However, I also made clear that simply voicing agreement is not enough. To bring the CTBT into force we must insist on action over words.”

So it is encouraging, he added, that scientists from all of the remaining Annex 2 States, with one notable exception, are participating in this conference and working together to refine the CTBT verification regime. “I earnestly hope that through scientific advancement and collaboration we can inspire diplomatic action.”

The CTBTO further stressed: “We must focus on advancing our common objectives in science and technology to increase trust and mutual understanding. Scientific collaboration is essential to achieving a world free from the nuclear threat. It is also vital for making progress on other global challenges, such as disaster risk reduction and mitigation, climate change, and sustainable development.”

A notable view emerging from the conference is that the United States and China hold the key to resolving the impasse. Once the U.S. succeeds in persuading Israel to follow suit, Egypt would feel secure, Experts, who do not want to be named, expect the U.S. to influence Pakistan, which in turn would encourage India to sign and ratify.

Another group of experts believes that direct talks between the U.S. and North Korea, which the country insists on, would lift barriers to an amicable settlement leading to the entry into force of the CTBT within a foreseeable period of time.

While it remains to be seen how far such views would find their way into realpolitik, the importance of the CTBTO conference is evidenced by the fact that it attracted more than a thousand registered participants from over 120 countries, with 650 submitting abstracts, and 100 giving oral presentations. Besides, nearly 400 posters gave an insight into multiple scientific aspects of the CTBT. This made the gathering the largest of its kind to date.

Taking advantage of the presence of scientists and leaders of numerous countries, participants engaged in a lively exchange of knowledge and ideas across scientific disciplines. Such interaction helped ensure that the Treaty's global verification regime remains at the forefront of scientific and technical innovation.



The conference participants could convince themselves through scientific demonstrations and posters that the CTBT has a unique and comprehensive verification regime to make sure that no nuclear explosion goes undetected. This regime consists of three pillars:

Around 92 percent of the facilities of the International Monitoring System (IMS) are already up and running. When complete, it will consist of 337 facilities worldwide to monitor the planet for signs of nuclear explosions. The IMS uses the following four state-of-the-art technologies (numbers reflect final configuration):

Seismic: 50 primary and 120 auxiliary seismic stations monitor shockwaves in the Earth. The vast majority of these shockwaves – many thousands every year – are caused by earthquakes. But man-made explosions such as mine explosions or the announced North Korean nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016 are also detected.

Hydroacoustic: The eleventh and final hydroacoustic station was certified on June 19, 2017, completing the hydroacoustic part of the network, which monitors the

globe 24/7 for signs of nuclear explosions under the CTBT. One of the CTBTO's longest running and most complicated engineering endeavours, hydroacoustic station HA04 was installed in Crozet Islands (France) in December 2016 after nearly 20 years of overcoming a number of challenges and hurdles. 11 hydroacoustic stations "listen" for sound waves in the oceans. Sound waves from explosions can travel extremely far underwater.

Infrasound: 60 stations on the surface are detecting ultra-low frequency sound waves (inaudible to the human ear) that are emitted by large explosions. Executive Secretary Dr Zerbo visited Ecuador from June 15-19, 2017 for the inauguration of infrasound station IS20 on the Galápagos Islands, as the 51st (out of 60) infrasound station in the International Monitoring System. The installation of IS20 completes Ecuador's portion of the network and increases coverage particularly in the Pacific.

Radionuclide: 80 stations measure the atmosphere for radioactive particles; 40 of them also pick up noble gas. Only these measurements can give a clear indication as to whether an explosion detected by the other methods was actually nuclear or not. They are supported by 16 radionuclide laboratories.

On-site inspections are dispatched to the area of a suspicious nuclear explosion if the data from the IMS indicate that a nuclear test has taken place there. Inspectors will collect evidence on the ground at the suspected site. Such an inspection can

only be requested and approved by Member States once the CTBT has entered into force. Large on-site inspection exercises were carried out in 2008 in Kazakhstan and in 2014 in Jordan.

The huge amount of data collected by the stations can also be used for other purposes than detecting nuclear explosions. They can provide tsunami warning centres with almost real-time information about an underwater earthquake, thus helping to warn people earlier and possibly saving lives.

During the March 2011 Fukushima power plant accident, the network's radionuclide stations tracked the dispersion of radioactivity on a global scale. The data could also help us better understand the oceans, volcanoes, climate change, the movement of whales, and many other issues.

Besides, the International Data Centre at the CTBTO's headquarters in Vienna 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.

When North Korea tested in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016 the Member States received information about the location, magnitude, time and depth of the tests within two hours - and before the actual test had been announced by North Korea. [IDN-In-DepthNews – 5 July 2017]

Image: Conference view | Credit: CTBTO

Youth Determined to Push Through UN Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

By Ramesh Jaura

NEW YORK | VIENNA (IDN) – “As youth, we are the future leaders of the world, the ones who will inherit and live in the world left behind for us, and the bearers of the hopes and dreams for our children and their children after them,” declared a group of young people who are members of the CTBTO Youth Group.

“Twenty years after the opening of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) for signature, we regret that this Treaty, which would establish a legally binding, comprehensive prohibition on nuclear explosive testing, has yet to enter into force,” said the Group in a joint statement.

For so many years, the international community has not been able to secure entry into force of the CTBT despite the diplomatic energies invested into the process, continued the statement, adding:

“We believe that a change in approach is necessary and recognize that each of the remaining Annex 2 States (China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Pakistan, and the United States) has concerns that should be recognized and addressed. We trust in the power of constructive dialogue based on the principle of equality to address and resolve these differences.”

The statement affirmed the Group’s shared vision for a world free of nuclear weapons. “To that end, we hold the CTBT to be a critical next step towards nuclear disarmament and an important component of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.”

These views expressed in a statement on June 13, 2016 reiterated some five months after Dr Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), launched the Group at the symposium on “Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security: the CTBT@20” in Austria’s capital Vienna, which hosts the CTBTO.

Dr Zerbo argued that much like the situation with climate change and the environment, youth today are faced with the consequenc-

es of the short sighted decision making of the past.

“My generation has the responsibility to ensure that youth are provided with educational opportunities and training that will prepare them to meet the challenges of the future,” he added. This is why he launched the CTBTO Youth Group in February 2016, and provided participants with access to CTBT educational material, networks and forums and opportunities to take part in the outreach activities of the organization.

The Group is open to all students and young professionals who are directing their careers towards global peace and security and who wish to actively promote the CTBT and its verification regime.

Currently, the Group has a membership of over 200 students and young professionals from around the world. The Group members share the common goal of achieving the entry into force of the CTBT. Through capacity building, members are empowered to use their individual voices, determine what the CTBT means to them, and convey this message in a manner that is meaningful to their peers and the community at large.

Furthermore, the resources offered to the group by the CTBTO serve to facilitate interaction among members for brainstorming, knowledge sharing, and the development of projects.

At the CTBTO Science and Technology Conference from June 26 to June 30, 2017 at Vienna’s glamorous and prestigious Hofburg Palace, the Group launched in February 2016 seemed to have come of age – thanks also due to the commitment of the Chief of CTBTO’s Public Information to ensure that the objective set out by Executive Secretary Dr Zerbo is achieved sooner rather than later.

The CTBTO Youth Group – represented by 70 members from over 50 countries – was not only an integral part of the Science and Technology conference deliberations. Youth participants also presented their own papers and outreach projects, participated in workshops and discussions, and tried their hands at “citizen journalism” in the ‘Youth Newsroom’ project.

In a series of events during the five days, the Group members



also reaffirmed their commitment to work for a world free of nuclear weapons, a goal which is indubitably related to entry into force of the CTBT which bans nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere: on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground.

They proved their ability to revitalize the discussion around the CTBT among decision-makers, academia, students, expert society and media, to raise awareness of the importance of the nuclear test-ban, build a basis for knowledge transfer to the younger generation, involve new technologies into promoting the CTBT – social media, digital visualization, interactive means of delivering information, and the capability to place the CTBT on the agenda of the world's most important nuclear-related events.

Besides, over the previous year, the CTBTO Youth Group members have been

regularly participating in and contributing to relevant events and activities to help raise awareness on the mandate of the Organization and to convey the importance of a legally binding global ban on nuclear testing. They have been involved in high-profile events, among others, in Washington, New York, and Brussels.

At the June 2016 Ministerial Meeting to commemorate the CTBT's 20th anniversary, Youth Group members delivered a joint statement. They had the opportunity to put questions not only to CTBTO Executive Secretary Dr Zerbo but also to the UN High-Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo during the event "Conversation with Youth – Ending Nuclear Tests: why should I care" and to meet former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the "CTBT20 Panel with UNSG Ban Ki-moon".

The resolve emerging from statements during the Youth Group events at the June Conference was: "We will spare no effort to contribute to the universal goal and get our generation to witness the long-awaited entry into force of the Treaty."

This in turn appeared to affirm the CTBTO Executive Secretary's repeated conviction that youth engagement is essential for achieving real progress on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament measures, and that investing in education at different levels has to be a fundamental part of the solution, and should be undertaken in an inclusive and collaborative way.

Dr Zerbo is a staunch advocate of "an

innovative and a focused approach" to advance the entry into force of the CTBT. With this in view, he launched the Group of Eminent Persons (GEM) at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in September 2013, less than two months after assuming the position of the Executive Secretary.

According to an observer, members of the Group of Eminent Persons are so much impressed by the Youth Group that they would prefer to listen to its members instead of telling them what needs be done and how.

Echoing that sentiment, Dr Zerbo said: "Your generation, you are not called the Leaders of tomorrow but the Leaders of today. The young generation leads the world on social media, and we have to be with you, share our vision with you and then take the fresh energy that you bring so that we can move together and achieve the goal that we set for ourselves and for the future generation." [IDN-InDepthNews – 4 July 2017]

Image: CTBTO Youth Group with Executive Secretary Dr Lassina Zerbo | Credit: CTBTO.

U.S. Prepares to Confront Nuclear Ban Treaty with Smart Bombs

Analysis by Rick Wayman



WASHINGTON, D.C: (IDN) - On May 23, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) issued a press release celebrating President Trump's proposed 2018 budget. DOE specifically lauded the proposed "\$10.2 billion for Weapons Activities to maintain and enhance the safety, security, and effectiveness of our nuclear weapons enterprise."

Less than 24 hours earlier, Ambassador Elayne Whyte of Costa Rica released a draft of a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Ambassador Whyte is President of the United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. Over 130 nations have participated in the ban treaty negotiations thus far. A final treaty text is expected by early July.

The draft treaty would prohibit state parties from – among other things – developing, producing, manufacturing, possessing or stockpiling nuclear weapons. The United States has aggressively

boycotted the treaty negotiations, and has actively sought to undermine the good faith efforts of the majority of the world's nations to prohibit these indiscriminate and catastrophically destructive weapons.

No one is surprised at President Trump's proposed funding for nuclear weapons activities; in fact, it is largely a continuation of the U.S. nuclear "modernization" program that began under President Obama. What is alarming, however, is the tacit admission by the Department of Energy that it is not simply maintaining current U.S. nuclear warheads until such time as they are eliminated. Rather, it is enhancing the "effectiveness" of nuclear weapons by incorporating new military capabilities into new weapons expected to be active through the final decades of the 21st century.

The draft ban treaty makes clear "that the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons transcend national borders, pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socioeco-

conomic development, the global economy, food security and for the health of future generations.”

Whether or not the United States plans to join the majority of the world’s nations in a treaty banning nuclear weapons, its policies and programs must reflect the indisputable evidence of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons use. There is simply no excuse for investing in new nuclear weapons instead of an all-out diplomatic push for true security in a world without nuclear weapons.

A Good Faith Obligation

Article VI of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) obligates all parties to negotiate in good faith for an end to the nuclear arms race at an early date. That treaty entered into force over 47 years ago.

The draft ban treaty repeats the unanimous 1996 declaration of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which said, “There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.”

Judge Christopher Weeramantry was Vice President of the ICJ when it issued its 1996 Advisory Opinion. In a paper that he wrote for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in 2013, he examined in detail the concept of good faith in the context of nuclear disarmament.

He wrote, “There is no half-way house in the duty of compliance with good faith in international law.” He continued, “Disrespect for and breach of good faith grows exponentially if, far from even partial compliance, there is total non-compliance with the obligations it imposes.”

The U.S. and numerous other nuclear-armed countries argue that they are in compliance with their obligations because the total number of nuclear weapons in their arsenals has decreased. Quantitative reductions are important, and the progress on this front has been significant over the past couple of decades. However, a nuclear arms race need not simply be quantitative. Rather, what we see now among many of the nuclear-armed nations is a qualitative nuclear arms race, with enhancements of weapons’

“effectiveness” being a key component.

This qualitative nuclear arms race is a blatant breach of the good faith obligation and, according to Judge Weeramantry’s interpretation, likely even constitutes bad faith.

A Ban Is Coming

Regardless of how much money the United States and other nuclear-armed nations commit to their nuclear arsenals, the vast majority of the world’s nations plan to conclude a treaty banning nuclear weapons in July.

Even though such a treaty will not immediately halt nuclear weapons development or diminish the threat that current nuclear weapon arsenals pose to all humanity, it is an important step in the right direction.

The NPT and customary international law require all nations – not just those that possess nuclear weapons – to negotiate for nuclear disarmament. The ban treaty is the first of many steps needed to fulfill this obligation, and will lay a solid foundation for future multilateral action.

Non-nuclear-armed countries must continue to enhance the effectiveness of their diplomatic arsenals to ensure the successful entry into force of a ban treaty and subsequent measures to finally achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. [IDN-InDepthNews – 24 May 2017]

Image: A step closer to fusion energy | Credit: DOE

Conference Highlights Significance of Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

By Ramesh Jaura

VIENNA (IDN) - “The urgent importance of bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force, as a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime,” was a highlight of the first session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2020 NPT Review Conference from May 2-12 in the capital of Austria.

The PrepCom’s Chair Henk Cor van der Kwast noted in his factual summary: “The intrinsic link between the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the goals and objectives of the Treaty was stressed.” 111 States parties to NPT, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons participated in the work of the Committee at its first session.

CTBT – negotiated in Geneva between 1994 and 1996 – is almost universal but has yet to become law. 183 countries have signed the Treaty, of which 164 have also ratified it, including three of the nuclear weapon States: France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.

But 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries must sign and ratify before the CTBT, which has been in limbo for 20 years, can enter into force. Of these, eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign the CTBT.

The PrepCom participants agreed with Lassina Zerbo, Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), that the Treaty will provide the global community with a permanent, non-discriminatory, verifiable and legally binding commitment to end any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, as a means to constrain the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons, which limits both horizontal and vertical nuclear proliferation.

The participants stressed that positive decisions on that Treaty by the nuclear-weapon States would have a beneficial impact towards the ratification of that Treaty. Those States were called upon

not to wait for other States to ratify that Treaty first.

“The special responsibility of the nuclear-weapon States to encourage countries listed in Annex 2 of that Treaty to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was reaffirmed, and the nuclear-weapons States were called upon to take initiative in this regard,” PrepCom Chair’s draft summary said.

While States parties welcomed the existing de facto moratorium on nuclear test explosions, many expressed the view that this was not a substitute for a permanent and legally binding commitment to end nuclear weapon testing and all other nuclear explosions, which can be achieved only by the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It was emphasized that the importance of refraining from any activities that would defeat the object and purpose of the CTBT.

A working paper submitted by the members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) reaffirmed the members’ strong commitment to strengthening the nuclear test ban regime, including the entry into force of the CTBT “at the earliest possible date, as well as to advancing global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.”

The Initiative is a diverse cross-regional grouping of non-nuclear-weapon States comprising Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

Yet another highlight of the May deliberations was the participation of Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida whose hometown Hiroshima, along with Nagasaki, suffered atomic bombs in 1945. He urged cooperation between nuclear states and non-nuclear states to prevent the spread of nuclear arms.

“North Korea has conducted two nuclear tests and launched more than 30 ballistic missiles since last year. Its nuclear and missile development has reached a new level and is posing a real threat to the region and beyond in the international community,” Kishida told the PrepCom on May 2.



“The efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons should be “carried out in a realistic manner, while taking into account the security environment that is becoming increasingly severe, including that of North Korea,” Kishida said.

Another Japanese national, Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs United Nations (UNODA), said in a statement on May 8 – one week after assuming responsibilities – that a priority task for the Preparatory Committee should be “the formulation of recommendations to ensure the full implementation of past commitments.” She said she was encouraged that all parties seemed to agree that the outcomes reached in 1995, 2000 and 2010 remain fully valid.

“In this regard, measures to promote accountability, transparency and mutual trust could be essential and could build upon the accomplishments of the previous cycle. The Committee should also seek to identify as early as possible a new common vision for the implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. This should include the early restart of inclusive dialogue among the States of the region.”

The significance of UNODA High Representative’s remarks is un-

derlined by the fact that, as in 2005, the 2015 Review Conference (from April 27 to May 22, 2015) in New York was unable to reach agreement on any substantive outcome documents. Three States parties – the U.S., Britain and Canada – crashed the conference because of objections of a non-state party, Israel.

The three states charged that Egypt had wrecked the conference with its demands that the Review Conference’s final declaration reiterate the call for creation of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone.

Such a zone was, however, envisaged by the 2010 Review Conference, which produced conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions in the areas of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the Middle East, particularly implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. [IDN-InDepthNews – 14 May 2017]

Image: CTBTO Executive Secretary, Lassina Zerbo addressing PrepCom on May 2, 2017

Mayors for Peace: Nuclear Weapons Don't Ensure Security

By Jamshed Baruah

VIENNA (IDN) - While nuclear weapons have not been deployed since 1945 when atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nearly 15,000 pieces of such instruments of mass destruction still exist, posing risks too great to be ignored. In view of this menacing reality, Mayors for Peace are warning that the danger of nuclear proliferation remains real, as seen in the case of continuing nuclear tests by North Korea.

Addressing the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference from May 2-12 in Vienna, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui expressed concern on behalf of the Mayors for Peace representing more than 7,200 member cities around the world, that nuclear-weapon states and their allies continued to stress the relevance of nuclear deterrence. He voiced strong support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), especially its Article VI obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament in good faith.

Mayor Matsui told the conference that there is a fundamental flaw in any security system that is dependent on nuclear weapons of utmost inhumanity. "Such a system will offer no real solution to the security challenges the global community is facing today. Even if it appears to present short-term solutions, they would be nothing more than a temporary fix based on the fragile

foundation of the threats actually to use this most inhumane of all weapons of mass destruction."

Over time, the international community will increasingly reject these repugnant and inhumane weapons and the doctrine that justifies their possession and use, he told the conference on May 3.

"It is already widely recognized that such weapons could invite more complex dangers of nuclear proliferation. We must also recognize that the very existence of nuclear weapons itself poses risks of use each day, as a result of miscalculation, malfunctions or accidents, if not by intent. Nuclear terrorism is also a real risk we cannot ignore."

He strongly urged the policymakers of the world, trusting their keen sense of responsibility to provide reliable security to the people. "We say, stop relying on nuclear deterrence that is based on mutual distrust and threats. We ask them to seek to create a new security framework that can foster mutual respect and a shared sense of our common humanity."

Such an effort, of course, requires a long-term and global perspective, "However, we would like to recommend once again that these leaders take initiative and start with immediate steps now by implementing their nuclear disarmament obligation in good faith. We trust that with such a decisive leadership, we can build together a more reliable and long lasting security system



away from nuclear deterrence."

Mayors for Peace support the start of negotiations this year of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. "Unfortunately, the negotiations have begun without the presence of nuclear-armed states and those under their umbrellas. These nuclear weapons dependent states should, however, understand why civil society and so many non-nuclear-weapon states are supporting negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons," the Hiroshima Mayor said.

As reflected in the recent global discourse on this issue, the great majority of non-nuclear-weapon states that are not dependent upon nuclear deterrence are keenly aware of the risks of nuclear weapons and catastrophic inhumane consequences of their use, whether intentional or not, argued

Mayor Matsui.

Those states are now also squarely facing the reality that anyone could become a victim of nuclear detonations. This is why so many non-nuclear-weapons states are leading the negotiations. The first session was held March 27-31 and the second is scheduled for June 15-July 7 at the UN in New York.

The non-nuclear-weapons states are leading the talks “not only on the basis of the Article VI obligation of the NPT, but also because of their legitimate right to participate in such negotiations as potential victims of such weapons’ use,” he added.

The Mayors for Peace hope that the legal instrument produced through these negotiations will be also open to the participation of states currently dependent on nuclear deterrence. They have also made specific proposals to ensure that the treaty achieves universal membership. They have done this because if the new treaty does not allow future participation of nuclear dependent states, it may not establish effective legal prohibition of nuclear weapons that will lead to their total elimination.

“We sincerely hope that the treaty will develop into a verifiable and comprehensive legal framework in the future; one that will indiscriminately bind all States, including the nuclear-weapon states,” said the Hiroshima Mayor, adding: “We strongly recommend that the nuclear-armed states and their allies participate in the next round of negotiations in June and July. Even if they cannot do so now, we ask them at least to make further efforts to take concrete steps to fulfil their nuclear disarmament obligations.”

Addressing another critical issue, Mayor Matsui said, while each and all the Parties to the NPT share the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world, “unfortunately, all the concrete steps for nuclear disarmament have been stagnating for a long time and have failed to yield any significant results – such as bringing the CTBT into force, concluding an FMCT, and substantially reducing the nuclear stockpiles of the U.S. and Russia, which still account for more than 90 per cent of the world’s stockpile.”

CTBT is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which is almost universal but has yet to become law. 183 countries have signed the Treaty, of which 164 have also ratified it, including three

of the nuclear weapon States: Britain, France and Russia. But 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries must sign and ratify before the CTBT can enter into force.

Of these, eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign the CTBT. The last Annex 2 State to ratify the Treaty was Indonesia on 6 February 2012.

FMCT, the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, is a proposed international treaty to prohibit the further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. The treaty has not been negotiated and its terms remain to be defined.

The Mayors for Peace therefore called on nuclear-armed states to “try harder” to achieve substantial progress by introducing new and innovative steps to break this stagnation. “And in this context they may find their participation in the negotiation of the legal prohibition of nuclear weapons could well be a viable option.”

The Hiroshima Mayor reminded the nuclear-weapons states that taking concrete steps to reduce risks and to eliminate the atomic arsenal is an integral part of NPT Article VI obligations as have been agreed upon in the past NPT review conferences. “Any failure to implement such basic obligations will only cause further destabilization throughout the global community,” he declared. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 May 2017]

Image: Mayor Kazumi Matsui of Hiroshima | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Preparing for 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Review Conference

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) – The States party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) convene every five years to review the implementation of this nuclear disarmament regime in three sessions. In run-up to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, the first session of the Preparatory Committee (Prep-Com) will meet from May 2-12 in Vienna.

The Austrian capital, which serves as the associate headquarters of the UN, has come to play a historic role in the world body's efforts for a legal treaty aimed at ushering in a nuclear-weapons-free world. In December 2014, it was the venue of the third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons – after Nayarit (Mexico) in February 2014 and Oslo in March 2013 – which paved the path to the 'Austrian Pledge', also known as the 'Humanitarian Pledge', to "stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons".

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the pledge in the form of Resolution 71/258 of December 23, 2016 for the nuclear ban conference in March and June–July 2017.

The first session of the PrepCom is taking place in the midst of a rising tension between the U.S. and Russia, which according to the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) together possess 93 percent of a total of 14,900 nuclear weapons. The rest are in the hands of seven countries including Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

While North Korea (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea - DPRK) continues to test nuclear explosive devices of increasing magnitude, the other nuclear-armed states "appear to plan to retain large arsenals for the indefinite future," instead of planning for nuclear disarmament, warns FAS.

The significance of the forthcoming PrepCom – with Ambassador Henk Cor Van der Kwast of the Netherlands as the Chair – is also underlined by the fact that it is taking place nearly one month after the first session of the UN conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. The second session of the conference is sched-

uled about one month later, from June 15 to July 7, 2017.

Another reason for the importance of the forthcoming PrepCom is that, as in 2005, the 2015 Review Conference (from April 27 to May 22, 2015) in New York was unable to reach agreement on any substantive outcome documents. Three States parties – the U.S., Britain and Canada – crashed the conference because of objections of a non-state party, Israel.

The three nuclear-armed states charged that Egypt had wrecked the conference with its demands that the Review Conference's final declaration reiterate the call for creation of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone.

Such a zone was, however, envisaged by the 2010 Review Conference, which produced conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions in the areas of nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and the Middle East, particularly implementation of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.

Earlier, the 2000 Review Conference agreed to a substantive final document, including practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the Treaty on nuclear disarmament.

The NPT entered into force in 1970 and was extended indefinitely in 1995. The Treaty is regarded as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

As the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) website says, it was designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, to further the goals of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Under the Treaty, the nuclear-weapon States are obliged not to transfer possession or control to any recipient nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, and not in any way to assist, encourage or induce non-nuclear-weapon States to manufacture,

acquire or control over such weapons or devices.

The non-nuclear-weapon States are obliged not to receive any transfer of or control over nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices, and not to manufacture or otherwise acquire such weapons or devices as well as not to seek or receive any assistance in this regard.

The non-nuclear-weapon States further undertake to accept safeguards administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on all source or special fissionable materials in all peaceful nuclear activities within their territory or under their jurisdiction or control, with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The Treaty guarantees the right of all States parties to research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with their basic non-proliferation obligations.

Article VI of the NPT includes the only legally binding treaty-based obligation requiring States to pursue in good faith effective measures related to nuclear disarmament.

Article VIII of the NPT provides for the convening of a conference of Parties to the Treaty every five years in order to review the operation of this Treaty with a view to assuring that the purposes of the Preamble and the provisions of the Treaty are being realized.

In 1995, in connection with the decision to

extend the Treaty indefinitely, State parties agreed to strengthen the review process and continue to hold Review Conferences every five years. The PrepCom normally holds sessions of 10 working days in each of the three years leading up to a review conference.

As decided by States parties in 2000, the purpose of the first two Preparatory Committee sessions is to consider principles, objectives and ways in order to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality, and to make recommendations thereon to the Review Conference.

The third session is specifically mandated to make every effort to produce a consensus report containing recommendations to the Review Conference, taking into account the deliberations and results of its previous sessions.

Within the NPT context, there are other reasons too, lending significance to the first of three PrepComs for the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

“The action plan from the 2010 NPT Review Conference remains only partially implemented. The disarmament actions suffered the most – of 22 action points, only five saw substantial forward movement. Before 2010, the last agreement was reached in 2000 – and the implementation of the “13 practical steps” from that outcome is also woefully inadequate,” notes the ‘2017 NPT Briefing Book’, published by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Its disarmament programme is Reaching Critical Will, headed by Ray

Acheson.

The broader context outside of the NPT is even more alarming, warns the Briefing Book, adding that the current situation is characterised by “a new nuclear arms race, with more players and more money and more “kill power” than ever before”.

Disarmament groups opine, “Meanwhile, even rhetorical commitment to nuclear disarmament is wavering – if it still exists at all”. Far removed from President Barack Obama’s vision of a nuclear-weapon free world – spelt out in Prague in April 2009, President Donald Trump’s administration has expressed doubts that nuclear disarmament is a “realistic objective”, and there are warnings that it may resume explosive nuclear testing.

The policy review under way in Washington, D.C. is expected to plead for a new nuclear posture in the face of mounting tension with Russian ruled by President Vladimir Putin, and the DPRK threatening to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. if it feels threatened enough to do so. [IDN-InDepth-News – 29 April 2017]



Image: The Hiroshima Peace Memorial, commonly called the Atomic Bomb Dome or A-Bomb Dome is part of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan and was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996 | Credit: Tim Wright

UN Institute Pleads for Global Nuclear Non-Proliferation

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA (IDN) – “The lack of nuclear weapons use since Hiroshima and Nagasaki cannot on its own be interpreted as evidence that the likelihood of a detonation event is minimal,” warns the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), an autonomous institute within the United Nations based in Geneva.

The Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on which the United States dropped atomic bombs on August 6 and 9, 1945, embody the abhorrent humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons use, warning of the brutal consequences should such weapons of mass destruction be ever deployed again.

The fact that Hiroshima and Nagasaki have not been repeated yet does not remove the uncertainty that continues to plague existing understanding of nuclear weapon risks. “Variables include its critical role in deterrence doctrine as well as unknowns linked to the interaction of complex systems, the possibility of ‘beyond design-basis’ events, and the impact of stockpile aging,” avers the report titled ‘Understanding Nuclear Weapon Risks’.

“Nuclear deterrence works – up until the time it will prove not to work,” argues the study edited by John Borrie, Tim Caughley and Wilfred Wan. “The risk is inherent and, when luck runs out, the results will be catastrophic. The arms races spawned by putting theory into practice create their own

self-perpetuating dynamic. The more arms produced, particularly in countries with unstable societies, the more potential exists for terrorist acquisition and use of nuclear weapons.”

Nuclear deterrence has also created the paradox of the commitment trap, adds the report. “For example, to deter most of the threats that the United States and its allies may face in Northeast Asia, particularly from the DPRK (North Korea), nuclear use is neither entirely credible nor necessary.

“Yet any weakening of the United States’ nuclear umbrella could spur further adventurism by adversaries and proliferation by allies. Breaking out of the conundrum will require steady, collaborative and visionary leadership of a kind that is sadly rare today as major States increasingly turn inward.”

The UNIDIR study finds that “the substantial levels of investment in nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons systems and their modernization have enhanced rather than decreased the likelihood of an intentional or inadvertent detonation event.”

Other main findings of the report are:

- The secrecy associated with nuclear weapons programmes is an obstacle both for assessment and accountability pertaining to risk.
- Human judgment has been key in identifying and resolving past instances of false alarms. Greater reliance on automated systems can lead to misplaced confidence

while introducing new points of vulnerability (“hidden interactions”).

- Technological advance suggests a declining need for terrorists or other groups to directly access an actual weapon in order to effect a nuclear detonation event.
- Risk is an inherent characteristic of nuclear weapons. The only way to eliminate risk completely is to eliminate nuclear weapons completely.

The study urges all States to: intensify their efforts to implement the existing global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime; strengthen national safety, security, and safeguards culture, including through outreach with pertinent members of civil society such as academia and the private sector; and address tensions in the international security landscape through greater transparency, communication, and other confidence-building measures.

The authors suggest nuclear-armed States “refocus their efforts to exchange information on existing stockpiles and delivery systems, especially those deployed in foreign countries, to prevent misidentification that could prompt retaliatory attack.”

The study further calls for “action to extend decision timelines for policymakers in crisis situations, including reducing the alert status of nuclear-tipped missiles and migrating away from ‘launch on warning’ postures.”

The UNIDIR report asks nuclear-armed



States to refrain from developing new nuclear delivery systems, such as air-launched cruise missiles, which would exacerbate ambiguity, eschew the use of rhetoric that normalizes the nuclear option or suggests the viability of limited nuclear war, and undertake a graded approach to cyber security that assesses the vulnerabilities in every layer of the nuclear weapons system complex.

They should also “ensure a level of independent oversight and control within their domestic nuclear weapons complex in order to prioritize safety considerations and thoroughly investigate operational uncertainties,” and “expand the nuclear security agenda to include the 83 per cent of fissile materials in non-civilian programmes.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 17 April 2017]

Image: Atomic Bomb Dome by Jan Letzel and modern Hiroshima | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

