

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



2021 Joint Media Project Report



CREDITS

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Cover: The Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine USS Louisiana transits the Hood Canal in Puget Sound, Wash., Oct. 15, 2017, as it returns to its homeport following a strategic deterrent patrol. Photo By: Navy Lt. Cmdr. Michael Smith | DOD

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Soka Gakkai
International



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PREFACE

By Ramesh Jaura

*Director-General of the Non-profit International Press Syndicate and Editor-in-Chief
of its Flagship Agency IDN-InDepthNews*

This Report of the Joint Media Project of the Non-profit International Press Syndicate Group with IDN as the Flagship Agency in partnership with Soka Gakkai International in consultative status with ECOSOC, is a compilation of independent and in-depth news and analyses by IDN from April 2020 to March 2021.

The articles in this compilation appeared on www.indepthnews.net in the main category nuclear weapons and disarmament on the INPS Group's thematic web-site "Toward A Nuclear Free World"-www.nuclearabolition.info. These can be accessed free of charge 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

2020-2021 was the fifth year of the INPS-IDN 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 meanwhile we are in the sixth year of the INPS-IDN's joint media project with the SGI. This compilation comprises 33 articles analysing the developments related to proliferation and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons at multiple levels – governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental. All articles have been translated into Japanese. Some have been translated into different languages, including Arabic, Bahasa, Chinese, German, Italian, Hindi, Korean, Malay, Norwegian, Swedish and Thai.

The backdrop to these articles is that nuclear weapon states have been fiercely opposing the Nuclear Ban Treaty (TPNW), which has meanwhile entered into force. The nuclear weapons states argue that TPNW ignores the reality of vital security considerations. At the same time, a complete elimination of nuclear weapons is increasingly becoming a global collaborative effort calling for relentless commitment and robust solidarity between States, international organisations and the civil society.

This compilation also includes an in-depth analysis of eminent Buddhist philosopher, educator, author, and nuclear disarmament advocate Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, who released his latest 39th annual peace proposal, titled "Value Creation in a Time of Crisis", released on January 26. Dr Ikeda calls for further global cooperation to address the key issues of our time: extreme weather events that reflect the worsening problem of climate change and the onslaught of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which continues to threaten social and economic stability throughout the world.

I would like to avail of this opportunity to express my gratitude to the network of our correspondents around the world for their insightful contributions, the Project Director, INPS Japan President Katsuhiko Asagiri for his liaison with SGI, Mr Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association for taking time for the Foreword, and Mr Kazuo Ishiwatari, Executive Director, Peace and Global Issues, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), for his Message. <>

FOREWORD

By Daryl G. Kimball

Executive Director of Arms Control Association and publisher of Arms Control Today



Credit: Arms Control Association

An informed and mobilized public is essential to human survival in the nuclear age – and effective and independent journalism is essential to revealing the hard truths, the consequences, and the choices that nuclear weapons pose for all of us.

Since the first U.S. atomic bombings of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, journalists have played an essential role in delivering facts – and dismantling the fictions – about the world’s most dangerous weapons.

As the late physicist, U.S. government nuclear weapons advisor, and nuclear disarmament advocate Dr. Sidney Drell wrote in 1983, matters of nuclear weapons and nuclear policy are “too important to be left to the experts All of us are the targets of these indiscriminating weapons of mass destruction. There is, therefore, no excuse for us not to constitute an informed and an effective public constituency insisting on the imperative of arms control”.

Equipped with information about the catastrophic risks of nuclear weapons and common-sense strategies to reduce and eliminate them, ordinary people, along with concerned scientists, physicians, and diplomats have organized and successfully pressed their political leaders to slow and reverse the nuclear arms race.

The result of public mobilization against the Bomb has been a vast body of bilateral and multilateral agreements to end nuclear testing, curb the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear know-how, and to cap and verifiably eliminate nuclear arsenals. And, beginning this year, the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force, establishing yet another tool in the legal framework for disarmament that further reinforces the taboo against nuclear weapons.

None of this might have been possible without the work of journalists and editors who have, over many decades, brought to light the dangers of the bomb, who have documented the intense public debate surrounding nuclear weapons and how and whether to eliminate them.

For example, it took the pioneering, on-the-ground reporting by John Hersey published in *The New Yorker* in August 1946 to finally reveal the horrific consequences of nuclear weapons – the blast, heat, radiation effects – that the U.S. occupation authorities tried to hide from the world.

Unfortunately, during the early Cold War years, many mainstream news outlets in the United States and Europe downplayed the risks, many could not breakthrough the veil of secrecy that surrounded nuclear matters, and many simply failed to question the official government line.

In the Soviet Union, of course, where the news media was essentially another arm of the government, it was even more difficult for ordinary citizens to learn about the devastating human and environmental effects of nuclear weapons production and testing, and to challenge dangerous nuclear policies.

With the help of concerned nuclear scientists and public health experts, however, some specialty journals and newspapers helped filled the gaps in the public record. In 1962 for example, *The New England Journal of Medicine* published a groundbreaking series of articles by a group of physicians documenting the effects of a Soviet nuclear attack on an American city and the devastation of the medical and emergency response infrastructure. Appearing just months ahead of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the articles exploded the myth that one or another side could “prevail” in a nuclear war.

In other cases, modest but important newspaper reporting helped catalyze events that inspired action in support of disarmament on a massive scale. In February 1979, *The St. Petersburg [Fla.] Times* newspaper enlisted the help of Arms Control Association Executive Director William Kincade and freelance journalist Nan Randall to help write a four-day series of articles describing the effects of a Soviet nuclear warhead exploding over the city.

Randall's account drew the attention of the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), a federal scientific advisory agency, which enlisted her to write a similar account for the 1979 OTA report on "The Effects of Nuclear Weapons." That report would, in turn, become an inspiration for the director and writer who was tapped to create an ABC-TV docudrama on the human consequences of nuclear conflict titled *The Day After*.

When it was broadcast the evening of November 20, 1983, *The Day After* drew some 100 million viewers, then a record audience for a made-for-television movie. The movie boosted public U.S. support for the nuclear freeze movement, demanded the attention of government policy makers, (including President Ronald Reagan), and prompted action to reduce the danger.

Then as now, the mass media is still the main source of public information about the dangers of the Bomb and efforts to eliminate the nuclear threat. In today's hyper-information age in which the fact is hard to discern from fiction, government disinformation is taking on new forms, independent news networks with a special focus on covering developments and ideas related to the world's most dangerous weapons are more vital than ever.

Since 1983, *IDN-InDepthNews* and its network of contributors and correspondents has provided invaluable coverage for people worldwide who are concerned about the nuclear weapons threat. Today, the long-running struggle to eliminate the nuclear weapons threat has taken on a new urgency as global nuclear competition and the risk of nuclear war is growing.

In this dangerous new phase of the nuclear age, the focused coverage that *IDN-InDepthNews* provides on effective solutions and ideas and actions to strengthen the guardrails against nuclear catastrophe and advance progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons is more vital than ever. <>

MESSAGE

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



On January 22, 2021, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force. It is the culmination of the long, persistent struggle of citizens who have sought the elimination of nuclear weapons coming together in solidarity. It is our hope and conviction that it will become a significant milestone on the path to nuclear abolition.

Threats to global peace and security are multifaceted and complex, and the dangers posed by the nuclear arms race continue to persist. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic presents an imminent crisis that threatens the lives and dignity of people more than ever before. The question then is: what is a true security for humanity?

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda in his annual peace proposal states: “If a deterrent force is needed in the world today, it is certainly not that of nuclear weapons. Rather, it is the power of joint action and solidarity transcending national borders, brought to bear against the intertwined crises of climate change and COVID-19 and their related economic impacts.”

Given that there is no longer such a security that protects a single state, true security is one based on a solidarity beyond borders to overcome difficulties with a broader sense of security shared with other countries. In that sense, it is also necessary to revisit the nature of nuclear weapons and to transform our view of the kind of security that relies on such weapons.

The entry into force of the TPNW is significant as it represents a pragmatic vision for achieving a world free from nuclear weapons. Along with the legal and institutional establishment of the treaty, it is also crucial that its animating spirit and vision be widely disseminated and received. This is a challenging undertaking that must be driven and sustained by hope and faith in the power of ordinary people.

As a member of civil society, and along with international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs), SGI has been dedicated to initiatives for nuclear abolition. SGI’s persevering efforts have focused on one-on-one dialogue and have been driven by the passion and energy of youth who lead the next generation.

Last August which marked the 75th anniversary of the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Faith Communities Concerned About Nuclear Weapons, of which SGI is a part, issued an interfaith statement as a reminder of its historical significance and as a call for action towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The statement was endorsed by 189 organizations from a wide variety of faiths and religions. In addition, in commemoration of the TPNW’s entry into force, SGI also created a digital tool to introduce and share the importance of the treaty to a wider public audience.

In order to tackle global issues such as nuclear weapons, climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential to foster people’s empowerment through grassroots awareness-raising. In that sense, the SGI/INPS media project serves a great purpose since it has continuously provided information on the issue of nuclear weapons from a civil society perspective. During this time of an unprecedented pandemic crisis, we have fortified our resolve to further expand the solidarity of people taking action in pursuit of a world free from nuclear weapons. <>

The UK Defies Nuclear Treaties and Strengthens Atomic Arsenal

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA (IDN) — Within three months of the UK's complete withdrawal from all institutions of the European Union and from the European Atomic Energy Community on January 31, 2020, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has decided to increase by 40 per cent to 260 the country's nuclear arsenal to "continue to be the leading European Ally within NATO". Disarmament activists and experts as well as world parliamentarians have criticized the decision.

The danger emanating from nuclear weapons is underlined by the fact that a single atomic warhead could kill thousands of people with lasting and devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences. Most of the atomic weapons are many times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.



Photo: A Trident missile launched from a submerged ballistic missile submarine.
Source: Wikimedia Commons.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the world's armed states possess a combined total of nearly 13,500 nuclear warheads; more than 90 per cent belong to Russia and the United States. Approximately 9,500 warheads are in military service, with the rest awaiting dismantlement.

The UK's nuclear program, known as Trident, established in 1980, now costs the country around \$2.8 billion a year to operate. The 111-page 'Integrated Defense Review', presented on March 16 states that the UK is dropping a self-imposed restriction on its nuclear arsenal to increase to 260, discarding the previous limit of 225 warheads as well as the current reduction target of 180 by the mid-2020s.

As it is, the UK is currently engaged in a costly and lengthy project to build new nuclear-capable submarines, which it bases off the coast of Scotland, despite Scottish resistance to the bomb. In 2019 alone, the United Kingdom spent \$8.9 billion on its nuclear weapons.

Besides, the decision comes at a point in time when most of the world's countries have declared that nuclear weapons are illegal. In doing so, the United Kingdom is moving in the wrong direction to increase its stockpile of weapons of mass destruction.

Also, this decision flies in the face of UK commitment under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to disarm, as well as the prohibitions in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on possessing, developing and producing nuclear weapons.

Beatrice Fihn, ICAN Executive Director, has carped the UK plan to increase its stockpile of weapons of mass destruction in the middle of a pandemic as "irresponsible, dangerous" and violating international law. "While the British people are struggling to cope with the pandemic, an economic crisis, violence against women, and racism, the government chooses

to increase insecurity and threats in the world. This is toxic masculinity on display."

Fihn, head of the 2017 Nobel laureate International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), added: "While the majority of the world's nations are leading the way to a safer future without nuclear weapons by joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the United Kingdom is pushing for a dangerous new nuclear arms race."

Meanwhile, the majority of the public stands behind the members of parliament and cities, including Manchester and Oxford, that are calling on the UK to join the TPNW. "UK policy should follow the will of the people and international law and reject nuclear weapons for good."

"The UK's shocking expansion of its nuclear weapons capability comes without an explanation of how this is in the national or global interest. It is tone-deaf to the lack of domestic consent for such a move where Scotland's First Minister and Government are unambiguously committed to the TPNW, cities including Manchester, Edinburgh, Oxford, Brighton and Hove, Norwich and Leeds, have signed up to support the Treaty's implementation and the majority of the UK public think that Britain should sign up to the TPNW."

Ben Donaldson, Head of Campaigns for ICAN Partner Organisation UNA-UK, said: "This decision is imbued in a toxic combination of militarism and hubris. We need the UK Government to invest in measures to combat climate change and pandemics, not trigger a dangerous new nuclear arms race."

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), which is a part of the ICAN, also condemned the UK's decision. This grassroots organization successfully campaigned for a global ban on nuclear weapons at the United Nations. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons entered into force in January 2021. Meanwhile, Oliver Meier, from the University

of Hamburg's Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (IFSH), also joined criticism of the UK for dramatically shifting its nuclear strategy while potentially putting it at odds with both NATO and the US.

"The United Kingdom has committed to — under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty — reducing the number and role of nuclear weapons," Meier commented to the German international broadcaster, Deutsche Welle. "There's also an obligation to work towards a goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world that is hard to reconcile with this decision," he added.

The 'Integrated Defense Review' warns that the UK could use nuclear weapons if other countries use "weapons of mass destruction" against it. Such weapons include "emerging technologies that could have a comparable impact" to chemical, biological weapons or other nuclear weapons.

According to some defence insiders, "emerging technologies" comprise cyberattacks, though the report doesn't explicitly say that. However, Tom Plant, a director at the Royal United Services Institute think tank, told CNBC: "I would not interpret it to include cyber-attacks in isolation, no."

He added that the "understanding of what constitutes emerging tech in government is not evenly distributed — cyber is definitely not 'emerging,' it's pretty substantially emerged." Either way, Plant believes that the change in language is significant.

In his view, the language is an indication that there is the potential in the future for blends of technologies and behaviours to collaborate that create emergent risks — "which perhaps would not arise through the developments of any one technology in isolation" — that are incredibly hard to predict and that "there is at least the possibility that one

or more of these as-yet-unknown emergent challenges might rival WMD in the threat they pose," Plant said.

The UK announcement has generated concern around the world, as evidenced by a statement the UK Abdicates its Global Responsibility in Nuclear Weapons Surge released on March 19 by Gareth Evans, Chair of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network and a former Foreign Minister of Australia.

In the statement, Mr Evans notes that the policy move by the UK, amongst other things, is "*in clear breach of its treaty obligation under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to pursue nuclear disarmament, and will undermine any prospect for consensus at the forthcoming NPT Review Conference.*"

He also notes that the move is a "*clear breach of its moral obligation to help eliminate the most indiscriminately inhumane weapons ever devised, whose use in a nuclear war would be an existential threat to life on this planet as we know it*".

Mr Evans accentuates that it is time for the world's nuclear-armed states to "*recognise anew the force of the Reagan/Gorbachev declaration of 1985 that a 'nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought', and to embark upon a serious program of nuclear risk reduction, including reducing weapons deployments, taking them off high alert, committing to No First Use, and—above all—reducing stockpile numbers.*" Both Mr Evans and Baroness Sue Miller in the UK House of Lords and Co-President of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) are endorsers of the Appeal for a Nuclear Weapons Free World. [IDN-InDepthNews – 22 March 2021]

UN Youth4Disarmament Recognized by 'Billion Acts of Peace'

By Devinder Kumar



Image credit: UN

NEW DELHI (IDN) — Disarmament is at the heart of the collective security system set out in the United Nations Charter, with its goal to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". In commemoration of the United Nation's 75th anniversaries and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) established the "75 Words for Disarmament Youth Challenge", which was launched on August 12 International Youth Day and closed on September 26, the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

The Challenge was open to young people between the ages of 13 and 29, with three age groups: 13 to 18 years (middle and high school), 19 to 24 years (college and graduate school) and 25 to 29 years (early career professionals).

Through the challenge, young people around the world were invited to express in 75 words what disarmament means to them and their communities. A total of 198 entries were received from 62 countries.

Another outreach initiative [#Youth4Disarmament](#), established in 2019 by the UNODA is encouraging young people to engage, educate and empower in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

"This is a great recognition that youth leadership and action are both inspiring and critical to ensuring our collective peace and security," says Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu.

She adds: "Young people, the largest generation in history, have a critical role to play in raising awareness and developing new approaches to bring about change to reduce threats from weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms, including their proliferation."

The [#Youth4Disarmament](#) initiative has been recognized as Best Coalition Building Project of 2020 by a [Billion Acts of Peace](#). The initiative was nominated along with eleven other inspiring projects, chosen from more than eight million Acts for Peace.

An Act of Peace is a thoughtful action that spreads more peace in the community, school, business or organization, and is designed to impact one or more of the Billion Acts Issue Areas that are critical to creating world peace. [Billion Acts of Peace](#), an initiative of the [PeaceJam Foundation](#), is fostering the ambitious goal of creating One Billion Acts of Peace by 2021. Already 82,987,619 Acts of Peace have been created across 171 countries.

The initiative is inspiring everyday people to change the world — one Act of Peace at a time. Among those who could vote for the nominated Acts were previous winners, which include climate change youth advocate Greta Thunberg.

In a related event this year, university students in India were asked by representatives of the [United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific](#)

(UNRCPD) about their ideas about how gender shapes the impact of weapons, both in their communities and on each of them as individuals.

UNRCPD is mandated to work with 43 states in the Asia-Pacific. It assists countries in the region to achieve their peace, security, and disarmament goals, through provision of substantive support; coordination of activities at the sub-regional, regional and international levels; and information sharing on global and regional activities.

The university students were participating in a webinar on "gender and peace", the fourth lecture in a [series](#) organized by the Prajnya Trust and Sansristi, two India-based civil society organizations. The UNRCPD staff drew the participants' attention to how disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control processes intersect with areas like gender. Awareness of this can facilitate the development of more effective policies, programmes and projects.

In fact, when the Security Council adopted [resolution 1325 \(2000\)](#) about two decades ago, it kicked off a series of policies and initiatives that have focused on the connection between gender dynamics and armed violence.

This landmark resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.

UNRCPD's project coordinator for [UN Security Council resolution 1540 \(2004\)](#), Mr Steven Humphries, explained that although nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction are inherently indiscriminate, ionizing radiation has been proven to have unique adverse effects on women.

Ionizing radiation is a type of high-energy radiation that can cause chemical changes in cells and damage DNA. Nuclear power plant accidents and atomic weapons also release high levels of ionizing radiation.

To pursue progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, it is necessary to apply a so-called "gender lens", ensure that diverse voices are heard and challenge gendered patterns of power relations, Mr Humphries concluded.

The importance of resolution 1540 (2004) lies in the Security Council's decision that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, in particular for terrorist purposes.

The resolution requires all States to adopt and enforce appropriate laws to this effect as well as other effective measures to prevent the proliferation of these weapons and their means of delivery to non-State actors, in particular for terrorist purposes.

According to UNODA, civil society and the private sector can make important contributions to the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004). UNODA is actively promoting partnerships with civil society, the private sector and industry to support national and international efforts to meet the objectives of the resolution.

In cooperation with Germany, UNODA convened the first Conference of International, Regional, and Sub-Regional Industry Associations on UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) in 2012. It involved the participation of industry associations and private companies from the nuclear,

chemical, biological, finance, transport and aerospace sectors.

In January 2013, UNODA in cooperation with Austria held the first Civil Society Forum on resolution 1540 (2004). The Forum assembled 45 civil society organizations, which reflected a broad geographical diversity and included representatives from the Americas, Asia, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East and North Africa and Southern Africa.

One effective, cooperative relationship has been between the Center for International Trade & Security, School of Public & International Affairs, University of Georgia and the UNODA. The Center has published the eleventh issue of their publication, *1540 Compass*, a journal of views, comments, and ideas for effective implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 to prevent WMD proliferation and terrorism by non-state actors.

Mr. Humphries's remarks gave way to an insightful discussion with the students on the implications and implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in January 2021 and represents the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty in more than two decades.

The human and economic cost of militarization were also discussed during the event.

With an eye on the future, three United Nations Youth Champions for Disarmament introduced the audience to the #Youth4Disarmament initiative, which seeks to connect geographically diverse young people with experts to learn about current international security challenges, the work of the United Nations and how to actively participate. [IDN-InDepthNews – 28 February 2021]

Nuclear Modernization Race Continues Despite New START

By J C Suresh



The Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine USS Louisiana transits the Hood Canal in Puget Sound, Wash., Oct. 15, 2017, as it returns to its homeport following a strategic deterrent patrol.

Photo By: Navy Lt. Cmdr. Michael Smith | DOD

TORONTO | WASHINGTON, D.C. (IDN) — While independent arms control experts around the world heaved a sigh of relief at Joe Biden's signature decision to extend the New START Treaty with Russia through February 4, 2026, Pentagon officials say it is "just the beginning of a larger discussion with Russia and China about placing further limits on nuclear weapons proliferation". The Pentagon is the headquarters building of the United States Department of Defense (DOD). As a symbol of the U.S. military, the phrase The Pentagon is also often used as a metonym or synecdoche for the Department of Defense (DOD) and its leadership.

Addressing the virtual Air Force Association's Aerospace Warfare Symposium on February 26, Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the New START treaty with Russia "is a good thing because it limits nuclear weapons and has a process to verify adherence".

New START continues the bipartisan process of verifiably reducing U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals begun by former Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. New START is the first verifiable U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control treaty to take effect since START I in 1994.

Officially known as the Treaty on 'Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms' entered into force on February 5, 2011. Its original duration was 10 years until February 5, 2021, with the option for the Parties to agree to extend it for up to an additional five years.

Hyten said that both the United States and Russia met the central limits of the New START Treaty by February 5, 2018 and have stayed at or below them ever since. Those limits are:

700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments.

1,550 nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments; each such heavy bomber is counted as one warhead toward this limit.

800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments. ICBMs capable of delivering nuclear weapons, heavy bombers and submarines comprise America's nuclear triad.

"The nuclear triad is important because it's there to deter Russia, China and, to some extent, North Korea and Iran from delivering nuclear strikes on the U.S. and its allies," said Air Force Gen. John E. Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Established in January 1942 to expedite strategic coordination during World War II, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have been at the center of U.S. military planning ever since.

However, extension of the New START treaty is "just the beginning of a larger discussion with Russia and China about placing further limits on nuclear weapons proliferation". Because Russia is building new capabilities—such as nuclear-armed torpedoes, nuclear armed cruise missiles and sea-launched ballistic missiles—that the DOD feels can "threaten the U.S. and are not accountable under the Treaty".

And, then, there's China, Hyten said. "China is the fastest growing nuclear power in the world. They're building at a percentage level, more new nuclear weapons than anybody on the planet. They're building new platforms. They're building new facilities, new airplanes, new missiles of a variety of types, new hypersonic capabilities, hypersonic capabilities that we have no defenses for, hypersonics that can be nuclear tipped.

"And we have no arms control agreement with China in any way, so we have no insight into their nuclear doctrine," he added. "That is a difficult place to be."

The other problem, the DOD believes, is that while Russia is finishing its nuclear modernization program and China is in the midst of rapid modernization, the U.S. is just starting its nuclear modernization program.

The U.S. must also have a credible sea-launched cruise missile in order to respond to the Russian capabilities and a low-yield nuclear weapon that can be deployed in small numbers on submarines to deal with the thousands of low-

yield nuclear and tactical nuclear weapons Russia is building that aren't accountable with the New START treaty, the U.S. Air Force General said.

"We have to continue to invest in our triad and make sure that we look at all of our adversaries' capabilities because the one thing we don't want is nuclear confrontation and nuclear war on this planet. And the only way to avoid that is to deter our adversaries," he said.

This is a distinct indication that "a qualitative nuclear arms race is underway" about which UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned. Bloomberg opinion columnist Andreas Kluth warns: "[The Risk of Nuclear Cataclysm Is Increasing](#)".

In fact, the Pentagon has identified hypersonics as one of the highest priority modernization areas, "as Russia and China develop their own capable systems". Hypersonic systems are able to travel on extended flights within the

upper atmosphere — 80,000 to 200,000 feet — at speeds near and above Mach 5 (that greatly exceeds the speed of sound), and they're able to maneuver in ways that are hard for defenders to predict.

"The high-altitude range creates a gap between air defenses and ballistic missile defenses", Mike White, principal director for hypersonics in the office of the undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, said at the virtual Air Force Association's Aerospace Warfare Symposium.

The department has developed a hypersonics modernization strategy that accelerates the development and delivery of transformational warfighting capabilities. He said the strategy consists, among others, of developing air-, land-, and sea-launched, conventionally-armed hypersonic strike weapons for highly-survivable, long-range, time-critical defeat of maritime, coastal and inland targets of critical importance on the tactical battlefield. [IDN-InDepthNews – 28 February 2021]



A common hypersonic glide body launches from Pacific Missile Range Facility in Kauai, Hawaii, on March 19, 2020, during a Pentagon flight experiment. (Courtesy of Oscar Sosa/U.S. Navy)

A Beacon of Hope from A Buddhist Leader in the Face of Crises

Viewpoint by Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | TOKYO (IDN) — Like the United Nations, the global community-based Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a beacon of hope to a world shrouded by dark clouds of unprecedented crises. An international association of the Soka Gakkai and an NGO in consultative status with UN ECOSOC, SGI has members in 192 countries and territories around the world. SGI President is Daisaku Ikeda, a Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder and educator.

Every year since 1983, he has issued a peace proposal, which explores the interrelation between core Buddhist concepts and the diverse challenges global society faces in the effort to realize peace and human security. In addition, he has also made proposals touching on issues such as education reform, the environment, the United Nations and nuclear abolition.

In his latest 39th annual peace proposal, titled "Value Creation in a Time of Crisis", released on January 26, 2021, marking the anniversary of the founding of the SGI, President Ikeda calls for further global cooperation to address the key issues of our time: extreme weather events that reflect the worsening problem of climate change and the onslaught of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which continues to threaten social and economic stability throughout the world.



Besides, more than 13,400 nuclear weapons in the current arsenals of nine nuclear-armed states and 32 nuclear-weapon endorsing states are an existential menace. Their explosive yield has grown exponentially since 1945 when atomic bombs razed to the ground Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The SGI President recalls that, amid the Cold War's accelerating nuclear arms race, Josei Toda (1900–1958),

second president of the Soka Gakkai, issued a declaration in September 1957 calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. "Inspired by this, our organisation has worked for the comprehensive prohibition of nuclear weapons and to make this a norm governing international relations," he adds.

To this end, SGI has actively collaborated with such organisations as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). In light of this history, the award of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize and the TPNW's entry into

force about three years later has been an unparalleled cause of celebration for SGI too.

Dr Ikeda notes — with apparent satisfaction — that despite the continuing complex of crises, "progress in efforts to build a global society committed to peace and humane values has not halted". An example of important progress is the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on January 22, 2021.

The Treaty maps a clear path to the achievement of the long-sought goal of nuclear weapons abolition, an issue that was addressed at the UN in 1946, one year after its founding, in the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly; it has remained pending ever since.

Still reeling under the catastrophic pandemic's impacts

Notwithstanding progress on the TPNW front, the world is still reeling under the catastrophic pandemic's impacts. More than 99 million people had been infected with COVID-19 as of January 25, 2021. Of these, over 2.12 million have died. In slightly more than one year, the number of COVID-19 fatalities has far exceeded the total number of lives claimed by large-scale natural disasters over the past two decades.

"One cannot begin to fathom the depth of grief experienced by those who have lost their loved ones in this unforeseen manner; and this pain is deepened by the fact that, due to measures to prevent the spread of the virus, so many of the victims have been prevented from spending their final moments with family by their side," mourns Dr Ikeda.

He emphasises the economic devastation brought about by the pandemic, estimated to be threatening the livelihoods of 1.6 billion people — half the world's workforce — and emphasises the need to promote global social protection initiatives.

In his latest annual peace proposal, the SGI leader focuses on three main issue areas.

Strengthening global governance

The first relates to strengthening global governance and establishing global guidelines for combating infectious diseases.

Because of the possibility of new infectious diseases emerging in the future, the SGI President calls for convening a high-level meeting and collaboration among the world's governments to adopt international guidelines governing pandemic response.

Crucial youth role

He also pleads for a "beyond COVID-19" youth summit to discuss what kind of world young people would like to see in the aftermath of the current crisis. "This summit could utilise online platforms, thus enabling the participation of many young people from diverse backgrounds," says Dr Ikeda.

In 2020, the UN launched the UN75 initiative — an ambitious attempt to listen to the world's people's voices through surveys and dialogue.

Of the suggestions detailed in the UN75 Report, Dr Ikeda highlights, in particular, the idea of establishing a *UN youth council with the role of communicating to the UN leadership ideas and proposals developed from the perspective of young people*.

The TPNW — a turning point in human history

The second issue on which the SGI President offers specific proposals is the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons.

"Removing the grave danger posed by these weapons is at the heart of both the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)," which entered into force in 1970

and the TPNW that became a legally binding international agreement on January 22, 2021, he explains.

"The entry into force of the TPNW marks the start of an era in which the continued existence of nuclear weapons on Earth has been stipulated as unacceptable by a legally binding instrument."

In his view, attention now focuses on the first meeting of States Parties of the TPNW. Since any state is welcome to attend, a major focus will be on how to involve as many nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states as possible in the deliberations.

Japan's special role

"As the only country in the world to have experienced a nuclear attack in wartime, Japan should pave the way for the nuclear-dependent states by announcing its intention to participate in the first meeting of States Parties of the TPNW and to proactively take part in discussions," emphasises Dr Ikeda.

"On this basis, Japan should aim for ratification at an early date. In light of its history and the underlying spirit of the Treaty — to protect the right to live of all the people with whom we share this planet and to ensure the survival of future generations — it can certainly send a powerful message to the world. In this way, Japan can make an important contribution to ensuring that the talks reach a constructive outcome."

Furthermore, the SGI President proposes a forum for discussing the relationship between nuclear weapons and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during the first meeting of States Parties. The theme of nuclear weapons and the SDGs can thus be positioned as an issue concerning all states and serve as the impetus to engage as many nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states as possible.

Besides, he wants the NPT Review Conference scheduled for August this year to discuss the true meaning of security in light of crises such as climate change and the pandemic. The final document, he adds, should include a pledge of non-use of nuclear weapons and a pledge to freeze all nuclear-weapon development in the lead-up to the 2025 Review Conference.

The SGI President argues that the TPNW opens a path for a nuclear-weapon state to become a State Party by submitting a plan to eliminate its nuclear-weapon program. Such participation by nuclear-dependent and nuclear-weapon states in the TPNW could be facilitated under the NPT regime by embarking on multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament undergirded by pledges non-use and a freeze on nuclear-weapon development. He calls for efforts to link the operation of these two treaties in ways that will put us on the path to ending the nuclear age.

Rebuilding life in a post-COVID world

The third issue on which Dr Ikeda offers proposals pertains to the reconstruction of economies and lives disrupted by the COVID-19 emergency.

As the United Nations has repeatedly emphasised, the magnitude of the COVID-19 economic shock has thrown many millions of people into financial devastation. This has driven home the urgency of strengthening access to social protection systems, a goal also supported by the members of the 37-nation Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

"I hope that OECD members will take the lead in efforts to realise all SDG targets related to ensuring universal social protection measures. I also hope that they will work together to establish and implement global policy standards for rebuilding economies and livelihoods devastated by the COVID-19 crisis," says Dr Ikeda.

Transition to a green economy

One direction this could take, he adds, is the development of new industries and the creation of job opportunities through the transition to a green economy, scaling back military spending and allocating the resources saved to strengthening social protection systems.

Social resilience

Further, notes the SGI President, OECD members have a significant role to play in enacting ambitious policies that enhance social resilience. "We are living in an era in which we need to adopt a comprehensive and simultaneous 'multi-hazard approach' to threats and challenges, with a clear understanding of the systemic nature of risk, as advocated by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction."

Dr Ikeda assures that drawing upon the network of collaborative relations Buddhist organisation has developed to date, as part of civil society, it is "wholeheartedly committed to working toward 2030 with like-minded people and organisations to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and to realise a global society of peace and humane values".

The 39th peace proposal — like his previous suggestions — is eminently exhaustive, founded not only on the philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism but also on the culture of peace and the author's wisdom and diverse encounters over the years with philosophers and government and religious leaders from around the world. [IDN-InDepthNews – 18 February 2021]

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"On this basis, Japan should aim for ratification at an early date. In light of its history and the underlying spirit of the Treaty — to protect the right to live of all the people with whom we share this planet and to ensure the survival of future generations — it can certainly send a powerful message to the world. In this way, Japan can make an important contribution to ensuring that the talks reach a constructive outcome."

The United States and Russia: Warmongers and Peacemakers

By Somar Wijayadasa*



Photo: President Barack Obama signs the New START (treaty) in the Oval Office, Feb. 2, 2011 - with Vice President Joe Biden on the extreme right.

Credit: Chuck Kennedy (official White House photograph)

NEW YORK (IDN) – Just days after the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) that explicitly and unequivocally prohibits the use of nuclear weapons entered into force on January 22, 2021 – a remarkable victory for humanity – the United States and Russia extended their Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) until 2026, just two days before it was set to expire.

It is also remarkable that the US and Russia joined hands at a time of severe acrimonious and adversarial relations between the two countries.

Originally signed in 2010 by Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev of Russia, the agreement placed the lowest limits in decades on American and Russian deployed nuclear warheads, and the land- and submarine-based missiles and bombers that deliver them. Most importantly, it allows the United States and Russia to monitor each other's nuclear forces, facilities and activities.

Noting that Russia has remained in compliance over the years, the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, “Especially during times of tension, verifiable limits on Russia’s intercontinental-range nuclear weapons are vitally important”.

Extending the treaty made “the world safer,” he said, adding that “unconstrained nuclear competition would endanger us all”.

Signing the Treaty, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the New START “makes it possible to maintain the transparency and predictability of strategic relations between Russia and the United States and to support global strategic stability”.

He also said that “it will have a positive effect on the international situation, contributing to the nuclear disarmament process”.

The treaty calls for a cap on the two countries' deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles and heavy bombers to 700 each; warheads on deployed ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers to 1,550 each; and deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers and heavy bombers to 800 each.

The Nuclear Arms Race

The arms race between the US and the former Soviet Union began in August 1945 after the world witnessed the destruction caused by two atomic bombs dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people.

Though not yet a superpower, the Soviet Union still suffering from the ravages of the second world war, the prospects of having a nuclear bomb with such immense destructive power in the hands of US was not acceptable to the Soviets.

The Soviets acquired the nuclear bomb in 1949 not only neutralizing the Americans balance of power but also as a deterrent to destructive wars, and perhaps as a weapon to make peace as well.

Thus began the nuclear arms race and the superpower competition between the United States and Soviet Union,

and by the time the two countries agreed to participate in numerous bilateral arms control treaties and initiatives, the two countries had a stockpile of approximately 70,300 nuclear warheads.

Since then, an entire generation grew up under the shadow of imminent catastrophe, and at times like the 1962 Cuban Missile crisis, there were widespread fears that humanity could not survive.

Thanks to several arms reduction treaties the stockpile of nuclear weapons has been reduced to a total of 13,865. But 6,185 and 6,500 nuclear warheads that the US and Russia respectively own today are ample to scorch our earth several times over.

A Turning Point in Arms Control

The arms control talks between the Americans and Soviets formally began in 1963 when the representatives of the United States, Soviet Union and Great Britain signed the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which prohibited the testing of nuclear weapons in outer space, underwater or in the atmosphere.

Beginning in 1969, the two countries entered into several Strategic Nuclear Arms Control Agreements.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) began in 1969 and produced the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty in 1972. Though a SALT II Treaty came into being in 1972, it collapsed after the Soviet Union's involvement with Afghanistan in December 1979.

The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed on July 31, 1991 by President George H. W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, required the United States and the Soviet Union to reduce their deployed strategic arsenals to 1,600 delivery vehicles, carrying no more than 6,000 warheads as counted using the agreement's rules.

Even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia continued to maintain momentum despite challenging times. In January 1993, Presidents George H. W. Bush and Boris Yeltsin signed the START II, Treaty that called for reducing deployed strategic arsenals to 3,000-3,500 warheads and banned the deployment of destabilizing multiple-warhead land-based missiles. After some delays in ratification procedures, START II was shelved as a result of the 2002 US withdrawal from the ABM treaty.

In May 2002, Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin signed the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) but it was replaced by New START treaty. In April 2010, the United States and Russia signed New START, a legally binding, verifiable agreement that limits each side to 1,550 strategic nuclear warheads deployed on 700 strategic delivery systems (ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers) and limits deployed and non-deployed launchers to 800.

Since the Second World War and even during the hostile Cold War era, the US and the Soviet Union and later Russia engaged in many noteworthy projects beneficial to both nations, and the whole world.

For example: The two countries participated in joint efforts in the Limited Test-Ban Treaty in 1963; the Apollo-Soyuz project in space where the cold-war rivals met in orbit in 1975; participated in the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty; the first joint US-Russian space shuttle mission in 1994; and in 1995, the US space shuttle Atlantis docked with Russian space station Mir in outer space forming the largest spacecraft ever in orbit.

These are epoch-making milestones by two adversarial superpowers, the US and Russia (who are often categorized

as war-mongers and not peace-makers) that strived and markedly reduced their nuclear weapons from 70,000 warheads during the cold war era to current 14,000.

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations strived to abolish nuclear weapons to accomplish its noble goal "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) that entered into force on January 22, 2021, explicitly and unequivocally prohibits the use, threat of use, development, production, testing and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, it obliges all States Parties to not assist, encourage or induce anyone in any way to engage in any activity prohibited by the Treaty.

Referring to the TPNW, Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said: "Today is a victory for humanity.

This Treaty – the result of more than 75 years of work – sends a clear signal that nuclear weapons are unacceptable from a moral, humanitarian, and now a legal point of view.

It sets in motion even higher legal barriers and an even greater stigmatization of nuclear warheads than already exists. It allows us to imagine a world free from these inhumane weapons as an achievable goal". [IDN-InDepthNews – 05 February 2021]

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UN Treaty Paves the Way for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World

Viewpoint by Sergio Duarte

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Image shows the world with nuclear weapons/World free of nuclear weapons,
Michael P., Poland, Art for Peace. Credit: Portside

NEW YORK (IDN) – The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) on January 22 prompted many comments from different quarters on the importance and significance of this new addition to positive international law. In accordance with its Article 15.1 the Treaty entered into force 90 days after the deposit of the 50th instrument of ratification. So far, 86 states signed and 52 have already ratified.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres hailed the Treaty as “an important step towards a world free of nuclear as “an important step towards a world free of nuclear weapons” and and called on all countries “to work together to realize this vision, for , for our common security and collective safety”.

Media in many parts of the world highlighted the fact that the TPNW is the first-ever instrument to ban all nuclear weapons and noted the strong opposition of the nuclear armed nations to it.

Civil society organizations and public opinion in many countries, including those that possess atomic arsenals, and their allies celebrated the entry into force as a historic step to rid the world of the last standing category of weapons of mass destruction.

In an article for the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* dated January 22, former United States Secretary of Defence William Perry wrote: "The ban treaty rightly establishes abolition as the standard that all nations should be actively working to achieve, rather than an indeterminate future goal" and closed his powerful piece by saying that "America prides itself on being a nation of trailblazers; let us be the first nuclear-armed nation to blaze this new trail toward the top of the nuclear-free mountain."

The same rationale that successfully supported and promoted the negotiation and adoption of the treaties that ban the other two categories of weapons of mass destruction – bacteriological (biological) and chemical, which are prohibited by multilateral treaties respectively in 1972 and in 1997 – certainly supports the prohibition of nuclear arms.

There is a substantial difference between the partial prohibitions contained in Article II the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the all-encompassing ban set forth by the TPNW, which applies to every Party, regardless of whether or not they possess nuclear weapons.

Besides its distinct humanitarian approach, including the obligation of assistance to victims of nuclear tests – it reinforces the commitments already undertaken by non-nuclear states in previous instruments, such as the NPT, and sets forth the principle that nuclear weapons are not

acceptable under the basic tenets that underpin civilized relations among nations. The Treaty constitutes a powerful normative and moral force against the development, manufacturing and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

The TPNW is not directed against any state in particular nor does it advocate unilateral disarmament. States possessing nuclear weapons that join the Treaty will have to take action in accordance with Articles 1 and 4, which do not preclude concerted arrangements among possessor states to ensure mutual security during the disarmament process.

In fact, nuclear-weapon States have negotiated among themselves in the past a number of *ad hoc* instruments aimed precisely at finding common ways to protect their security. The wealth of experience accumulated over decades of animosity and mistrust can be shifted to seeking security in the progressive reduction of nuclear weapons organically linked to their final elimination, rather than in endless and fruitless pursuit of an elusive military and strategic superiority.

It is not reasonable to hide behind the possession of nuclear weapons by others in order to justify the perpetuation of one's own. The possession of weapons that can wipe out civilization as we know it is simply not justifiable.

If it were so, all nations would have valid reasons to acquire them. The often-repeated phrase that "we will keep nuclear weapons as long as they exist" is a self-serving expression of the unwillingness to even contemplate common-sense options to devise workable ways to achieve the stated objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear disarmament would replace highhandedness and threats in international relations. Instead of obtuse, angry hostility to the TPNW, nuclear-weapon states would do better if they choose to engage constructively with the new treaty.

Several commentators have stressed the fact that a nuclear disarmament treaty that does not involve the existing nuclear weapon states is not effective. It is obvious that the TPNW will not be able to fully achieve its objective without the good-faith participation of those who actually possess nuclear weapons. It does, however, shift the focus from armed confrontation to the need for a broad consensus to address this existential issue.

The states that extol the value of their nuclear armament have not been able to convince their own populations nor world public opinion that their security and that of the planet is better served by reliance on utter destruction in response to perceived threats. Polls across the globe, including in allies of nuclear-armed states, have shown that there would be strong popular support to effective, legally binding, verifiable and time-bound measures to completely eliminate nuclear weapons.

Voices from some quarters in nuclear-weapon states have argued that the pressure generated by the entry into force of the TPNW on states, agencies and vested interests that enable the development, research and production will only be felt in countries with well-established democratic institutions, where public opinion is able to influence the behavior of governments and other actors.

This is only half true: in all societies the public has found ways of making its aspirations to be translated into action.

Opinions, attitudes and beliefs have always been able to permeate barriers erected by autocratic and oppressive regimes, as the history of the world clearly shows. International law applies *erga omnes*, regardless of political systems. Internal pressures do not stem only from civil

society: they also come from public pronouncements or private demarches by other states, as well as from international organizations, from positions taken by eminent personalities and from the general strength of public conscience. As frustration with the senseless armaments race and with lack of progress grows support of public opinion everywhere for effective measures of nuclear disarmament will also grow.

All members of the 51-year-old Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are committed to its Preamble, which declares the intention to achieve at the earliest date effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament, and particularly to its Article VI to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures related to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament”. The 122 states that negotiated and adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons have given the example by doing exactly that. Their effort should be commended and followed rather than dismissed or ignored, so that the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is finally achieved.

Parties to the NPT – widely considered as “the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime” – must not allow the continued flouting of nuclear disarmament obligations. They must avail themselves of the opportunity offered by the forthcoming NPT Review Conference to recognize the valuable contribution of the TPNW to the important and urgent task of ridding the world of the threat of nuclear weapons and to agree on effective action in that regard. With its entry into force, the TPNW has now become an indispensable part of this endeavour. [IDN-InDepthNews – 28 January 2021]

The Nuclear Ban Is Here. Now What?

Viewpoint by Alyn Ware



The author is Director of the World Future Council Peace and Disarmament Program. He is also the International Representative of the Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace.

PRAGUE (IDN) – January 22 was a historic day for the global campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons, with the entry-into-force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). According to promoters of the TPNW, nuclear weapons "*are now illegal under international law*".

This is fabulous news for the world. Since the birth of the nuclear age and until January 22, humanity lived under the threat of nuclear war, the destructiveness of which would dwarf the horror of World War I and World War II, and possibly destroy civilization as we know it.

Now that nuclear weapons are illegal, we can celebrate the end of the nuclear weapons era, take "nuclear abolition" off our to-do list, and turn our attention to other important issues like stabilizing the climate and more effectively addressing the pandemic.

Or can we? Is it really true that nuclear weapons are now illegal? And before January 22, were they legal? And what weight does law have on the policies of those countries possessing nuclear weapons? The truth is much more complicated than the slogans imply.

Firstly, does the TPNW make nuclear weapons illegal? The answer is yes, but only for those countries that join the treaty. 51 countries have joined, all of them are non-nuclear states. The countries possessing nuclear weapons, and those engaged in nuclear deterrence security agreements like NATO, have all said that they won't join the treaty.

So, in effect the treaty is a little like if the vegetarians of the world adopted a treaty to ban meat-eating, in order to help reduce carbon emissions, deforestation and environmental pollution and improve the food supply for humanity. All very well and something this author would support as a vegetarian. But if the meat producers and eaters refuse to join, it won't have much impact on them. It certainly does not make meat-eating illegal under international law.

But the second question is more interesting and possibly more useful for the global nuclear disarmament campaign. Were nuclear weapons legal before January 22? The answer is – hardly. For the non-nuclear States, the possession of nuclear weapons was already prohibited under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

For the nuclear-armed states, the possession of nuclear weapons was not specifically prohibited, but the threat or use of nuclear weapons was generally prohibited under international humanitarian law and international human

rights law – and was affirmed as such by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1996 and the UN Human Rights Committee in 2018. In addition, both the ICJ and the Human Rights Committee affirmed that there is a universal obligation to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons under strict and effective international control.

So, if the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons does not "*make nuclear weapons illegal under international law*", can it have a positive impact on nuclear disarmament? And the answer to that is – definitely yes in three key ways.

Firstly, the adoption of TPNW has made a lot of noise around the world. With over 120 countries supporting it, and 51 now having ratified, it makes a strong statement to the nuclear-armed States that the non-nuclear-armed States are sick-and-tired of waiting for progress on nuclear disarmament, and so are starting to take action themselves.

This could be used to generate momentum in the nuclear-armed States for progress on concrete and meaningful disarmament measures such as ending the production of new nuclear weapons, cutting nuclear weapons stockpiles, adopting policies to never to initiate nuclear war by launching nuclear weapons first (no-first-use policies), and committing to work with the other nuclear-armed states to achieve a safe and secure nuclear-weapon-free world within a specified timeframe.

The election of a new US President sympathetic to these measures, and a Democratic Party-led Congress that could support the new President, gives cause for some optimism that progress is possible – but the continuing conflicts between the nuclear-armed States indicate that none of this will be easy.

Secondly, the TPNW commits states parties to prohibit the possession, production, deployment, testing, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons in their territories. The nuclear-

armed States transit their nuclear weapons through the airspace and territorial waters of some of these countries.

If these States parties to the TPNW are brave enough to fully implement the treaty by prohibiting the transit of nuclear weapons, this would have a very significant political and legal impact on the nuclear-armed States.

This was demonstrated, for example, when New Zealand banned the transit of nuclear weapons in 1987 and incurred considerable wrath from nuclear-armed states that had been transiting nuclear weapons there (France, the UK and the USA), but gained considerable respect from non-nuclear countries around the world, even winning themselves a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council because of this.

Thirdly, the TPNW also makes it illegal for states parties to "Assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Treaty". Many of the states which have joined the TPNW maintain government-managed funds such as sovereign wealth funds, public employee pension funds, national pension funds and public trust funds which invest in the stock market, including in corporations involved in the manufacture of nuclear weapons and/or their dedicated delivery systems.

Some also have national banks and other state-managed financial institutions which invest in the nuclear weapons industry. Such investments are assisting the production of nuclear weapons. Under the TPNW, they should end such investments.

"Money is what makes the world go around..." And at the moment, the nuclear arms race is being fuelled by colossal nuclear weapons budgets in the nuclear-armed States and significant financial investments globally. It was a global divestment campaign against South Africa that helped end apartheid.

A global nuclear weapons divestment campaign, led by States parties to the TPNW, could reverse the financial incentives for the nuclear arms race and give powerful support to political actors (legislators, financial institutions, civil society) in the nuclear-armed States who are trying to reign in the nuclear weapons budgets and advance nuclear disarmament.

Some countries including Lichtenstein, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland, had already taken nuclear weapons divestment action prior to the TPNW (indeed Norway and Switzerland are not even members of the TPNW). To date, the TPNW has not led to any other countries following suit, because most attention on the TPNW has been on getting more states to sign and ratify, rather than on adoption of effective national policies to implement the treaty.

However, this issue could take prominence at the first Conference of States Parties to the TPNW, if civil society makes it a priority. Move the Nuclear Weapons Money, a global campaign pushing this is starting to gain traction.

If states parties to the TPNW and civil society supporters focus on the above three processes, significant progress could be made on nuclear disarmament in the near future, paving the way for comprehensive prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons at the very latest by 2045, the 100th anniversary of the United Nations.

States Parties and TPNW supporters should, however, avoid the pitfall of focusing their primary attention on trying to move the nuclear-armed States to join the TPNW. All but one of the nuclear-armed states have indicated an openness to join a multilateral nuclear disarmament agreement such as a nuclear weapons convention or a similar package of agreements (as China, France, Russia, UK and USA agreed in the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference Final Document and India, Pakistan and North Korea have supported in UN Resolutions).

However, none of them supports the option of unilaterally giving up nuclear weapons to join the TPNW. So, pushing this option at this point in time is pushing at a closed and locked door, while there are partially open doors adjacent.

A final important aspect of the TPNW is its attention to victim assistance and environmental remediation with respect to the testing or use of nuclear weapons within the territories of States Parties. This is important as the 2000 plus nuclear test detonations undertaken by nuclear-armed States have caused catastrophic health and environmental effects – and these need to be rectified.

However, the problem with the TPNW is that it does not establish the responsibility correctly. Responsibility should rest on those governments that conducted the tests, not on those governments of territories and people that have been impacted by the tests. In some cases, nuclear tests were conducted by nuclear-armed States in territories that are now independent countries for example Russia testing in Kazakhstan, France testing in Algeria and the USA testing in the Marshall Islands. In other cases, nuclear-armed countries have tested close to other countries with severe

impacts on them, such as France testing in the Pacific and China testing at Lop Nor near the borders with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

Despite this, the inclusion of victim assistance and environmental remediation in the TPNW gives voice and standing to those impacted by nuclear weapons and to the environment. This can assist to advance the human rights of people impacted and environmental rights.

Indeed, following the adoption of the TPNW and the 2018 declaration of the UN Human Rights Committee, campaigners are engaging with the UN Human Rights bodies to review countries' policies and practices relating to nuclear disarmament and the impact of nuclear weapons production, testing and use. This can only serve to strengthen the nuclear disarmament movement. [IDN-InDepthNews – 23 January 2021]

Photo: The remains of the Prefectural Industry Promotion Building, after the dropping of the atomic bomb, in Hiroshima, Japan. This site was later preserved as a monument. UN Photo/DB

A global nuclear weapons divestment campaign, led by States parties to the TPNW, could reverse the financial incentives for the nuclear arms race and give powerful support to political actors (legislators, financial institutions, civil society) in the nuclear-armed States who are trying to reign in the nuclear weapons budgets and advance nuclear disarmament.

The Political Significance of the UN Nuclear Ban Treaty

Viewpoint by Thomas Hajnoczi

*The writer is the outgoing Director of Arms Control at the Austrian Foreign Ministry.**



VIENNA (IDN) – With its entry into force on January 22 the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) will become binding international law for the growing number of State Parties, for the moment 51 countries. Moreover, it is also having an effect on those states that do not intend to join it.

The nuclear-weapon states themselves testify to the TPNW's effectiveness by their campaign against it. They could have ignored it instead of pressuring countries not to sign and ratify.

The TPNW has clearly revealed their lack of will to comply with their obligation to nuclear disarmament in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Since the latter's entry into force 50 years ago, the nuclear-weapon states have not only failed to disarm but have not even started to elaborate a plan for how to do it.

Instead, they are investing trillions of dollars in modernizing their arsenals, developing a new generation of even more sophisticated nuclear weapons, and lowering the threshold for their use. For many years, the US has been on record at the UN to declare that they seek a world free of nuclear weapons and that such a world requires a legally binding prohibition norm.

So, it is not the concept of the TPNW that is contentious, rather it is the fact that it has been put into existence by the majority of states without waiting for the nuclear-weapon states.

The nuclear-weapon states had been invited to the negotiations, yet they preferred to boycott them. Some even put pressure on those countries which have chosen to put themselves under their nuclear umbrella to stay away from the negotiations.

By doing so, it could be said that the nuclear-weapon states have violated Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty that requires them „to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiation leading to nuclear disarmament“.

The nuclear-weapon states argued against the negotiations, insisting that a prohibition norm should only be created once there were almost no nuclear weapons left. This stands in stark contrast to the history of the prohibition of the other classes of weapons of mass destruction.

If this line of thinking would have prevailed, neither the prohibition of chemical weapons would exist, since their destruction is still not completed.

Without a prohibition norm against chemical weapons in place, the use of them by Syria and others over the last years would not have violated international law. This example, as many others regarding conventional arms, corroborates why the prohibition of a class of weapons always precedes their destruction.

The campaign against the TPNW centres on the argument that the TPNW does not eliminate a single nuclear warhead. This criticism falls back on the nuclear-weapon states themselves because no treaty and no non-nuclear-weapon state can destroy their nuclear weapons for them. As long as they fail to do so, the risk to humankind will persist.

For that reason, the TPNW is a focused prohibition treaty that leaves detailed procedures for destruction and verification to future regulation with states possessing nuclear weapons, once they join the treaty.

As the mandate of the negotiations already expressed, the TPNW is designed to lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The TPNW creates an indispensable basis on which further legal and practical steps can build. What the TPNW underscores is that nuclear weapons are in fundamental contradiction to humanitarian values and international law.

Since the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it has been rightfully argued that the use of nuclear weapons violates international humanitarian law, for these weapons cause excessive suffering and kill overwhelmingly civilians. The required clarity that nuclear weapons are illegal has finally been established by the TPNW.

Indeed, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the unacceptable risks which they bring about were the main motivation for the process that led to the adoption of the TPNW. Even a limited nuclear confrontation would result in global effects like "nuclear winter".

A considerable number of cases is documented in which misunderstandings, error or technical breakdowns almost caused the detonation of nuclear weapons. No humanitarian crisis response capacity exists or could ever be created that can cope with the humanitarian devastation that nuclear weapons would cause. For those reasons, the only guarantee that such a catastrophe does not occur is the prohibition of nuclear weapons and their total elimination.

The TPNW delegitimizes nuclear deterrence at a time in history when this concept dating from the bipolar world of the Cold War area has been put in question by facts. How could nuclear deterrence be effective in a multipolar and

digitalized world, when cyber hacking of nuclear systems can happen and hypersonic weapons by their sheer speed and non-ballistic course might permit a first strike without retaliation?

In addition, the credibility of the concept of nuclear deterrence necessitates the readiness to use nuclear weapons and thus to kill millions of people, including one's own population. As President Reagan has said on nuclear deterrence as a means to make sure that nuclear weapons would never be used: "But then would it not be better to do away with nuclear weapons entirely?"

The prohibition implies that states must not build their security strategy on reliance on nuclear weapons. This concerns not only the nuclear-armed states but also those countries that have chosen to found their security on reliance on nuclear weapons of others. The TPNW exposes the contradiction in the position of these so-called "umbrella states" that profess to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons and simultaneously want their continued existence for their "protection".

As in most umbrella states, a majority of the population favours joining the TPNW, these dynamics might lead to a serious debate on nuclear disarmament resulting in a change of the position on disarmament. Another effect of the TPNW is the growing trend to disinvest from companies involved in the nuclear weapons industry. Not only the largest public funds are taking this course, but also an increasing number of investment funds of banks are doing so.

The entry into force of the TPNW coincides with a global pandemic, a threat to global, national and personal security that cannot be fought by nuclear weapons. Most of the major contemporary challenges to security starting with climate

change cannot be confronted with weapons, let alone nuclear weapons. On the contrary, the modernization programs and upkeep of nuclear weapons systems siphon off the funds that would be desperately needed to tackle the predominant challenges to security.

This broader concept of security has also set the premises of the TPNW. National and humanitarian security mean the same thing: the security of the people living in a given country. If their own country uses nuclear weapons, the people would suffer in a horrific way and their very survival would be imperilled: first, by an expected nuclear counterstrike of the attacked state and secondly, as all of mankind, by the global humanitarian consequences of nuclear warfare. This is not security.

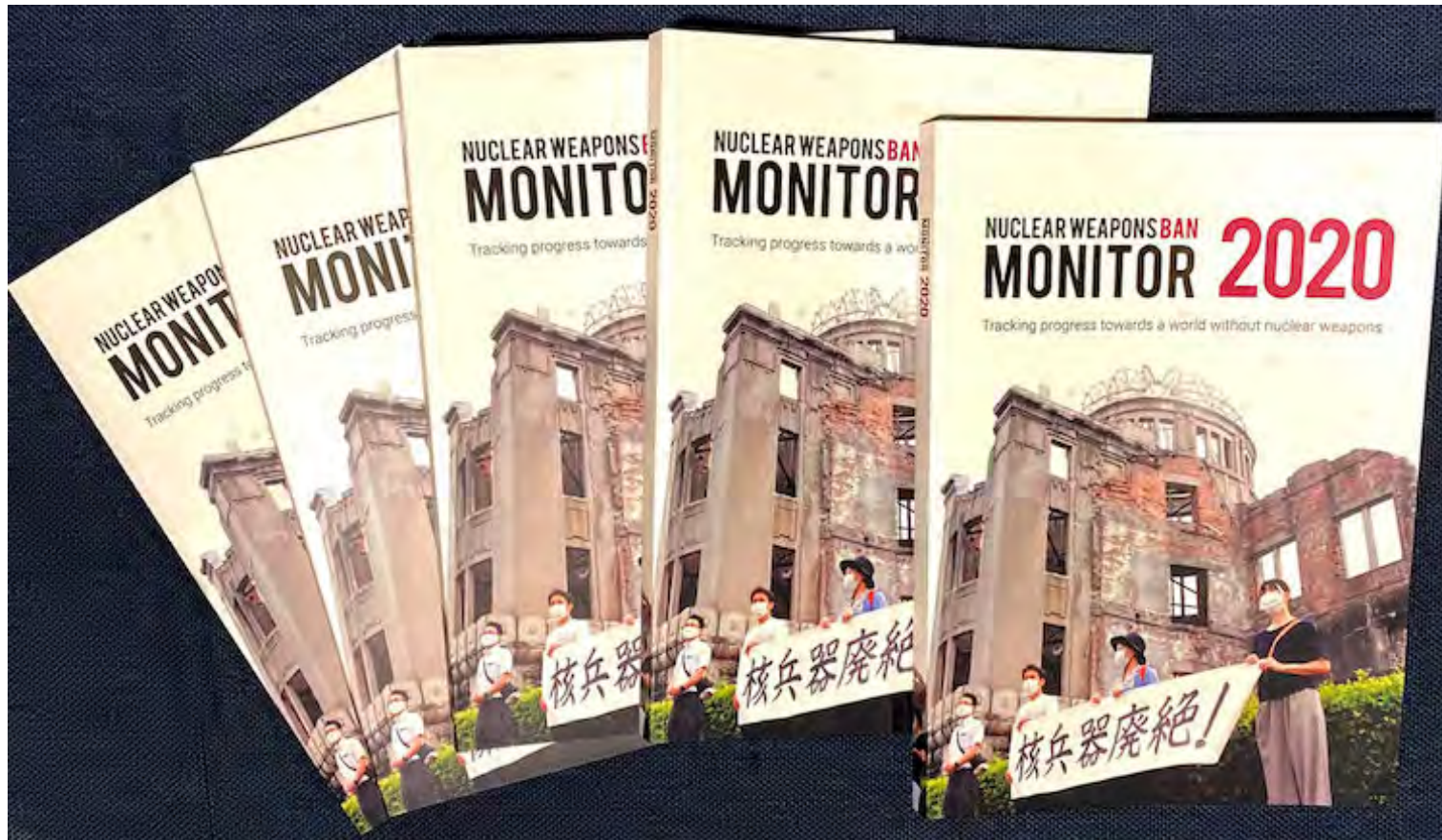
Finally, the TPNW mentions rightly the unacceptable suffering of the hibakushas, i.e. the victims of the nuclear bombings in 1945. It contains obligations on victim assistance and environmental remediation. In the negotiations, these real-life effects of nuclear weapons were a strong motivation. The TPNW has succeeded in putting the fate of the individual into the centre. Future disarmament treaties must follow suit. [IDN-InDepthNews – 20 January 2021]

** Ambassador (ret.) Dr Thomas Hajnoczi graduated as a doctor of law from the University of Vienna in 1977 and was the Director for Disarmament, Arms Control, and Non-proliferation at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe and International Affairs. Hajnoczi also served as Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva.*

Image source: IIP:

Watchdog Indicates Barriers to UN Ban on Nuclear Weapons

By Jamshed Baruah



GENEVA (IDN) – Most of the world’s states can become a party to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and comply with the Treaty without making any changes to their existing policies and practices, says Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor (NWBM).

But 42 states around the world currently engage in conduct that is not compatible with the new ban on nuclear weapons. In fact, Europe stands out as the region with the most states that act in conflict with the UN Treaty. Established in 2018, the NWBM is produced and published by Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA), a partner organisation of the 2017 Nobel Peace Laureate, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

The Monitor evaluates the nuclear-weapons-related policies and practices of each of the 197 states that can become a party to global treaties for which the Secretary-General of the United Nations is the depositary. The 197 states include all 193 UN member states, the two UN observer states (the Holy See and the State of Palestine), and two other states, Cook Islands and Niue.

The Monitor aims to be an accessible and trusted long-term source of accurate information on progress in nuclear disarmament and analysis of the key challenges.

Its central purpose is to highlight activities that stand between the international community and the fulfilment of one of its most urgent and universally accepted goals: the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Using the TPNW as a yardstick against which the progress towards a world without nuclear weapons can be measured, the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor records developments related to the universalisation of the Treaty.

It also tracks the status of all states in relation to other relevant treaties and regimes dealing with weapons of mass destruction, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) treaties, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Partial Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (PTBT), Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The Monitor sets out clear interpretations of each of the prohibitions and positive obligations of the TPNW and assesses the extent to which the world's states – whether they have consented to be bound by the Treaty or not – act in accordance with them or not. This is done with a view to providing guidance to states that have already ratified or

acceded to the Treaty, those that are currently considering whether to do so and those that could do so in the future.

The Monitor's 2020 edition – ahead of the TPNW coming into force as international law on January 22, 2021 – notes that "only the United States is known to station nuclear weapons in other countries today (in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey respectively), but Russia and the United Kingdom have also done so in the past".

A total of 19 states are believed to have previously hosted such deployments, in some cases without their knowledge: Belgium, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Cuba, Cyprus, Denmark (Greenland), France, East Germany and West Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Mongolia, Turkey, United Kingdom.

The figure does not include territories that during the relevant period were under the direct jurisdiction or administration of a nuclear-armed state (Guam, Okinawa, and the Marshall Islands).

Most nuclear-hosting arrangements were put in place in the 1950s and 1960s, and all but the above-mentioned five cases in Europe are believed to have since been discontinued.

The 2020 Monitor points out that there have been several attempts by European policymakers to have the remaining weapons removed from European soil. For example, in 2005, the Belgian Senate unanimously adopted a resolution calling for the removal of nuclear weapons from Belgian territory.

In 2009, the German coalition government committed through its governing platform to have the remaining nuclear weapons in Germany withdrawn. The then Foreign Minister, Guido Westerwelle, promoted the initiative enthusiastically for some time, but the United States responded negatively, and the initiative was quietly shelved the next year.

At the NATO summit in 2018, the allies collectively declared that NATO's deterrence posture "relies on the United States' nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and the capabilities and infrastructure provided by Allies concerned".

The renewed debate about Germany's role in NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements erupted in 2020, when Rolf Mützenich, chairman of the Social Democratic Party's parliamentary group, called for US nuclear weapons to be withdrawn from the country. The NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, quickly responded that Germany's support for nuclear sharing was "vital to protect peace and freedom".

Forty-two states around the world who currently engage in conduct that is not compatible with the new ban on nuclear weapons include nine nuclear-armed states (China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Britain, and the United States). They possess an estimated total of nearly 14,000 nuclear weapons, most of which are many times more powerful than the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

In addition, there are 33 states that do not have nuclear weapons. Twenty-seven 27 of them are European states. Albania, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey were all found to engage in assistance and encouragement of the continued possession of nuclear weapons, which is prohibited under Article 1(1)(e) of the TPNW.

They aid and abet the nuclear-armed states' retention of nuclear weapons in different ways, ranging from the hosting

of nuclear weapons on their territories to participation in nuclear-strike exercises, logistical and technical support, allowing the testing of nuclear-capable missiles, development, production, and maintenance of key components for nuclear weapons, and endorsement of nuclear-weapons doctrines, policies and statements.

Outside of Europe, the only non-nuclear-armed states that currently assist and encourage the possession of nuclear weapons in different ways are Armenia, Japan, and South Korea in Asia; Canada in the Americas; and Australia and the Marshall Islands in Oceania.

The 42 states are by no means barred from joining the Treaty. But they would have to make varying degrees of changes to their policies and practices if they are to meet the demands of the TPNW," says the 2020 Monitor editor, NPA senior advisor Grethe Lauglo Østern.

According to the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor, support for the TPNW is high in all regions apart from Europe, where 31 of 47 states currently are opposed to joining the Treaty.

Two weeks before the Treaty was to enter into force, exactly 70 per cent – or 138 of the world's states – were supportive of the TPNW.

51 states are already parties to the Treaty and 37 have signed but not yet ratified it. "So we are fast approaching a situation where half of all states will have accepted binding obligations in international law under the TPNW," says Østern. The Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor recorded a further 50 states as "other supporters". [IDN-InDepthNews – 13 January 2021]

Image credit: Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor

The Nuclear Weapon States Urged to Advance Disarmament

By Bernhard Schell



AMMAN (IDN) – The upcoming Review Conference (postponed to August 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is expected to be characterised by deep divisions among the nuclear-weapon states (NWS), and between them and the non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS), which are deeply disappointed with the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament despite commitments laid down in the NPT and made at past NPT review conferences.

With this in view, a joint statement by the representatives of 16 States has renewed the "call on all nuclear weapon states to show leadership, address and reduce nuclear risks and advance nuclear disarmament by taking meaningful steps to implement the commitments under the NPT," They convened the third ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament and the NPT in Amman, the capital city of Jordan.

Jordan is the only Arab state in this group and has the opportunity to lead disarmament diplomacy in the Arab world and encourage the NWS to participate in a constructive process that will strengthen global security.

"Recalling our declaration – 'Advancing Nuclear Disarmament, Securing Our Future' – [adopted on February 25, 2020 in Berlin] we reaffirm the 'stepping stones' contained therein as 22 concrete proposals to make progress on the road towards a world free of nuclear weapons," the statement adds.

Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said that the world and the Middle East, in particular, are witnessing "enough crises, tensions and unrest" without the threat of nuclear weapons to add to it.

"We will continue to work on pushing nuclear disarmament and the non-proliferation treaty. We envision a nuclear-free Middle East that has good relations with its neighbours," said Safadi, who insisted that Arab countries have all "expressed their will to form friendly relations with Iran".

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas nevertheless said that Iran "must soften its tone and not gamble away the chance of an effective non-proliferation treaty with its recent 20 per cent uranium enrichment".

He said that Tehran "must show moderation and back down on the dangerous uranium enrichment decision", adding that the new Joe Biden-led US leadership "might make 2021 the year in which a course is set for a nuclear-free world".

Noting that the past couple of years with their technological leaps have "accelerated nuclear and nuclear arms production rather than slowed it down", Maas said that the work of the 16 states in the meeting on January 6 is "multilateralism at its finest and a sign that nuclear order is on the right track forward".

Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde said that the meeting, which was co-hosted by Sweden, is also "a way to involve women and the youth in the talk over disarmament".

Linde highlighted Sweden's "support for UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees] and the services that it provides for Palestinian refugees".

Jordan Foreign Minister Safadi noted that the visits by the German and Swedish foreign ministers is "a chance to discuss their bilateral relations with the Kingdom and the effort and support they provide for Jordan's hosting of the Syrian and Palestinian refugees".

In remarks to *The Jordan Times*, Safadi said that while the meetings discuss nuclear non-proliferation with states, they also work on preventing the acquirement of nuclear weapons by non-state actors.

"We know that terrorist organisations feed on chaos and the absence of hope, so if we wish to eliminate the threat of a nuclear crisis, we must solve the region's crises in a way that satisfies all the parties and puts an end to the chaos," he said.

UN Secretary General António Guterres in a recorded video message applauded Stockholm Initiative's efforts to overcome "dangerous trust deficit".

The Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament was launched by Sweden, with 16 foreign ministers from non-nuclear-weapon states meeting in Stockholm in June 2019 to "discuss how nuclear disarmament diplomacy can be advanced" by using a constructive, innovative, and creative approach that is able to respond effectively to the challenge presented by nuclear weapons. As Dina Saadallah, Security analyst and a Geneva Centre for Security Policy alumna, points out, the main objectives of the meeting were to reaffirm the value of the NPT Review Conference.

Participants were aware of the challenges, yet also chose to draw attention to the undeniable successes of the NPT: those of reducing the size of nuclear arsenals globally through the START 1 treaty, lowering tensions by creating nuclear-weapon-free zones such as the Central Asian Zone and African Zone, and the signing of treaties to limit the proliferation of nuclear material such as the one that established the Nuclear Suppliers Group. The Stockholm Initiative states that “together we must ensure the future of this landmark treaty” (i.e. the NPT).

According to the Initiative, a real and current danger exists of “a potential nuclear arms race” that would adversely impact the global security landscape. In early 2019 the US left the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. The Stockholm Declaration mentioned three other principal arms control concerns.

The first is the imminent expiry of the New START Treaty in February 2021, which is the last remaining limitation on the size of US and Russian nuclear weapon arsenals.

The second is the Iran nuclear deal, or Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA): the US withdrew from the JCPOA in 2018, causing a rift with the other parties, including its European allies, and a suspension of Iran’s compliance with the nuclear limits laid down for it in the JCPOA, which could trigger nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East. The third is the lack of progress on creating a WMDFZME, which has been on the agenda since 1974.

The ministers met again in Berlin in February 2020 and virtually in June 2020.

Meanwhile, a number of states have joined the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as a means of expressing their desire for a world free of nuclear weapons and their belief in the need for a legal instrument to formalise and implement this desire together with the NPT.

TPNW comes into force on January 22, 2021.

This has led the NWS to accuse these states of threatening consensus within the NPT process. Another source of frustration is the enduring stalemate in the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East (WMDFZME).

WMDFZME was decided in the 1995 NPT Middle East resolution that created an inextricable link between the NPT’s indefinite extension and the creation of such a zone.

The UN General Assembly opened a parallel track to the NPT on the WMDFZME, but thus far has held only one successful session in November 2019 (the second session has now been postponed to 2021). [IDN-InDepthNews – 06 January 2021]

Photo: A test of a U.S. thermonuclear weapon (hydrogen bomb) at Enewetak atoll in the Marshall Islands, November 1, 1952. U.S. Air Force

Iran Joins China, Russia, EU, France, Germany and UK in Reaffirming Commitment to 'Nuclear Deal'

By Robert Johnson



BRUSSELS (IDN) – Amid speculations about Iran's reaction to the assassination of the country's eminent nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh on a road outside of Tehran on November 27, participants in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) have reiterated their commitment to preserving the agreement and stressed their respective efforts in this regard.

The pledge emerged from a virtual ministerial meeting of the E3/EU+2 (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy) and the Islamic Republic of Iran on December 21, 2020. The EU High Representative Josep Borrell chaired the meeting.

The ministers agreed that full and effective implementation of the JCPOA by all parties remains crucial and asserted the need to address ongoing implementation challenges, including on nuclear non-proliferation and commitments to lift sanctions.

According to the German Foreign Affairs ministry, the ministers underscored the important role of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) as the sole impartial and independent international organisation mandated by the UN Security Council to monitor and verify the implementation of the nuclear non-proliferation commitments under the JCPOA. They stressed the importance of continued good faith cooperation with the IAEA.

Ministers recalled that the JCPOA, as endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), remains a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and a significant achievement of multilateral diplomacy that contributes to regional and international security.

Ministers reiterated their deep regret towards the US withdrawal from the agreement. They stressed that the Security Council resolution 2231 remains fully in force.

The United States announced its withdrawal from the JCPOA, also known as the "Iran nuclear deal" or the "Iran deal", on May 8, 2018.

Ministers agreed to continue dialogue to ensure the return of the US to the JCPOA and underlined their readiness to positively address this in a joint effort.

Analysts are far from certain how Fakhrizadeh's death might impact Iran's nuclear program. He reportedly led the Islamic Republic of Iran's alleged covert nuclear weapons program in the early 2000s.

Most recently he served as a brigadier general in Iran's Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces Logistics, as head of the ministry's Defensive Research and Innovation Organization (DRIO). He also taught physics at Imam Hossein University, an institution associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards.

Fakhrizadeh is believed to have been involved in the nuclear talks in some capacity and received one of Iran's highest honours for his service. However, his active role, if any, in Iran's nuclear program before his death is otherwise unclear.

According to Muhammad Sahimi, the effects of Fakhrizadeh's death on the DRIO, tasked with overseeing advanced defence R&D, is also difficult to discern without knowing the details of his work or the organization's pool of personnel to draw on. "Leadership changes in any organization entail disruption.

But the nature of R&D projects, institutionalization of knowledge in Iran's military-industrial complex and the DRIO's relatively deep human resources pool suggest Fakhrizadeh's death may have a limited impact," he writes for the Responsible Statecraft website.

Sahimi's analysis has been re-published by Iran Review, "the leading independent, non-governmental and non-partisan website representing scientific and professional approaches towards Iran's political, economic, social, religious, and cultural affairs, its foreign policy, and regional and international issues within the framework of analysis and articles".

Sahimi is a professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. In the past two decades, he has published

extensively on Iran's political developments and its nuclear program.

While the perpetrators of this attack may have hoped to draw the Iranian government into a military conflict with the United States during the Trump administration's remaining weeks in office, says Sahimi, there's little evidence to suggest Iran's calculus has changed.

Though there have been calls for vengeance from across Iran's leadership and political spectrum, under its policy of "strategic patience," Iran has absorbed successive blows from the U.S. "maximum pressure" campaign since May 2018, adds Sahimi.

These include one of the most punishing sanctions regimes in recent memory, an aggressive cyber offensive and sabotage effort against Iran's critical infrastructure including nuclear facilities, and the assassination of senior government personnel.

Analysts agree that Israel and the United States had been looking for Fakhrizadeh for at least 15 years as part of a larger covert war against Tehran supposedly designed to slow its nuclear and missile programs, which Israel insists are aimed at producing weapons and the means to deliver them.

But, have multiple assassinations, considered "criminal" by the European Union and condemned by Agnes Callamard, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Executions, achieved their goals?

No. Because "Iran's nuclear advances went on, even as its scientists were picked off, one by one".

Dr. Ardeshir Hosseinpour, an authority on electromagnetism and its application to the nuclear program, was the first major Iranian scientist to be assassinated, on January 15, 2007. The last report by the IAEA on Iran's nuclear program

before Dr. Hosseinpour's death was issued exactly two months before the assassination, on November 15, 2006.

That report confirmed that Iran had produced no enriched uranium at the time and had not built any significant number of centrifuges used for enrichment. Between January 2010 and January 2012, four Iranian scientists were assassinated.

Sahimi points to a fact that has been often ignored: Pursuant to the signing of the JCPOA, Iran subsequently exported 97 per cent of its LEU (Low enriched uranium) to Russia, placed over 13,000 centrifuges into storage; removed centrifuges from the Fordow site destroyed the Arak research reactor and began implementing the Additional Protocol of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which gives the IAEA the right to conduct more intrusive inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities to ensure its compliance with the NPT.

However, in return, writes Sahimi, "the Trump administration exited the JCPOA in 2018 in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2231 and imposed the harshest U.S. economic sanctions against Iran".

Besides, for two decades the United States and Israel left no stone unturned to attempt to sabotage Iran's missile program, which is its only credible conventional defence in the absence of a modern air force.

None of the acts of assassinations and sabotage, with the possible exception of the Stuxnet attack – involving a malware that was designed to sabotage Iran's nuclear enrichment facility – "has appreciably slowed Iran's missile and nuclear programs". In fact, science has become indigenous, and when a program's leader is killed, many are ready to take over.

"Given Iran's strategic importance, the change in the attitude of the Iranian people toward the U.S. and Israel may well be the most consequential result of these acts of

sabotage and murder – and that does not bode well for the future," warns Sahimi, the professor at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.

Highlighting another aspect of Fakhrizadeh's assassination, The New York Times' David E. Sanger warns that it "threatens to cripple President-elect Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s effort to revive the Iran nuclear deal before he can even begin his diplomacy with Tehran. And that may well have been a main goal of the operation".

He quotes intelligence officials saying that there is little doubt about Israel having been behind the killing, especially as it had all the hallmarks of a precisely timed operation by Mossad, the country's spy agency. "And the Israelis have done nothing to dispel that view."

In fact, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long identified Iran as an existential threat and named the assassinated scientist, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, as national enemy No. 1, capable of building a weapon that could threaten a country of eight million in a single blast.

"But Mr. Netanyahu also has a second agenda," adds Sanger. "There must be no return to the previous nuclear agreement," he declared shortly after it became clear that Mr. Biden – who has proposed exactly that – would be the next president.

Meanwhile, analysts such as Jonathan Power are warning that the thirteenth Presidential elections are scheduled to be held in Iran on June 18, 2021. The moderate Rouhani will be stepping down and there is the likelihood that a hard-line conservative will succeed him – someone who is less keen on negotiations.

He is of the view that a new deal could be wrapped up in a month. "If negotiators on both sides honour their pledges to return at once to how it was before Trump squashed the deal this is possible. It will make the Middle East a safer and calmer place. Then will be the time to make it even safer by negotiating the other divisive issues, hopefully with the same good faith," writes Jonathan Power. [IDN- InDepthNews – 23 December 2020] Photo credit: Tasmin News Agency.



Assassinated physicist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh with Amir Hatami, Minister of Defense of Islamic Republic of Iran.

A New Handbook on Parliamentary Action for Disarmament

By Jamshed Baruah



Photo: The consultation event for the publication at the UN in February 2019. Credit: UN.

GENEVA (IDN) – Nearly one-and-a-half years after UN Secretary-General António Guterres launched *Securing Our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament* in May 2018, a new handbook to support disarmament for security and sustainable development has been released. Its approach and focus draw primarily on the Agenda. Titled *Assuring our Common Future*, published by four international parliamentary organizations and two international policy bodies on November 5, 2020, the new publication offers background and examples of effective policies and parliamentary actions on a wide range of disarmament issues.

These include weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons, small arms and light weapons, future weapon technologies and disarmament in outer space and cyberspace. It also reflects how disarmament is connected with sustainable development and with pandemics such as the COVID-19.

Comprising input from the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the publication affirms the importance of disarmament and introduces the vital roles that legislators play in developing, monitoring and implementing effective disarmament policies.

The guide notes: “Parliaments and parliamentarians have responsibilities to authorise ratification of disarmament agreements and adopt national implementation measures, allocate budgets to support disarmament, monitor government’s implementation of disarmament obligations, highlight and replicate exemplary policy and practice, and

- Disarmament to save humanity, which focuses on nuclear weapons, biological and chemical weapons and outer space;
- Disarmament that saves lives, which focuses on the regulation of weapons based on humanitarian, security and legal objectives, and includes conventional weapons, small arms, inhumane weapons (e.g., landmines and cluster munitions), the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and an outline of applicable international law;
- Disarmament for future generations, which focuses on emerging weapons technologies including autonomous weapons systems and the use of force in cyberspace;
- Strengthening partnerships, which focuses on the range of constituents and stakeholders in disarmament and how parliamentarians can engage with them on disarmament initiatives.

The handbook also includes sections on parliamentary action in relation to Disarmament, climate and sustainable development and to Pandemics and disarmament, public health and economic sustainability. In total, 53 recommendations for parliamentary action are offered and 85 examples of effective policies and parliamentary action are summarized and listed.

build cooperation between legislators and parliaments regionally and globally.”

It adds: “Parliamentary action is vital to shift national security priorities from a primary focus on military security to a stronger focus on cooperation and human security.”

Izumi Nakamitsu, UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs says: “Parliamentarians are crucial partners for the implementation of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Agenda for Disarmament. By illustrating several guiding principles for legislators through a wealth of practical examples, this handbook equips lawmakers and their constituents with valuable resources for parliamentary action to secure our common future”

The handbook incorporates the following sections addressing each pillar of the UN Chief’s Agenda for Disarmament:

These examples cover all regions of the world and reflect an inclusive and cross-party approach. In developing the handbook, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) organized virtual and in-person consultation events with legislators; disarmament experts; UNODA officials; representatives of treaty bodies including the

Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization; representatives of United Nations Member States; and key

civil society organizations. Feedback from these events contributed to the guide, including its examples of effective policies and parliamentary action.

The handbook was edited by Alyn Ware, PNND Global Coordinator, and prepared and jointly launched by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parliamentarians for Global Action, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the World Future Council, with additional support from UNODA.

Here is what leaders from some of these organizations have shared about this new resource:

“This is a must-have handbook on disarmament. It is a superb resource for parliamentarians to advance effective disarmament policies and laws nationally, and to foster cooperation at the regional and international levels.” – Maria Espinosa, Member of the World Future Council and President of the seventy-third United Nations General Assembly.

“Engagement of parliamentarians from across the political spectrum is vital to take forward disarmament measures in order to enhance peace, security, democracy and economic well-being of people around the world, and to protect the planet. The importance of disarmament has become even more self-evident in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Good public health systems, science and evidence-based policies, international cooperation, informed civil society and peace are the ‘weapons’ to combat pandemics, not guns or bombs.” – Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

“I strongly support the launch of the Parliamentary Handbook on Disarmament for Security and Sustainable Development. This Handbook is an excellent resource, highlighting the many ways that Parliamentarians, both as advocates and lawmakers, can make decisive and catalytic contributions in achieving disarmament goals.” – Naveed Qamar MP, Convenor of the International Peace and Security Program for Parliamentarians for Global Action and a former Minister of Defence of Pakistan.

“The Disarmament Agenda launched by United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) in 2018, is vital and much needed in the world of today. Parliamentary action is fundamental to prevent the uncontrolled flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) as to promote disarmament, peace and sustainable development globally. Thus, this Handbook is highly welcomed to stimulate future disarmament efforts on behalf of parliamentarians.” – Daisy Lilián Tourné Valdez, President of the Parliamentary Forum Small Arms and Light Weapons.

“Appropriate disarmament measures – coupled with a stronger focus on human security, diplomacy, international conflict resolution and law – can help reduce armed conflict, save lives and cut the \$1.9 trillion global military budget. This could liberate additional financial support for climate protection, public health and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.” – Phil Twyford MP, New Zealand Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control and former Chair of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament New Zealand.

“Policymakers have a responsibility towards current and future generations. This handbook is a perfect tool for them to work towards a more peaceful world.” – Alexandra Wandel, Executive Director of the World Future Council. [IDN-InDepthNews – 20 December 2020]

Doubts Whether Space Is Being Used Only for Peaceful Purposes

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) – A Soviet cosmonaut and an American astronaut shook hands high above the planet Earth, on July 17, 1975, where the Soviet spaceship Soyuz-19 and the U.S. spacecraft Apollo had met and docked. In a message of greeting, the Soviet leadership described the "joint flight of the Sovt and US opening up "new prospects for various countries to work together in the peaceful exploration of outer space". In the U.S. that night, CBS newscaster Walter Cronkite said that "the handshake in space could usher in a new era in mankind's advance towards the unknown".



Recalling that historic moment, Gennadi Gerasimov wrote for the *Novosti Press Agency Publishing House* in October 1983. "That day, we thought then, would be unforgettable, but now it seems that it never happened at all." The space romance indeed turned out to be fleeting.

Forty-five years later, three of the world's five official nuclear powers the U.S., Russia and China – have their Space Commands and space and counter-space weapons. Though, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty bans the stationing of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in outer space, prohibits military

activities on celestial bodies, and details legally binding rules governing the peaceful exploration and use of space.

The treaty entered into force October 10, 1967, and has 110 states-parties, with another 89 countries that have signed it but have not yet completed ratification. The treaty forbids countries from deploying "nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction" in outer space.

As Arms Control Association's Executive Director Daryl Kimball points out, the term "weapons of mass destruction" is not defined, but it is commonly understood to include

nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. The treaty, however, does not prohibit the launching of ballistic missiles, which could be armed with WMD warheads, through space.

The treaty repeatedly emphasizes that space is to be used for peaceful purposes, leading some analysts to conclude that the treaty could broadly be interpreted as prohibiting all types of weapons systems, not just WMD, in outer space.

However, Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Tim Lawson is of the view that the Pentagon considers space to be a warfighting domain on par with land, air and sea. During remarks at the National Defense Industrial Association's Space Warfighting Industry Forum, which was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic, he said: "China has already tested anti-satellite missiles, while Russia has deployed on-orbit systems that could threaten U.S. satellites."

Lawson said Spacecom must "be ready to fight tonight" – a mantra that in the past was usually applied to U.S. combat forces in geopolitical hotspots such as the Korean Peninsula. However, it will be "several years" before the command achieves full operational capability, he added. However, the U.S. Space Command has meanwhile reportedly developed new capabilities to counter China and Russia. Lawson assured that significant portions of the U.S. military's space programs are part of the classified "black budget," making it difficult for outside observers to know what's coming down the pike.

Spacecom is a unified combatant command of the United States Department of Defense, responsible for military operations in outer space, specifically all operations above 100 kilometres above mean sea level. Space Command was originally created in September 1985 to provide joint command and control for all military forces in outer space and coordinate with the other combatant commands. Spacecom was inactivated in 2002, and its responsibilities and forces were merged into United States Strategic

Command. After nearly 17 years, a new Space Command was established on August 29, 2019, with a reemphasized focus on space as a war-fighting domain.

American Space Command's mission is: "To conduct operations in, from, and through space to deter conflict, and if necessary, defeat aggression, deliver space combat power for the Joint/Combined force, and defend U.S. vital interests with allies and partners."

Russian Space Command – the counterpart of the American Space Command – was the part of the Russian Aerospace Defence Forces responsible for military space-related activities. It was formed on December 1, 2011 when the Russian Aerospace Defence Forces were created as a merger of the Russian Space Forces with part of the Russian Air Force. Responsibilities of the command included missile attack warning, space surveillance and the control of military satellites.

Space Command was one of four components of the Aerospace Defence Forces, the others were Air and Missile Defence Command, Plesetsk Cosmodrome and the arsenal. Subsumed under Space Command were three centres with their associated stations. Initially, the space program of the People's Republic of China (PRC) was organized under the People's Liberation Army (PLA), particularly the Second Artillery Corps. In the 1990s, the PRC reorganized the space program as part of a general reorganization of the defence industry to make it resemble Western defence procurement.

The China National Space Administration, an agency within the Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence currently headed by Zhang Kejian, is now responsible for launches. The Long March rocket is produced by the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology, and satellites are produced by the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. [IDN-InDepthNews – 06 December 2020]

Missile Defence Plans Threaten to Trigger Arms Race

By J C Suresh

TORONTO | WASHINGTON (IDN) – President Trump's legacy is far from inspiring. Joe Biden and his team face numerous crucial decisions. Arms policy experts believe that one of the momentous decisions confronting the new administration is "whether and how to move forward with Trump-era plans to expand the U.S. national missile defence footprint with new sea-based missiles that can shoot down long-range ballistic missiles". But this will undoubtedly hamper progress on arms control.

Nearly \$180 million is earmarked to improve the system's ability to intercept ICBMs and intercept surface-to-air missile threats. If adopted, this approach would be a significant step forward in defence against North Korea, Russia, China, Iran, and other rogue states and their ballistic missiles.

Nuclear strategists have long understood that developing and deploying strategic missile interceptors to target nuclear-armed adversaries is ineffective, but they could still induce them to develop an arsenal of new, more powerful missile systems to overcome and bypass missile defence, says Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the [Arms Control Association](#).

A new interceptor, known as the Aegis Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) Block IIA, which was successfully tested on November 16, could help defuse the North Korean ballistic missile threat in the short term. But it will certainly encourage Russia and China to believe that they need to further improve their nuclear arsenals in response to the United States missile attacks, say knowledgeable sources.

To prevent costly and destabilizing missile competition, Washington and Moscow had agreed to limit the number of strategic missile interceptors to no more than 100, as provided for in the [1972 ABM Treaty](#). This ceiling allows a limited number of interceptors to be deployed in the event of an attack by a nuclear-armed adversary.

Since the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002, Washington policymakers have focused on improving capabilities to counter limited missile threats from "rogue" states.

But the Pentagon has deployed only 44 strategic interceptors as part of its ground-based medium-range defence system.

On the one hand, North Korea has improved its ballistic missile capabilities in recent years, on the other the U.S. Congress has poured billions more into the Missile Defence Agency to develop, acquire, test, and research new technologies. In 2019, the Trump administration's Missile Defence Review recommended strengthening the U.S. homeland's defence capabilities to defend it against "rogue" state threats.

President Donald Trump said: "The goal is to ensure that the United States can track and destroy any missile fired from anywhere, anytime." The system would be capable of intercepting land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), as well as sea, intercontinental and surface-to-air missiles.

On November 17, the Missile Defence Agency tested the SM-3 Block IIA against an ICBM target. The Pentagon's current plans call for a total of 1,000 of the new missile defence systems to be built and deployed worldwide by 2030, both on land and at sea.

Nearly \$180 million is earmarked to improve the system's ability to intercept ICBMs and intercept surface-to-air missile threats. If adopted, this approach would be a significant step forward in defence against North Korea, Russia, China, Iran, and other rogue states and their ballistic missiles.

Against this backdrop, Kimball is of the view that as a first step, the Joe Biden administration should reiterate that U.S. missile defence capabilities at home are able to defend against the threat of third-party offensives, not against more sophisticated Russian and Chinese capabilities.

"Such a clarification alone will not be sufficient," writes Kimball. Moscow, he adds, has conditioned further offensive nuclear cuts on future limits on U.S. missile defences. Russia claims its efforts to develop new intercontinental-range nuclear delivery systems such as an undersea torpedo, hypersonic glide vehicle, and nuclear-powered cruise missile are designed to overcome U.S. missile defences.

China has already begun to respond to U.S. missile defence capabilities by diversifying its nuclear strike capabilities, including by increasing the number of silo-based ICBMs that are armed with multiple warheads. He warns that U.S. efforts to further limit Russian nuclear weapons and bring

China into the arms control process are unlikely to gather momentum unless Washington agrees to seriously discuss its long-range missile defence capabilities, including the SM-3 Block IIA. "Fielding sufficient missile defences to defend against limited ballistic attacks from North Korea or Iran and agreeing to binding limits on the quantity, location, and capability of such defences should not be mutually exclusive."

But doing so will require the Biden administration to move away from the simplistic notion that there should never be any limits on U.S. missile defences.

Twenty years ago, then-Senator Biden argued for the "development of a theater missile defence that enhances regional stability" and against a strategic missile defence system that "would be seen as threatening by both Russia and China". Now, as President, he is responsible for adapting the U.S. missile defence strategy so that it strikes the right balance. [IDN-InDepthNews – 04 December 2020]

Photo: The U.S. Navy Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Donald Cook (DDG 75) fires a Standard Missile-3 during exercise Formidable Shield 2017 over the Atlantic Ocean, Oct. 15, 2017. Credit: U.S. Navy.



Faith-based & Other NGOs Look Forward to Entry into Force of the Nuclear Ban Treaty

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN (IDN) – When she learned that the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) reached the 50 states parties required for its entry into force, Setsuko Thurlow said: "I was not able to stand. I remained in my chair and put my head in my hands, and I cried tears of joy. ... I found myself speaking with the spirits of hundreds of thousands of people who lost their lives in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I was immediately in conversation with these beloved souls. ...I was reporting to the dead, sharing this good news first with them, because they paid the ultimate price with their precious lives.



Setsuko Thurlow is a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and long-time campaigner for nuclear weapons abolition. "I have a tremendous sense of accomplishment and fulfilment, a sense of satisfaction and gratitude. I know other survivors share these emotions — whether we are survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki; or test survivors from South Pacific island nations, Kazakhstan, Australia and Algeria; or survivors from uranium mining in Canada, the United States or the Congo," she said in the statement published on the website of the 2017 Nobel Peace laureate International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

A joint interfaith statement on the 75th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 signed by 189 organizations around the world reaffirmed that "the presence of even one nuclear weapon violates the core principles of our

different faith traditions and threatens the unimaginable destruction of everything we hold dear".

“

As a wide coalition of faith-based communities from around the world, we have committed to speaking with one voice that rejects the existential threat to humanity that nuclear weapons pose,” declared the statement.

Less than four months later, a broad spectrum of the non-governmental organization (NGOs) including churches, and

a major Buddhist group have hailed the TPNW, which seeks for the first time to establish a comprehensive ban on atomic weapons. The treaty aimed at destroying all nuclear weapons and prohibiting their use forever crossed a decisive milestone October 24 and will enter into force on January 22, 2021.

"The Holy See and the popes have vigorously supported the effort of the UN and the world against nuclear weapons," Vatican News reported. In a video message on September 25 on the occasion of the UN's 75th anniversary this year, Pope Francis reiterated his call for increased support for the principal international and legal instruments on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and prohibition.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) representing more than 550 million mainly Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Christians also welcomed on October 26 the ratification of the prohibition treaty. "It has now triggered the 90-day period after which the treaty will enter into legal force, meaning that a new normative standard in international law has been created, and that – for those States which are parties to it – the treaty must now be implemented," said Peter Prove, director of the WCC' Commission of the Churches on International Affairs.

According to the SPRI Yearbook, an "estimated 13,400 warheads" at the start of 2020 were threatening the survival of humankind. But the governments of the nine countries – Russia, USA, China, France, Britain, Pakistan, India, Israel, and North Korea – which continue to hold and develop nuclear weapons have been staunch critics of the TPNW.

The director-general for Peace and Global Issues Hirotsugu Terasaki of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a community-based Buddhist organization, spanning 192 countries and territories around the world, said: "The entry into force of the TPNW establishes the fundamental norm that nuclear weapons are subject to comprehensive prohibition. This has a profound historical significance."

He expressed the hope that more countries will ratify the treaty by the time of its entry into force, thus further strengthening it as a prohibitory norm. "At the same time, I sincerely hope that the significance and spirit of the treaty

will be widely disseminated among the world's people," Mr Terasaki said.

He noted that some have taken a critical view that the TPNW, by failing to take realistic security perspectives into account, has deepened the divide between nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states and the non-nuclear-weapon states.

"As citizens, however, we absolutely cannot entrust the security of our lives and property to nuclear weapons. And to the extent there is a divide, this is due to the stalled implementation of the nuclear-weapon states' obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament set forth in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The TPNW was established as a concrete measure to implement this obligation."

Mr Terasaki further expressed the hope that "the nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent states, including Japan, will participate (as permitted by the Treaty) in the first meeting of States Parties to the TPNW to be held within one year from its entry into force, where they can consider a full range of concrete steps to abolish nuclear weapons and how best to fulfil their nuclear disarmament obligations".

The significance of the entry into force of the TPNW is "truly profound" also in view of the fact that "a grievous new arms race is beginning around the world". The modernization and miniaturization of nuclear weapons are advancing, threatening to make them more 'usable'. Mr Terasaki concluded: "Under such circumstances, it is up to civil society to decide if we will continue to tolerate humanity being held hostage by nuclear weapons, or whether we will raise our voices as an irresistible force for their banning and abolition. The Soka Gakkai and the SGI are fully committed to continuing our efforts to expand global people's solidarity toward the realization of a world free from nuclear" arms.

SIGI expressed "deepest respect and appreciation to all those involved in the long struggle for a world free from the scourge of nuclear weapons, including the hibakusha, the states that played a leading role in this effort, the United Nations and its agencies, international organizations, as well as our friends and colleagues in the NGO community, such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ... with whom we have worked over the years".

In a statement, Sergio Duarte, President, and Paolo Cotta Ramusino, Secretary-General of the 1995 Nobel Peace Laureate Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs said the TPNW is "based on the common-sense notion that their use would have unacceptable humanitarian and environmental consequences".

Pugwash expects the number of parties to the TPNW to increase in the near future to include in particular States that belong to existing or planned nuclear-weapon-free zones. "The TPNW is fully consistent with the NPT and is the only treaty that explicitly forbids its members from hosting nuclear weapons belonging to other states. Nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States must work cooperatively to achieve the elimination of all nuclear arsenals and the risk they pose to every nation's security," added the statement.

Blue Banner, Mongolian NGO and a partner organization of the ICAN welcomed the 50th ratification of TPNW "as a major political impulse and a step in making this most dangerous weapon of mass destruction illegal under international law". Blue Banner is pledged to continue to work for "the speediest accession by Mongolia to the Treaty", a state with internationally recognized nuclear-

weapon-free status, that endorsed the "humanitarian pledge", participated in negotiating the treaty and voted in its support. "The entry into force of the TPNW will stigmatize further nuclear weapons and their possession and advance the goal of their ultimate total elimination," the statement said.

At the regional level, Blue Banner will continue to work with other regional civil society organizations to promote confidence in the Northeast Asian region and, until the nuclear weapons are totally eliminated, work to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region.

It called on all states to sign and accede to the treaty and will work with its partner organizations to raise the awareness of the importance of the treaty for world peace and realizing the Sustainable Development Goals. Blue Banner was established in 2005 to promote nuclear non-proliferation and Mongolia's initiative to turn the country into a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ). Chairman of the organization is the former Mongolian Ambassador to the United Nations, Dr Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan.

Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy (LCNP) and Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF) urge the United States to "roll back its opposition to the TPNW and instead ... embrace the treaty's vision of a more democratic world in which nuclear weapons have no place and of a paradigm shift toward human security rather than the security of states". The two organizations are affiliates of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA), which is a partner of ICAN. [IDN-InDepthNews - 10 November 2020] Photo: Albin Hillert / WCC, 2017

Nuclear Weapons Are Illegal Under International Law

Viewpoint by Somar Wijayadasa*



Photo: Trump's new apparently low-yield nuclear warhead entered production in 2019. Credit: Ronald Gutridge/U.S. Navy

NEW YORK (IDN) – The United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) reached on October 24 the required 50 signatories for its entry into force on January 22, 2021. It will eventually make nuclear weapons — the most dangerous weapons of mass destruction — illegal under international law.

Unquestionably, it is a landmark victory for the United Nations that continually for 75 years had on its agenda the issues relating to disarmament and abolition of nuclear weapons. It is remarkable that it coincided with the UN's 75th anniversary, and also the infamous use of atomic bombs in August 1945.

To fully understand the Treaty's significance, we must take a glimpse of the historical steps taken by the United Nations since its inception to accomplish the noble goal to ban the nuclear bomb.

Historical disappointments and accomplishments

The United Nations was founded in 1945 following two World Wars and loss of millions of lives, and after the world

witnessed the destruction caused by two atomic bombs dropped by the United States on Hiroshima and Nagasaki that killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people, respectively.

Despite the UN's lofty goal "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and the countless mechanisms enshrined in the UN Charter to resolve conflicts by peaceful means, many countries waged hundreds of wars in which multi-millions of people have been killed, tens of millions made homeless, and countless millions injured and bereaved.

In 2014, David Swanson wrote in the American Journal of Public Health that, "Since the end of World War II, there were 248 armed conflicts in 153 locations around the world.

The United States launched 201 overseas military operations between the end of World War II and 2001, and since then, others, including Afghanistan and Iraq”.

As we know, the policy of containment of communism in the Far East led to the devastation of Vietnam, North Korea and Laos, and the 45-year Cold War Policy ended the East European bloc and dismantled the Soviet Union, and the policies of pre-emptive strikes and of regime change destroyed the lives of millions of people in the Middle East.

The Arab spring in the Middle East caused thousands of deaths and regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. The civil war in Syria killed over 220,000 people. These wars rendered over 50 million people homeless.

According to Tom Mayer, a peace activist, “US military intervention has been a calamity in the Middle East. They have destroyed Iraq, destabilized Libya, fostered dictatorship in Egypt, accelerated civil war in Syria, and the destruction of Yemen, and helped squelch a pro-democracy movement in Bahrain”.

These confrontations and others like the 1962 Cuban missile crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

Dag Hammarskjöld, UN Secretary-General, from 1953-1961, said that the “UN was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell”.

The UN has indeed saved the world from hell.

Regardless of tragic disappointments, the UN never gave up its supreme goal of eliminating the nuclear weapon — the most inhumane and dangerous weapon on earth which can annihilate whole cities, potentially killing millions, and destroying the natural environment and lives of future generations through its long-term catastrophic effects.

At its first General Assembly on January 24, 1946, the United Nations adopted its very first resolution on the

“elimination of atomic weapons and all other major weapons of mass destruction”. In 1945, the United States was the only nation in the world to own and drop nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since then, several other countries Russia (Ex-Soviet Union 1949), United Kingdom (1952), France (1960), China (1964), India (1974), Pakistan (1998), North Korea (2006), and Israel (undeclared) acquired the nuclear bomb.

The United States and Russia possess almost 14,000 (92 per cent of all nuclear weapons) enough to scourge our planet umpteen times.

Over the years, the UN adopted several treaties and mechanisms such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968), the Biological and Toxin Weapons convention (1972), the Chemical Weapons Convention (1993), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (1996), and the Arms Trade Treaty (2014) — to ban weapons of mass destruction, including the nuclear weapon.

There are nuclear-weapons-free zones in the regions of Latin America, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Central Asia — encompassing 115 states that account for 60 per cent of all UN Member States.

These are significant accomplishments that, in 2017, paved the way for the United Nations to adopt the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) that seeks to “prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.

Accolades and subterfuges

The treaty emphasizes the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons. It forbids participating states to develop, test, use, threaten to use, produce, possess, acquire, transfer, test or deploy nuclear weapons.

In September, New York Times reported that “fifty-six former prime ministers, presidents, foreign ministers and defence ministers from 20 NATO countries, etc., released an open letter” imploring their current leaders to join the TPNW Treaty. According to NYT, the letter was signed by former prime ministers of Canada, Japan, Italy and Poland; former presidents of Albania, Poland and Slovenia; more than two dozen former foreign ministers; more than a dozen former defence ministers; former secretaries-general of NATO: Javier Solana of Spain and Willy Claes of Belgium; and also the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

It is striking as some of these are “nuclear umbrella” states seeking protection from the US nuclear arsenal, and also hold 180 nuclear warheads in six bases in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey.

Despite the impressive endorsement of the Treaty, recently, CBS reported that the United States has sent a letter to all countries that have ratified the UN treaty to ban nuclear weapons to withdraw their support, alleging that the “five original nuclear powers — the US, Russia, China, Britain and France — and America’s NATO allies stand unified in our opposition to the potential repercussions of the treaty”.

According to CBS, the letter states “Although we recognize your sovereign right to ratify or accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), we believe that you have made a strategic error and should withdraw your instrument of ratification or accession”.

That is not only an insult to the UN that strived for 75 years to nail the coffin of the nuclear bomb but also an egregiously belligerent attempt by the superpowers to subvert the will of the majority of people around the world to live in peace without the threat of nuclear holocaust hanging over their heads. I wish to emphasize that even

though the countries that possess nuclear weapons may not sign the TPNW Treaty, all countries will be morally obliged to adhere to it as nuclear weapons will be banned under international law —as in the case of other weapons of mass destruction that are now outlawed.

In the past, some nuclear-powered countries threatened to use the nuclear weapon to intimidate and subjugate other countries — with pompous comments such as “my nuclear button is much bigger and more powerful than yours”. When the nuclear weapon is outlawed that era of braggadocio will become history.

As President Vladimir Putin said: “Our Western partners, led by the United States of America, prefer not to be guided by international law in their practical policies, but by the rule of the gun. They have come to believe in their exclusivity and exceptionalism, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right”. Just as the US recently demanded North Korea for “the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization” almost all countries now implore the nuclear-powered States to reciprocate by eliminating all their nuclear weapons.

Since the eradication of nuclear weapons under the TPNW is now inexorable, all world leaders should collaborate with the United Nations to establish a world order that ensures peace, justice, security and prosperity for all. President Truman said, “The responsibility of the great states is to serve and not dominate the peoples of the world”. [IDN-*InDepthNews* – 07 November 2020]

** Somar Wijayadasa, an International lawyer was a Faculty Member of the University of Sri Lanka (1967-1973), worked in UN organizations (IAEA & FAO from 1973-1985), Delegate of UNESCO to the UN General Assembly from 1985-1995, and Representative of UNAIDS at the United Nations from 1995-2000.—.*

The Promise of the Treaty on Prevention of Nuclear Weapons

Viewpoint by Dr Joseph Gerson*



Credit: ICAN

NEW YORK (IDN) – The Treaty on the Prevention of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) has received its 50th ratification and will go into force in 90 days – January 22, 2021. Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bomb survivors, activists from [ICAN](#) (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) and the diplomats are celebrating this contribution to the long struggle for a nuclear-weapons-free world.

The next and most critical step will be winning the signing and ratification by one or more of the nuclear weapons umbrella states, a European NATO member or one of the newly christened, “quad”, envisioned as an Asia-Pacific NATO: Japan, Australia and India. (The U.S. is the fourth member of the quad.)

Governments won't altruistically risk offending the world's declining hegemon on their own. As we have seen in the past, they can be moved, their policies and commitments changed, in response to public opinion, public debate, and popular mobilization. The forums and institutions the Treaty will create and the political forces it will unleash could not come at a more opportune moment. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has issued its starkest warning ever: the world is 100 seconds to Doomsday, the closest since the beginning of the Cold War.

Each of the world's nuclear powers is upgrading its nuclear arsenal. In the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait, a military incident, accident, or miscalculation, like the 1914 gunshots in Sarajevo, could ignite an ever-escalating war. The same applies to the Baltic and Black Seas, where provocative U.S. and Russian military “exercises” – including U.S. flights of nuclear-capable B-52 bombers – could precipitate a catastrophe.

The Treaty's negotiation and initial promulgation by 122 nations at the United Nations in 2017 should be recognized as a signal achievement of the Hibakusha, those of Hiroshima and other nations from the Marshall Islands and Australia, to Utah and Semipalatinsk downwinders. Their steadfast insistence on sharing their emotionally searing testimonies about what they, their families, and communities suffered, refocused the international debate away from the sterile and deceitful focus on ostensible state security preoccupations to what nuclear weapons actually do, the devastating humanitarian and

environmental consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war.

In forums like the annual World Conferences in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the three International Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, the Hibakusha opened, seared, and won people's hearts and minds including the diplomats who initiated the TPNW negotiations at the United Nations.

In essence, the TPNW prohibits nations that have ratified the Treaty from “developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, or stockpiling nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.” They are barred from transferring or receiving nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, meaning that they cannot permit nuclear weapons to be stationed or deployed in their countries. They are forbidden to exercise any control over nuclear weapons or to provide assistance for any actions prohibited by the Treaty.

They are obligated to assist victims of nuclear weapons and to join environmental remediation efforts. And, of potentially great importance, Article XII of the Treaty requires governments that have ratified the treaty to press nations outside of the Treaty – including Japan and the United States – to sign and to ratify it.

If they have the necessary courage and imagination, over time Treaty nations could exercise the political, diplomatic economic power and moral suasion needed to universalize the Treaty. As Alexander Kmentt, the former Austrian Disarmament Ambassador who was so moved by Hibakusha testimonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and who led the organizing for the Vienna Humanitarian Consequences conference recently observed this will be a long-term process, but it is a goal that with steadfastness can be achieved.

The TPNW should not be necessary. Fifty years ago, in Article VI of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), the nuclear powers 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.” The following year, the UN General Assembly’s first resolution mandated the ‘control of atomic energy to ensure its use only for peaceful purposes,’ and ‘the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.’”

Forty years after the NPT came into force, at the conclusion of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear powers agreed to implement 13 practical steps for the systematic and progressive disarmament of the world's nuclear weapons with an “irrevocable commitment.” Now, in 2020, only one of those steps has been taken.

Rather than fulfil these international legal obligations the nuclear powers led by the United States have steadfastly resisted taking the steps needed to create the nuclear-weapons-free world that can help to ensure humanity’s survival. They have continually upgraded their genocidal and potentially omnicidal nuclear arsenals, refined their nuclear warfighting doctrines, and repeatedly prepared and/or threatened to initiate nuclear war.

(In his new book *The Bomb*, the journalist/scholar Fred Kapan describes how Donald Trump’s “Fire and Fury” threats and preparations for nuclear war brought the world much closer to nuclear catastrophe than all but a few knew.)

The nuclear weapons states have undermined, but not completely destroyed, the NPT’s legitimacy by refusing to fulfil their Article VI and 2010’s “irrevocable” commitments. These failures which jeopardize human survival, along with the political heat created by the

Hibakusha’s urgent truth that “human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist”, and the consistent demands of the world’s diverse peace movements led to the negotiation, signings, ratifications and now the entry into force of the TPNW.

While the TPNW in and of itself will not dismantle a single nuclear warhead, it has placed those who are preparing nuclear Armageddon on the defensive. From the beginning and led by the United States, the five original nuclear powers opposed the negotiation of the TPNW and the Treaty itself, falsely claiming that it jeopardizes the NPT. In fact, as Ambassador Kmentt reiterated, the TPNW complements and reinforces the NPT.

The P-5 boycotted the negotiations, spoke against the TPNW in diplomatic forums and press conferences, and exerted enormous pressure on dependent nations not to sign or ratify the Treaty. As the Associated Press (AP) reported, on the eve of the 50th ratification, stating that the nuclear powers “stand unified in our opposition to the potential repercussions” of the TPNW, the Trump administration was pressing governments that have ratified the Treaty to withdraw their ratifications.

As the old saying has it, this is pissing in the wind, the equivalent to trying to silence the tides of the ocean. Trump, Putin, and their comrades will be no more successful in preventing the Treaty from coming into force than they have been in containing COVID-19 which is not about to “disappear”.

The Treaty’s entry into force marks the beginning of a new phase in the struggle to eliminate the existential threat posed by the world’s nuclear arsenals. Hiroshima and Nagasaki Hibakusha and the Japanese peace movement have long led the struggle to eliminate nuclear weapons. Their campaigning played an enormous role in bringing the TPNW into being.

As indicated above, the most immediate TNPW challenge now is to win the signing and ratification of one or more “umbrella” states. Such a victory, breaking ranks with the nuclear powers, would be the unravelling of the thread of nuclearism that holds the nuclear disorder in place.

Given Japan’s history as the only nation to be attacked by nuclear weapons in wartime and the majority support for the TPNW across country, winning Japanese government support for the Treaty may simply be a matter of time. But this victory can only be won through widespread and dedicated advocacy and action.

Obviously, those of us who are U.S. citizens have the moral responsibility to transform the policies, doctrines, and actions of the world’s most threatening nuclear power. The NPT’s promise of a nuclear-weapons-free world and 2010’s 13 steps must be honoured and fulfilled.

In days, the U.S. presidential election will come to an end. Should Trump prevail via the undemocratic Electoral College system (written into the Constitution 231 years ago to defend slavery), or via a post-election coup, we will face a daunting horizon: the consolidation of a Trumpian tyranny and the doubling down on the Pentagon’s extremely dangerous campaign to restore U.S. first-strike supremacy.

The polls are offering limited hope. After four years of dysfunction, deceit, disrespect and disaster, former Vice-President Biden appears to be on track to win the election. Biden won’t be signing the TPNW any time soon.

Should he prevail, despite his promise to work for a nuclear-weapons-free world, the upgrading of the U.S. nuclear arsenal and Washington’s preparations to fight and “win” a nuclear war will continue.

But, if we keep our eyes on the prize, the four years of a Biden presidency will give us time, political space, and opportunity to take the next steps in the long march begun by the Hibakusha. We will insist that Biden honour his articulated commitment to a no first use policy. With the urgent need for post-pandemic, post-Trump economic and social revitalization, of necessity there will be a powerful guns or butter debate over national budget priorities, opening the way to restore the JCPOA agreement with Iran, a renewed commitment to arms control if not nuclear weapons abolition, and to seriously reduce spending to upgrade Washington’s nuclear arsenal and its delivery system.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Kmentt offered the vision of the TPNW igniting “societal discussion” as in the 1980s, about the urgency of nuclear disarmament. In corners of the imperium, like the Massachusetts state legislature, where legislation has been introduced to initiate a study of what the state would need to do to conform to the TPNW, to press for massive nuclear weapons spending cuts and for the country to fulfil its Article VI NPT commitments, that societal discussion has begun. [IDN-InDepthNews – 25 October 2020]

** Dr Joseph Gerson is President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security and author of With Hiroshima Eyes and Empire and the Bomb.*

2045: A New Rallying Call for Nuclear Abolition

Viewpoint by Alyn Ware, Vanda Proskova and Saber Chowdhury*

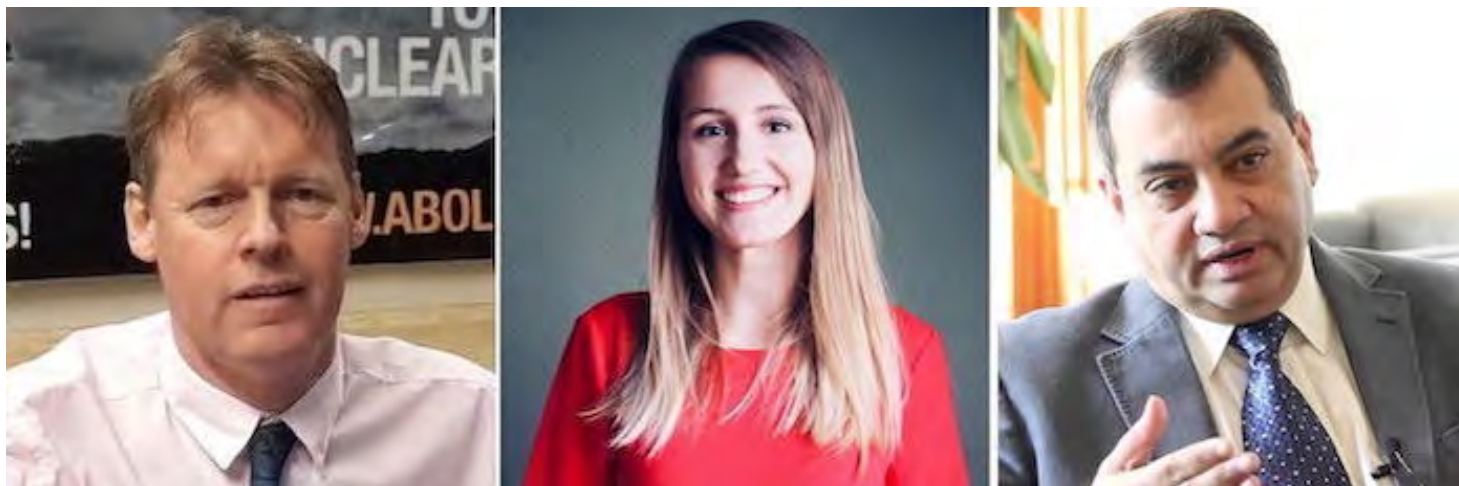


Photo (left to right): Alyn Ware (PNND, World Future Council), Vanda Proskova (PragueVision) and Saber Chowdhury (IPU).

NEW YORK (IDN) – On October 2, 2020, 77 Heads of State and Government Ministers addressed a United Nations High-Level meeting on the elimination of nuclear weapons, along with the UN Secretary-General, the President of the UN General Assembly and two representatives of civil society.

One of the proposals highlighted by some of the governments and supported by the two civil society representatives was an appeal to UN member states to commit to the elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045, the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations.

This proposal had been introduced to the UN previously by Kazakhstan First President Nursultan Nazarbayev, firstly in a speech to the UN General Assembly in October 2015, and again when he hosted a special UN Security Council meeting on weapons of mass destruction in January 2018. President Nazarbayev appealed to the permanent members of the Security Council, in particular, to pledge to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045.

The appeal was ignored at that time by the USA and Russia, who used the occasion of the special Security Council meeting to trade accusations against each other, rather than agree to a time-bound framework for nuclear abolition. Nor was the 2045 target picked up then by non-nuclear countries, many of whom were focused more on whether or not they would join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was opened for signature in September 2017.

However, the idea caught the attention of several political analysts such as Lewis A Dunn, Member of the UN Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and former U.S. Ambassador for the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference, and Tong Zhao, senior fellow in Carnegie’s Nuclear Policy

Program based at the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, who mapped out a series of arguments as to how a 2045 target is both politically feasible – at least for the achievement of ‘strategic elimination’ – and a useful tool to engage and influence the nuclear-armed States.

As the nuclear arms race shows no sign of abating soon, and it becomes increasingly obvious that the nuclear-armed states and their allies will continue to reject the TPNW at least for the medium-term future, the 2045 target for nuclear elimination is getting picked up and promoted by civil society as a useful campaign tool.

In addition to being highlighted in the civil society presentations on October 2, the 2045 target has been made in two recently launched civil society appeals, one by World Beyond War which focuses its attention on the nine nuclear-armed States, and the other by #WeThePeoples2020 which focusses on all UN members, and which also calls for immediate nuclear risk-reduction measures and for UN member states to cut nuclear weapons budgets, end investments in the nuclear weapons industry and redirect these budgets and investments to support climate action, COVID-19 recovery and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The #WeThePeoples2020 appeal is of particular interest, as its hundreds of endorsers include a mix of ‘realists’ (academics and former military and political leaders) and ‘idealists’ (religious and civil society leaders) thus bridging the gap between hope and political feasibility.

These developments raise critical questions:

- Is the elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045 at all realistic?
- Is calling for this goal helpful, or would it be better to aim for an earlier date?

- Is it better to put forward the goal of elimination by a certain date and campaign for a commitment to this, or is it better to advocate for specific nuclear disarmament measures like de-alerting, no-first-use, START renewal, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a Nuclear Weapons Convention, the Global Zero path to zero nuclear weapons or other measures?

Discussion of these issues should take into consideration new and emerging political circumstances, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis on security thinking, the November US elections that could deliver a new administration, the upcoming Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, and how these relate to the political forces and security issues that are maintaining the current nuclear arms race.

Commitment to a date or a process?

There is no shortage of plans and processes/approaches put forward to achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world. A few of these have been mentioned above including the Global Zero plan, a proposal for a Nuclear Weapons Convention and the call on the nuclear-armed States to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Others include: the Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free and Non-violent World Order, the Comprehensive Action Agenda put forward by the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, the former UNSG's 5-point proposal for nuclear disarmament, the 13 practical steps to achieve nuclear disarmament adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference, and the Building Blocks for a World Without Nuclear Weapons proposal submitted to the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Negotiations on Nuclear Disarmament.

Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. None provide a magic wand that convinces the nuclear-armed states to adopt the plan and use it to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world. For each of the approaches offered, the nuclear-armed States can come up with arguments as to why they won't work.

Rather than pitting each of the processes/plans against each other, and dividing the disarmament movement, what would be more effective would be the nuclear disarmament community rallying around the goal of nuclear disarmament within a specific time-frame, build commitment by the nuclear-armed States to achieving this goal, and remain open to the process employed to reach the goal.

Setting a feasible date for nuclear weapons elimination is also a way to build support from the rest of global civil society, most of whom would agree with the goal of nuclear abolition and would be ready to give their support, but lack the knowledge, time or interest to engage in the debate on how to get there.

A simple call of the elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045 could generate widespread and powerful momentum that would be difficult for the nuclear-armed States to ignore.

Why choose 2045?

There are ample reasons for choosing 2045. It is the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations and also the 100th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons. As such, it provides a compelling symbolic date that can attract political, media and civil society attention. It also carries with it a burden on the nuclear-armed States to deliver. They would find it hard-pressed to deny that 100 years is more than enough to implement the very first resolution of the UN General Assembly, adopted by consensus, setting forth the goal of nuclear weapons elimination.

Besides, there is more than enough time between now and 2045 for the nuclear-armed States to address their security concerns about moving into a nuclear-weapons-free world. So, their usual excuse, that political conditions currently make it impossible to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world falls flat on its face. They have nearly 25 years to take steps and establish mechanisms to meet their security concerns regarding relinquishing nuclear deterrence and eliminating the weapons. As such, 2045 cannot be credibly dismissed by nuclear deterrence adherents as not being feasible.

Why not an earlier date?

It is entirely feasible to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons earlier than in 2045. Indeed, the 'political conditions' arguments put forward by nuclear-armed and allied States for not making concrete progress on nuclear disarmament, are mostly spurious.

They are used to prop up nuclear deterrence policies which serve other purposes – such as enhancing domestic political power and feeding the financial interests of the nuclear weapons industry. If the nuclear-armed States were truly committed to nuclear disarmament, they could indeed negotiate and adopt, within a much shorter timeframe, an agreement or regime for the verified elimination of nuclear weapons.

Putting forward the date of 2045 by which nuclear weapons should be eliminated allows for the possibility of them being eliminated earlier, capitalizes on the political attention surrounding the 100th anniversary of the UN, and avoids the pitfalls in putting forward an earlier date.

Some voices question whether the elimination of nuclear weapons is indeed possible, arguing that the nuclear-armed and allied states will never agree to relinquish nuclear deterrence and eliminate the weapons as they provide security and political benefits that cannot be met in other

ways. According to these voices, the best we can do is to manage the situation to ensure that nuclear deterrence does not 'fail' resulting in the use of nuclear weapons.

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) addressed this head-on by: a) highlighting that it is unrealistic to expect that maintaining nuclear deterrence policies and practices indefinitely will not result in nuclear weapons use at some stage, either by intent, miscalculation or accident; and b) examining all the political, security and economic drivers for nuclear deterrence policies and demonstrating how these drivers could be addressed and met by alternative means.

Mr Gareth Evans, Co-Chair of the ICNND, in a presentation on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (September 26, 2020), noted that: *Making progress on nuclear disarmament is always going to be a slow, grinding, frustrating, unrewarding process. But I do believe progress can be made if we do four things: utilize the power of emotion; utilize the power of reason; unite around a common, realistic disarmament agenda that does not make the best the enemy of the good; and, above all, stay optimistic. As desolate as the international environment for now remains, it is important to keep things in perspective. Pendulums do swing, wheels do turn, Presidents and Prime Ministers do change.*

**About the authors:*

Alyn Ware is PNNND Global Coordinator, Member of the World Future Council and Co-founder of the global Move the Nuclear Weapons Money campaign. Vanda Proskova is a graduate student in international relations and law from the Czech Republic. She is Deputy-Chair of PragueVision Institute for Sustainable Security and is Director of the PNNND Gender and Disarmament Program. She was the second of the two civil society representatives invited to address the UN High-Level Meeting on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on October 2, 2020. Saber Chowdhury is a Member of the Bangladesh Parliament, Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNNND) and Honorary President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He was one of the two civil society representatives invited to address the UN High-Level Meeting on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on October 2, 2020.

COVID-19, the climate crisis and nuclear abolition.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis are changing the global security environment in ways that make the elimination of nuclear weapons more feasible. Both issues have emerged as key threats impacting the security of both individuals and nations. And obviously, nuclear weapons are useless in addressing these threats.

Also, the massive human, technical and financial investments in nuclear weapons are a drain on resources that are needed to manage and recover from the pandemic and to make the transition to low-carbon economies.

These aspects provide political opportunities to phase out nuclear deterrence, economic opportunities to reduce the power of the nuclear weapons lobby, shift nuclear weapons budgets and investments to meet human security needs, and strengthen the nuclear abolition movement by building cooperation with those working on climate action, sustainable development and building back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The *#WeThePeoples2020 Appeal* for a nuclear-weapon-free world by 2045 makes these connections and could serve as a powerful rallying cry to support this. [IDN-InDepthNews – 22 October 2020]

Forum Calls for New Approach to NE Asian Denuclearization and Economic Development

By Alan Gua



Photo: (top) Virtual International Forum; (second) Dr. Enkhsaikhan addressing the forum. Credit: The writer.

ULAANBAATAR (IDN) – Former Mongolian Ambassador to the United Nations and Chairman of Blue Banner NGO of Mongolia Dr Jargalsaikhany Enkhsaikhan believes that “establishing a Northeast Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone (NEA-NWFZ) and providing North Korea with a joint, credible mini-Marshall Plan might be a win-win solution for the Korean Peninsula as well as for overall regional security and development”.

Both the U.S. and North Korea need to adopt “bold conceptual approaches to resolve security threats on the Korean peninsula, including deterrence that excludes nuclear weapons,” he told an international forum.

International Policy Forum co-sponsored by the Global Peace Foundation, Action for Korea United, One Korea Foundation and Blue Banner was held on September 30 in Mongolia's capital.

The forum organized two parallel roundtables: one on considering the prospects of establishing a NEA-NWFZ that would include security assurances by Russia, China and the USA to the two Koreas and Japan, non-nuclear deterrence, development of a “post-Cold War framework” of regional security cooperation, providing international mini-Marshall Plan to the DPRK and on integrating the latter in the regional economic development.

“Russian and Chinese security assurances would be important in reassuring North Korea that the U.S. assurance would be dependable and that NEA-NWFZ would be legally and politically credible,” Enkhsaikhan said, adding that a binding commitment to non-nuclear deterrence would also avert a possible regional nuclear arms race.

Former chief U.S. negotiator during the North Korean nuclear crisis of 1994 and former Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs Dr. Robert Gallucci said that if the issue of NEA-NWFZ is to be pursued it should address the DPRK’s concern about the potential threat from U.S. weapons as well as the latter’s alliance commitments and its security interests.

He added that clear understanding of the term “denuclearization”, the issue of fissile materials, their production facilities and some other issues needed to be duly addressed if there is to be any movement on this issue.

Dr. John Endicott, President of Woosong University, former proponent of limited NEA-NWFZ, said that any concept of a zone in Northeast Asia “must be a process where the building of mutual trust and friendship is realized over time”, and that he would support launching such a process. During the discussion issues of “no first use pledge” and “sole purpose” policies of nuclear-weapon states were touched upon, some supporting such policies, while others viewing that such approaches might undermine the efficacy of nuclear deterrence policy.

View was also expressed that any progress on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula would need a radical change in approaches to the DPRK and developing a reliable regional security mechanism that would include a NEA-NWFZ. In order to improve the over-all security environment, it was pointed out, jointly addressing non-military common security challenges, such as current and possible future pandemics, infrastructure development, fine dust pollution, marine pollution, etc. would be needed.

The second roundtable considered economic opportunities, examining prospects for regional economic development, with the case study of Mongolia’s transition from a centralized command economy to a free market. Vietnam’s experience was also touched upon.

“As governments and large multilateral institutions move slowly,” underlined John Dickson, president of the World Trade Partnership, “it is imperative that contingency plans be considered to enable a peaceful, mutually productive framework for the economic integration of the Korean peninsula.”

Yeqing Li, Senior Fellow on Northeast Asia Peace and Development at the Global Peace Foundation, noted that China was the largest trading partner of both North and South Korea and peaceful unification with the development of infrastructure, manufacturing, tourism, mining and the service sector was “low hanging fruit” for Chinese and regional economic growth.

Some 35 security experts, economists and political scientists from South Korea, China, Japan, Great Britain, Finland, Russia, India, Mongolia and the United States examined these two issues in the context of contributing to ending the 74-year division of the Korean peninsula. The forum concluded with an agreement by the organizers to establish a regional secretariat to continue in-depth consideration of NEA-NWFZ issue. [IDN-InDepthNews – 02 October 2020]

UN Chief Concerned About Standstill in Arms Control Talks

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA (IDN) – "We need a strengthened, inclusive and renewed multilateralism built on trust and based on international law that can guide us to our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons," said UN Secretary-General António Guterres, commemorating the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26.

He was reiterating the resolve adoption of the General Assembly resolution in 1946, which committed the UN to the goal of ridding the planet of nuclear weapons. Because of these, "the world continues to live in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe".

In 1959, the UN General Assembly endorsed the objective of general and complete disarmament. In 1978, the first Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament further recognized that nuclear disarmament should be the priority objective in the field of disarmament.

Yet, as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) points out, around 13,400 nuclear weapons remain. Countries possessing such weapons have well-funded, long-term plans to modernize their nuclear arsenals. More than half of the world's population still lives in countries that either have such weapons or are members of nuclear alliances.

While the number of deployed nuclear weapons has appreciably declined since the height of the Cold War, not one nuclear weapon has been physically destroyed pursuant to a treaty. In addition, no nuclear disarmament negotiations are currently underway.

At the same time, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence persists as an element in the security policies of all possessor states and many of their allies. The international arms-control framework that contributed to international security since the Cold War, acted as a brake on the use of nuclear



weapons and advanced nuclear disarmament, has come under increasing strain.

On August 2, 2019, the United States' withdrawal spelled the end of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, through which the U.S. and Russia had previously committed to eliminating an entire class of nuclear missiles.

Furthermore, the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms ("new START") will expire in February 2021. Should this treaty not be extended, as provided for in its articles, or expire without a successor, it will be the first time the world's

two largest strategic nuclear arsenals have been unconstrained since the 1970s.

On-site inspections under the New START, which were suspended in March due to the coronavirus, have yet to resume, and the next meeting of the Bilateral Consultative Commission (BCC), the implementing body of the treaty, remains postponed. The U.S. has been sending contradictory signals.

According to the Washington-based Arms Control Association, the United States is studying how and when to resume inspections and the BCC while mitigating the risk of COVID-19 to all U.S. and Russian personnel. A State Department official said: "The United States continues to implement and abide by the New START Treaty."

Also, reports said that the Trump administration has softened its demand that China immediately participate in trilateral nuclear arms control talks with U.S. and Russia and says it is now seeking an interim step of a politically binding framework with Moscow. However, the administration continues to reject Russia's offer of a clean five-year extension of the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) and has said that President Trump will not consider an extension until several conditions are met.

Trump administration officials insist that the framework with Russia must cover all nuclear warheads, establish a verification regime suitable to that task, and be structured to include China in the future. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on August 31 that the United States is in "detailed discussions with them [Russia] on an arms control agreement" and that he hopes Washington and Moscow can "get that done before the end of the year."

Following talks from August 17-18 in Vienna with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea

pinned a potential extension of New START on Moscow fixing alleged verification flaws in the treaty and agreeing to the new framework.

"New START is a deeply flawed deal negotiated under the Obama-Biden administration," said Billingslea during an August 18 press briefing. "It has significant verification deficiencies." According to Billingslea, these deficiencies include the absence of sufficient exchanges of missile telemetry and the limited frequency of on-site inspections.

Along with nuclear arms control, space security issues have an important role to play in negotiations on non-proliferation between the two countries. The rapid development of new space technologies, rivalries among the world's big three space powers – the US, Russia, and China – has raised concerns over possible "weaponization" of the final frontier.

In his video address to the 75th UN General Assembly, Russian President Vladimir Putin promoted the idea of signing a deal that would help Moscow and Washington avoid the armed conflict in outer space.

"Russia is putting forward an initiative to sign a binding agreement between all the leading space powers that would provide for the prohibition of the placement of weapons in outer space, threat or use of force against outer space objects," Putin said.

Commenting on Putin's address, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin pointed out that Beijing and Moscow had submitted draft agreements on arms control in outer space. He accused the US of obstructing talks aimed at banning militarization of outer space.

The Chinese official expressed Beijing's growing concern that the U.S. is determined to ensure space dominance through the creation of air force and space commands and intensification of the militarization of outer space. [IDN- InDepthNews – 27 September 2020]

Extinguishing Prometheus' Nuclear Flame: International Day Against Nuclear Tests

By Tariq Rauf*

VIENNA (IDN) – The first nuclear explosive device was detonated at the Alamogordo Test Range in the New Mexico desert in the United States of America on July 16, 1945, and then on August 6 and 9 the US carried out the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the next seven decades, nine additional countries carried out some 2060 nuclear explosions, spreading radioactive contamination in the air, lands and space, and in the world's oceans, leading to long-lasting catastrophic consequences for the health and well-being of millions of innocent people.



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As an inevitable consequence of the US-USSR nuclear arms race initiated in 1945, in the Degelen mountain range and in the steppes of Kazakhstan the world's largest nuclear test site was established by the Soviet Union at Semipalatinsk. In the four succeeding decades since the first Soviet nuclear test explosion on August 29, 1949, through to February 12, 1989, no less than 456 nuclear detonations were carried out at the Semipalatinsk "polygon" nuclear test site in Kazakhstan, that affected the health of more than one million people and radioactively contaminated thousands of hectares of land rendering it unsafe and unusable for hundreds of years. Similar fates befell the nuclear test sites of China, France, UK and the US in areas ranging from

Algeria to Australia to the South Pacific oceans and islands to the Nevada test site to Novaya Zemlya in the high Arctic.

The infamous tally of nuclear detonations comprises 1030 by the US, 715 by the USSR, 210 by France, 45 each by China and the United Kingdom, 6 each by India, North Korea and Pakistan, and at least one by Israel. Of the 2060 nuclear detonations, 529 were in the atmosphere and some 1500 on land, underground and underwater. It is estimated that the entire population of the northern hemisphere has been exposed to residual amounts of caesium resulting from the more than 500 nuclear explosions in the atmosphere – this trace contamination is believed to be

transmitted through to succeeding generations of people. The greatest burden of the devastating genetic and environmental effects of nuclear explosions has been borne by the population of Kazakhstan. Thus, it fell to the then leader of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev to convince the then USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev who had announced a unilateral nuclear testing moratorium in October 1990 to permanently close and decommission the “polygon” test site at Semipalatinsk (also referred to as “Semey”).

This act of leadership by President Nazarbayev contributed to the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 that permanently prohibits all nuclear test explosions in all environments for all time. The CTBT closed the circle on nuclear weapons testing started in 1963 by the Partial Test-Ban Treaty (PTBT) that banned nuclear tests in all environments except underground.

The closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the Soviet testing moratorium led to the US to also announce a testing moratorium in 1992. The seminal 1995 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference (NPTREC) agreed to the indefinite extension on the condition, *inter alia*, to complete the negotiation of a CTBT no later than 1996. Unfortunately, contrary to the example set by Kazakhstan, both China and France embarked on a fool’s errand and resumed nuclear tests in 1996 and only announced respective testing moratoria under intense international pressure and signed on to the CTBT in September of that year.

Three countries then bucked the nuclear testing moratoria and carried out tests after the opening for signature of the CTBT in September 1996. In May 1998, once again India set itself up as a rogue State in the context of nuclear arms control when it claimed that it had detonated five nuclear explosive devices – recall that in May 1974, India had

carried out its first nuclear test in violation of solemn non-proliferation commitments given to Canada and the US. Given the resulting untenable security situation in South Asia, Pakistan then proceeded to carry out six nuclear tests also in May 1998 to “even the score”. Then, in 2006, North Korea detonated a nuclear device and over the next 11 years carried out five more nuclear test explosions. None of these three countries – India, North Korea and Pakistan – has signed the CTBT!

Following the conclusion of the CTBT in 1996, thirty-six of the 44 countries whose ratification is required for entry into force went on to ratify the treaty – including France, the Russian Federation and the UK. Unfortunately, in little more than a year after the 1998 nuclear tests in South Asia, the US Senate in a “rogue” action formally rejected US ratification of the CTBT – the only country to have done so. By now 24 years have elapsed since the CTBT was concluded but it languishes in limbo awaiting the required six ratifications – the prospects of which recede with each passing year as a new nuclear arms race is ignited and the CTBT is overtaken by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Kazakhstan’s Role

In the void of leadership in bringing about the entry into force of the CTBT thus legally enshrining the prohibition on nuclear testing, the broken field of promises for nuclear disarmament made by the States parties to the NPT at the review conferences in 1995, 2000 and 2010, and the growing risks of accidental nuclear war and the increasing recognition of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan under the leadership of First President Nazarbayev continued to take incremental steps to try to reduce nuclear dangers and strengthen nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

Since achieving independence in 1991, Kazakhstan has undertaken a number of notable steps for nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. These include, for example: returning by April 1995 to Russia for dismantlement the 1410 Soviet strategic nuclear warheads (deployed on 104 SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles and 40 Tu-95 strategic bombers armed with air-launched cruise missiles) and an undisclosed number of tactical nuclear weapons; transferring to the US approximately 600 kg of weapon-grade highly enriched uranium (HEU) from the Ulba Metallurgical Plant (UMP); down-blending into low enriched uranium (LEU) at UMP for civilian nuclear applications under IAEA safeguards 2,900 kg of nuclear fuel (enriched up to 26% U-235) from the Mangyshlak Atomic Energy Combine in Aktau; permanently sealing 13 bore holes and 181 tunnels at the Semey nuclear test site to lock in plutonium residues; acceded to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon State; ratified the PTBT, CTBT and TPNW; established a Central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone and concluded an Additional Protocol to its NPT safeguards agreement with the IAEA; supported the entry-into-force conferences of the CTBT; endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons; and established the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank at Oskemen (Ust Kamenogorsk).

The United Nations General Assembly on December 2, 2009, unanimously adopted August 29 to be commemorated annually as the International Day Against Nuclear Tests in response to a proposal (resolution 64/35) by Kazakhstan. Since 2010, every August 29 – the date of permanent closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in 1991 – is internationally observed as the International Day Against Nuclear Tests to promote awareness and education “about the effects of nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions and the need for their cessation as one of the means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-

weapon-free world”. This year’s commemoration is especially significant not only because it is the 75th anniversary of the first test and use of nuclear weapons (in July-August 1945), and the eve of the 30th anniversary in 2021 of the closure of Semipalatinsk but also because earlier this year the US raised the ugly prospect of possibly resuming nuclear explosive testing thus endangering both the continuing moratoria of nuclear tests as well as the CTBT.

In a broader context, I note with great regret that the world today is still saddled with more than 14,000 nuclear warheads deployed at 107 locations in 14 countries, as well as nearly two million kilogrammes (2000 tonnes) of weapon-usable nuclear materials – highly enriched uranium and plutonium.

I would recommend that on August 29, 2020, Kazakhstan once again needs to raise its voice against nuclear tests and nuclear weapons and to boldly issue an urgent call, among others. to:

- announce the convening of a major international conference in Nur Sultan (Astana) on 29 August 2021 to mark the permanent closure of the Semipalatinsk test site, to both mourn and to celebrate the lives of the victims of nuclear testing not only in Kazakhstan but also globally;

Let us renew today, on the 75th anniversary year of the first use of nuclear weapons, the 29th anniversary of the permanent closure of the Semipalatinsk polygon, and the 10th anniversary of the Day Against Nuclear Tests, the promise to the peoples of the world in particular the victims of nuclear weapons to spare no effort to work collectively to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons and thereby extinguish forever the nuclear flame of Prometheus. [IDN- InDepthNews – 29 August 2020]

Looking Back at the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Nuclear Attacks on 75th Anniversary

Viewpoint by Tariq Rauf



Photo: Side view of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 2.5

The writer is former Head of Nuclear Verification and Security Policy at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, former Alternate Head of the IAEA Delegation to the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty (NPT); Senior Advisor on nuclear disarmament to the Chairs at the 2015 NPT Review Conference and 2014 NPT PrepCom; long time Expert with Canada's NPT delegation until 2000. Personal views are expressed here. The following is an expanded version of comments made at the event, 'The 75th Anniversary of Atomic Bombing and the United Nations In the Time of COVID-19: Where Do We Stand and What Can Be Done for a Nuclear-Free World?', organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Hiroshima.

VIENNA | HIROSHIMA (IDN) – On 16 July 1945, at 05:29 AM, the secrets of the atom were unlocked by detonating the world's first nuclear explosive device dubbed "The Gadget". Robert Oppenheimer, the scientific leader of the multinationally staffed and supported Manhattan Project to develop atomic weapons, lamented that "*We knew the world would not be the same. Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds*", and his colleague Leó Szilárd remarked, "*That night I knew the world was headed for sorrow*".

The atomic bombing by the United States of Hiroshima and Nagasaki a mere three weeks later, on 6 and 9 August 1945, respectively, clearly demonstrated the revolutionary and catastrophic power of nuclear weapons on human beings and the environment.

Nuclear scientist Szilárd observed that *"Almost without exception, all the creative physicists had misgivings about the use of the bomb"* and further that *"Truman did not understand at all what was involved regarding nuclear weapons"*.

Later Szilárd recalled that *"In March 1945, I prepared a memorandum which was meant to be presented to President Roosevelt. This memorandum warned that the use of the bomb against the cities of Japan would start an atomic-arms race with Russia, and it raised the question whether avoiding such an arms race might not be more important than the short-term goal of knocking Japan out of the war?"*

Following the death of Roosevelt, Szilárd drafted a petition to President Harry Truman opposing on moral grounds the use of atomic bombs against the cities of Japan.

Several years later, Szilárd astutely observed that after the atomic bombing of Japan's two cities, the US lost the argument of the immorality of using atomic bombs against the civilian population.

Once the concept of atomic fission had been scientifically demonstrated and its application utilized to destroy cities in Japan, Albert Einstein belatedly took full responsibility for the dire consequences of the letter of 2 August 1939 that he and fellow scientist Leó Szilárd had jointly sent to US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt warning against the dangers of Nazi Germany developing atomic weapons and recommending that the United States initiate a nuclear

weapon development programme – that led Roosevelt to commission the Manhattan Project.

Less than a year after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Einstein lamented that, *"The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe"*. Later Einstein called it *"the greatest mistake"*, and in 1947 he told Newsweek magazine that *"had I known that the Germans would not succeed in developing an atomic bomb, I would have done nothing"*.

Promoting Nuclear Disarmament

Emerging from the ashes of the Second World War, the very first resolution adopted in 1946 by the newly formed United Nations called for the "elimination of atomic weapons".

Thus, the first seeds were planted warning about the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use of atomic weapons and the first call issued to prohibit nuclear weapons.

To atone for his mistake, Einstein joined with philosopher Bertrand Russell and other atomic scientists to issue the "Russell-Einstein Manifesto", on July 9, 1955 that issued a clarion call:

"Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war? No one knows how widely lethal radioactive particles might be diffused, but the best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with H-bombs might possibly put an end to the human race. Although an agreement to renounce nuclear weapons as part of a general reduction of armaments would not afford an ultimate solution, it would serve certain important purposes".

Despite efforts by many scientists to abolish nuclear weapons, other scientists unfortunately were successful in persuading their leaders to develop thermonuclear weapons with much greater destructive force than simple atomic weapons. Indeed, in 1958 there even was a short-lived US effort started in 1958, Project A-119, to detonate a thermonuclear nuclear device on the surface of the Moon.

The rationale was to produce a very large mushroom or radioactive cloud and a brilliant super flash of light clearly visible from Earth — that would be an obvious show of strength to the Soviet Union.

Fortunately, the project was cancelled, the Moon was spared and the "Moon Treaty" of 1979 prohibits all types of nuclear tests on the Moon and other celestial bodies. This to highlight just one of the follies of humankind to misuse nuclear energy for destructive purposes and the ever-present risks of nuclear weapons.

Today, on the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, it is important to recognize that no sentient human being who has met or seen the *hibakusha* (survivors), or visited the hypocentre, or looked at the photographic evidence of the destruction of the two devastated Japanese cities, can avoid being shocked and horrified by the devastation that nuclear weapons inflicted.

It is surprising and deeply disappointing that leaders of the "axis" of nine (9) countries with nuclear weapons and their "allies" — more appropriately the "captive nations" of nuclear deterrence — continue to blindly ignore the devastating effects of nuclear weapons use; and blatantly reject the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) supported by 122 States, signed by 82 and ratified by 40 States.

On a positive note, we should encourage 10 more States to ratify the TPNW for it to enter into force and thereby

establish a *jus cogens* rule (fundamental principle under international law) creating an *erga omnes* (obligation) for all States to renounce nuclear weapons. In this context, we might recall Einstein's prophetic words that, "*Our defence is not in armaments, nor in science...Our defence is in law and order*" — something in short supply today at the international level. In October 2016, the "captive nations" of NATO, and other "allies" united in opposing the more than 122 countries that were supporting the negotiation under United Nations aegis of a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

This "axis" of 'nuclear' States and the "captive nations" of nuclear deterrence now also are back-tracking from measures agreed to implement nuclear disarmament and risk reduction consensually agreed at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conferences.

Tribute to Hiroshima

Up until now, Hiroshima and Nagasaki mercifully remain the only instances in which nuclear weapons have been used in war; however, it has been the hope that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki serves as a constant reminder why preventing the further use and proliferation of such weapons — and why nuclear disarmament leading eventually to a nuclear-weapon-free world — is of utmost importance for the survival of humankind and planet Earth.

In this regard, I would like to recognize and greatly appreciate the decades' long efforts and sacrifices of the *hibakusha* and their families, the children, the people and leaders of Hiroshima Prefecture and Hiroshima City to keep alive the memory of those who perished and sustain those who survived the atomic bombing 75 years ago.

This honourable and selfless example of the leaders and people of Hiroshima should be an inspiration for the people

and government of Japan, as well as for those in other cities and countries globally, to resolutely strive to seek a permanent end to all nuclear weapons.

It is truly inspiring that Hiroshima Prefecture Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki continues to be a tireless staunch supporter of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons and Hiroshima City Mayor Matsui Kazumi also is working towards this goal.

The Mayor of Hiroshima serves as the President of "Mayors for Peace" encompassing 7,909 member cities in 164 countries and regions which conveys the realities of the atomic bombings and works to increase the number of people who share in the *hibakusha's* message on the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Impact of COVID-19

The unfortunate coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has clearly and unambiguously shown misplaced priorities and wasteful investments on nuclear deterrence and military interventions amounting to trillions of dollars by the "axis" of nuclear-armed States and the "captive nations". Their severe historic under-investment in health care have led to the unacceptably high levels of infections and fatalities in most of their countries.

It is truly tragic and contemptible that some of these States have selfishly commandeered certain medical supplies and instead of collaborating internationally to jointly develop a vaccine they are engaged in tribalism, bitter competition and propaganda that amounts to "vaccine nationalism" of "my country first". This is not surprising because just as the advocates of nuclear weapons and deterrence lack the mental acuity to comprehend the global catastrophe of any use of nuclear weapons, they also fail to understand that defence against a pandemic cannot be contained within any one country.

It is obvious that those non-nuclear-weapon States that did not waste national resources on nuclear weapons and foreign military interventions are the ones that have been coping much better with the pandemic.

The collapse of Nuclear Arms Control

Unfortunately, the vision of ridding the world of nuclear weapons is receding as the nuclear arms control architecture patiently built up over the past 50 years is collapsing before our eyes.

The 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) still not in force, also is under threat of resumption of explosive nuclear testing and re-opening Pandora's Box of nuclear weapon test explosions. The supporters of the CTBT have miserably failed to make it a requirement for India – a non-proliferation pariah – when they were giving it an "exception" in 2008 to enable it to buy nuclear technology and fissile material in flagrant contravention of UN Security Council resolution 1172 of 1998 and of the so-called "guidelines" of the self-anointed Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

In the negotiations and discussions on the denuclearization of North Korea and the Korean Peninsula, again no requirement was stipulated for North Korea to accept the CTBT. The bi-annual CTBT "facilitating entry-into-force conferences" have become a sad joke of repetitive platitudes. Thus, the prospects of the CTBT ever entering into force recede with each passing year and the likelihood of this Treaty becoming a fossil of nuclear arms control are enhanced.

The architecture and fundamentals of bilateral and multilateral nuclear arms control have been eroded by the United States withdrawal in 2002 from the crucial Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, and by the failure of the five nuclear-weapon States – China, France, Russia, United

Kingdom and the United States – to fully honour the commitments on nuclear arms reductions agreed in the framework of the 1995/2000/2010 NPT review conferences.

One also may note that the EU/E3+3-Iran Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – signed in July 2015 and implemented since then by Iran – has been abandoned by the United States (in May 2018) leading to Iran stepping out of constraints on uranium enrichment (starting in May 2019), thereby further destabilizing the security situation in the region of the Middle East and raising the prospect of yet another ruinous war in that region.

On 2 August 2019, the United States formally withdrew from the 1987 Treaty on Shorter- and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) – foreshadowed in July 2019 by the Russian Federation suspending its compliance with the Treaty. Under the INF Treaty, by May 1991, 2692 ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5500 kilometres had been verifiably eliminated, 1846 by the USSR and 846 by the United States under mutual verification—and nearly 5000 nuclear warheads removed from active service.

This leaves only one nuclear arms reduction treaty in force between Moscow and Washington – the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) – that was signed on 8 April 2010, entered into force on 5 February 2011. By 4 February 2018 both Russia and the United States had verifiably met the central limits of 1550 accountable deployed strategic nuclear warheads and 700 deployed launchers (land- and sea-based intercontinental ballistic missiles and long-range bombers). In fact, on 1 July 2020, under New START, Russia had 485 deployed launchers carrying 1326 nuclear warheads, and the United States had 655 warheads on 1372 launchers.

New START will expire on 5 February 2021, unless extended by Presidents Putin and Trump. Should New START not be extended, it will leave Moscow and Washington without any bilateral nuclear arms control treaty for the first time in over a half-century and likely lead to a dangerous new nuclear arms race. The end of New START also will bring to an end the mutual intrusive verification and technical weapons data exchange modalities leading to lack of transparency and an increase in nuclear risks.

For the first time in the history of Soviet/Russian-United States nuclear arms control not only are existing agreements being dismantled but both sides are modernizing nuclear arsenals unchecked and have lowered the threshold of nuclear weapon use in their declaratory and operational policies.

Doctrines of some nuclear-armed States now posit first or early use of nuclear weapons. The United States Defence Department's new nuclear weapons guidance, *Nuclear Operations* (11 June 2019) clearly posits that "using nuclear weapons could create conditions for decisive results and the restoration of strategic stability."

For its part, Russian military doctrine envisions what some have called "escalation to de-escalate" in countering superior NATO conventional forces, that is early but limited use of nuclear weapons. In South Asia, both India and Pakistan also contemplate use of nuclear weapons in a regional conflict. Recently, India is under pressure to invoke its nuclear capabilities to defend against China in the context of their revived conflict in the Ladakh region in the high Himalayas.

It is highly disturbing that when nuclear weapon use is discussed, the vocabulary used is very often conveniently sanitized.

The destruction by thermonuclear war and resulting humanitarian and environmental consequences are downplayed and substituted by antiseptic concepts of nuclear deterrence.

Worrisomely, it is the view of many erstwhile defence experts, such as William Perry, former United States defence secretary, among others, that in today's world the dangers of inadvertent, accidental or even deliberate use of nuclear weapons is higher than it was during the height of the Cold War. Perry published his new book last month entitled, *The Button*, because in his words, "Our nuclear weapons policy is obsolete and dangerous. I know, because I helped to design it, and we have to change it before it is too late."

He warns that the "awesome ability to launch hundreds of thermonuclear weapons in mere minutes" creates grave dangers of blundering into Armageddon.

The Gorbachev-Reagan understanding of December 1987 that a "nuclear war cannot be won, and must never be fought" is no longer in the forefront of the minds of today's leaders and nuclear war planners.

This year the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* set the clock (which puts into context how close we are to nuclear catastrophe) at 100 seconds to midnight; closer to catastrophe than any year of the Cold War, one of the darkest years of the Cold War, when it was set at two minutes.

Belatedly, one hopeful sign has emerged with the initiation of direct discussions held in Vienna between the Russian Federation and the United States in late June and again in late July. The NSVT (nuclear, space and verification talks) on three baskets of nuclear arms control issues cover: nuclear weapon doctrines; space weapons and arms control; and transparency and verification.

Despite this encouraging progress, both sides are divided over the extension of the coverage of the NSVT to include China as preferred by the US, and France and the UK if China is included as preferred by Russia. None of the other three nuclear-armed States – China, France and the United Kingdom – have expressed any enthusiasm in joining Russia and the US in starting multilateral NSVT.

At the 22 June session of the NSVT, the US placed desk flags for China, even though China already had indicated that it will not take part. This is an image of the exchange of Twitter messages between the representatives of the US and China.

Non-Proliferation Treaty

The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) marked its 50th anniversary in July this year, and alarm bells already are ringing warning about impending failure of the 10th NPT review conference postponed to 2021 because of the SARS COVID-19 pandemic. This review conference, in reality, should be postponed to 2022 and held in Vienna (Austria), as I have argued since New York is no longer a safe or appropriate venue.

Concerning nuclear disarmament in the context of the NPT, the field is now crowded with several disorganized competing approaches: the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) NPT States favour a three-phase time-bound "plan of action", in contrast, the Western States stand by a "step-by-step" approach which has been slightly modified by a cross-cutting group called the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) that calls for "building blocks"; while another such group, the New Agenda Coalition (NAC) supports a "taking forward nuclear disarmament" approach; Sweden has proposed "stepping stones"; and the United States has advanced the concept of "creating the environment of nuclear disarmament"

A sober assessment of the concept CEND suggests that this initiative is geared to transfer the focus and responsibility for the "environment" and "conditions" for nuclear disarmament from the nuclear-armed to the non-nuclear-weapon States. In fact, the dystopian US CEND approach and nuclear policy as presently formulated is serving the cause of "creating conditions to *never* disarm".

It would be appropriate to characterize CEND approach as being based on "dreaming of rainbows, butterflies and unicorns to appear magically and sprinkle fairy dust leading to a new fantasy world of nuclear arms control".

Placing one's faith in such "rainbows, butterflies and unicorns" can never be the way forward to save the world from the dangers of nuclear destruction! Faithfully implementing nuclear disarmament obligations in the framework of the NPT is the only way forward to salvation.

The continuing survival of the human race and all other species on planet Earth is held at existential risk by the actions and decisions of some of the "leaders" and officials

in the "axis" of nuclear-armed States, supported by the "captive nations; whose humanity, rationality and mental stability is increasingly open to question.

An international order anchored in legal norms and treaties offers the best hopes for survival. In this regard, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons could establish a "right to nuclear peace" and stop nuclear weapons becoming a "perpetual menace".

We need to heed the call of Pope Francis when, during his visit to Japan in November 2019, he clearly voiced his demand that world powers renounce their nuclear arsenals. He declared that both the use and possession of atomic bombs an "immoral" crime and dangerous waste.

I recall Pope Francis' lament at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, "*How can we propose peace if we constantly invoke the threat of nuclear war as a legitimate recourse for the resolution of conflicts? May the abyss of pain endured here remind us of boundaries that must never be crossed!*" [IDN-InDepthNews – 06 August 2020]

Russian military doctrine envisions what some have called "escalation to de-escalate" in countering superior NATO conventional forces, that is early but limited use of nuclear weapons. In South Asia, both India and Pakistan also contemplate use of nuclear weapons in a regional conflict. Recently, India is under pressure to invoke its nuclear capabilities to defend against China in the context of their revived conflict in the Ladakh region in the high Himalayas.

Japanese and American Catholics Take on the Bomb

By Drew Christiansen



Photo: Atomic Bombing in Nagasaki and the Urakami Cathedral. Credit: Google Arts&Culture

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WASHINGTON, DC. (IDN) — Nagasaki is the historic centre of Japanese Catholicism. In the 16th century, beginning with the missionary visits of one of the first Jesuits, Francis Xavier, Nagasaki was the focal point of their efforts to bring Christianity to Japan.

After a series of persecutions and the official suppression of Christianity in the late 17th century, Nagasaki's "hidden Christians" kept their faith alive for centuries, baptizing their children, catechizing them and passing on their favourite prayers.

After the resumption of contact with Europeans and the legalization of the church in the later 19th century, parishioners built the Urakami cathedral, named for the neighbourhood in which the hidden Christians had lived.

The detonation of the atom bomb over Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, destroyed the cathedral, which lay only 500 meters from the centre-point of the detonation. The bomb blast incinerated all those assisting at Mass that day. One of the relics of the bombed cathedral is a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary whose disfigured face and hollow, blackened

eye-sockets provide a haunting memory of that nuclear holocaust.

In the midst of this coronavirus pandemic, Japanese and American Catholics join in ongoing commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the bombing. On Monday August 3, Archbishop Joseph Mitsuaki Takami, a survivor of the 1945 bombing, now the archbishop of Nagasaki and president of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of Japan, will exchange remarks and prayers with Bishop David Malloy, the bishop of Rockford, IL, and chair of the U.S. bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace.

On a visit to Nagasaki in November 2019, Pope Francis appealed for the abolition of nuclear weapons, saying "A world of peace, free from nuclear weapons, is the aspiration of millions of men and women everywhere. To make this ideal a reality calls for involvement on the part of all."

Two years earlier the Holy See had signed and the Pope had ratified the UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and at a conference marking the opening of the treaty, he had condemned the possession of nuclear weapons and "the threat to use [them]," effectively delegitimizing nuclear deterrence as a defence strategy.

In an interview with Catholic News Service, Archbishop Takami commented, "There is a need to join Pope Francis 'to raise our voice and make it louder.' We need to make all the politicians and the people of the world understand that the existence of nuclear weapons is a problem."

The archbishop also "appealed to people of faith, and Catholics in particular, to know and understand 'the peace that Christ teaches' so that they can see that a world without violence is possible." Anticipating the coming anniversary, Archbishop José Gómez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S.

Conference of Catholic Bishops, wrote, "My brother bishops and I mourn with the Japanese people for the innocent lives that were taken and the generations that have continued to suffer the public health and environmental consequences of these tragic attacks."

In the name of the U.S. bishops, Gomez, too, joined Pope Francis' appeal for abolition of nuclear weapons, calling "on our national and world leaders to persevere in their efforts to abolish these weapons of mass destruction, which threaten the existence of the human race and our planet."

The August 3 exchange between Archbishop Takami and Bishop Malloy is an effort to make the Catholic Church's teaching on nuclear abolition better known by both Catholics and the wider public.

At the same time, Georgetown University Press is releasing a book of the testimonies delivered at the symposium where Pope Francis issued his condemnation, *A World Free of Nuclear Weapons: The Vatican Conference on Disarmament*.

In addition, the Catholic Peacebuilding Network will sponsor a trans-oceanic dialog between Japanese and American students the week of August 3 and, in October, dialogues between Archbishop Takami and audiences of students, faculty and members of the public at Catholic University, Notre Dame and Georgetown.

The October 3 webcast is a production of the Project on Revitalizing Catholic Engagement on Nuclear Disarmament, a collaboration of Georgetown University's Berkley Center, the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Center for International Peace Studies, and the Institute for Policy Research and Catholic Studies at the Catholic University of America with the collaboration of Professor Hirokazu Miyazaki of Northwestern University. [IDN-InDepthNews – 01 August 2020].

A Warrior for Nuclear Peace Dies But His Message Reverberates

Viewpoint by Jonathan Power*



Photo: Bruce Blair. Credit: Matt Stanley, mattstanleyphoto.com

LUND, Sweden (IDN) – Bruce Blair, one of the great unsung heroes of the nuclear bomb age, died on July 19 at the age of 72. In his twenties he had been an intercontinental nuclear rocket launch officer, spending his days or nights deep down in a below-ground bunker waiting for the signal to fire and obliterate the cities and their people, the workers of all classes, pensioners and the totally innocent children of western Russia.

The New York Times said in its obituary that “he sounded alarms about how easy it is to start a nuclear attack and about the lack of safeguards. A leading voice for nuclear arms control, he pushed for countries to adopt a no-first-use policy”.

He was stationed near Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana, responsible for 50 Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles- each armed with a nuclear warhead 100

times more powerful than the atomic bomb that demolished Hiroshima in 1945.

The experience “illuminated for me the speed at which this process unfolds and how there’s really no latitude to question an order,” he told Princeton Alumni Weekly in 2018.

In all the hoopla over the coronavirus, there have been only very rare, if any, observations in Congress or the media that it is President Donald Trump who has his finger on the button during these troubled and politically unsettling times, a man clearly unstable, mercurial and volatile.

The American public appears to be blind to the Armageddon that could happen through either an accidental launch or a president’s folly. Theoretically and legally neither Congress nor the military can stop the president giving the order to fire, although it’s hard to imagine that the military don’t

have secret contingency plans to interrupt the command of a mentally disturbed president.

There is only approximately five minutes for a president to act on being told there are incoming missiles and 12 minutes between an order to attack and the irreversible launching of nuclear missiles. Blair sought to find a way to buy time in the split-second decision-making needed in response to a potential threat.

In 1977, for example, he persuaded the Air Force to reprogram the “unlock codes” that supposedly safeguard Minuteman missiles. All the locks had been set at “00000000” to make it easier for crews to remember. How crazy this was, enabling a crew of malevolent or unstable missile launch officers to fire the rockets without an order. He advocated that warheads be separated from missiles.

Blair was not an outsider, a marcher or sitter-downer. He worked and advocated within the establishment, but in his own independent way. He directed a review of the military’s nuclear command for the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment from 1982 to 1985. He was a senior fellow in foreign policy studies from 1987 to 2000 at the Brookings Institution that is staffed with foreign policy and nuclear experts, many of whom have served at the highest levels in government.

He feared the Soviet system of controls and safeguards was even weaker than America’s. In an article in The New York Times in 1993 he warned of a Soviet doomsday system that could automatically launch a nuclear counterattack even if Moscow’s military command were wiped out.

On another occasion, interviewed for the PBS TV program “Frontline,” he said, “We need to recognize that the primary challenge that we face today is not deterrence but a failure of control, particularly in Russia.”

Three years ago he wrote, again in The New York Times, warning that it was possible for outside hackers to seize control of American missile systems.

A small group of experts, critics of American nuclear policy, including Blair, and also some high up ex-military men, did have some effect in pushing through stabilizing reforms including more resilient command and control systems, and a de-emphasis on nuclear systems that created the most severe risks of crisis instability.

Michael O’Hanlon, a senior fellow at Brookings, pays tribute to Blair on the Brookings Institution’s website describing him as a man who “felt the weight of the world on his shoulders.” He was, O’Hanlon wrote, “at times almost melancholy, given the enormity of the problems he was wrestling with, and how seriously he took his responsibilities for trying to help save humanity from itself.”

Blair’s seminal work “Strategic Command and Control: Redefining the Nuclear Threat,” was among the small handful of most important books ever published by Brookings in foreign policy studies. By deducing all the things that could go wrong when potentially flawed and fragile electronics systems were juxtaposed with even more flawed human operators and organizations, he demonstrated convincingly that the threat of accidental nuclear war was substantially greater than many appreciated or wanted to believe.

O’Hanlon also wrote how, “Later in life, Blair contributed enormously to the Global Zero nuclear disarmament movement, because he felt, in Martin Luther King’s words, ‘the fierce urgency of now’.

** Note: The writer was for 17 years a foreign affairs columnist and commentator for the International Herald Tribune. [IDN-InDepthNews – 28 July 2020].*

Trump and Senator Cotton Embrace Enhanced Testing & Face Kilotons of Surprises

Viewpoint by Robert Kelley

The writer also seconded by the USDOE to the IAEA where he served twice as a Director of the nuclear inspections in Iraq in 1992 and again in 2001. Kelley is currently based in Vienna. He has carried out professional travel to more than 20 countries

VIENNA (IDN) – There are growing rumours that the United States is considering carrying out a nuclear test in the near recent amendment reads: “carry out projects related to reducing the time required to execute a nuclear test if necessary,” nuclear test might be thought to be necessary if there is a problem to resolve in the nuclear weapons stockpile or a new system to develop. Alternatively, it would be a political threat designed to frighten adversaries, encourage nuclear proliferation and reheat the arms race.



Image: Ground zero after the "Trinity" test, the first atomic test, which took place on July 16, 1945 – four weeks before an American B-29 bomber dropped the world's first deployed atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima, on August 6, 1945. Public domain

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is not in force. It was signed by the US but not ratified. A number of other states have not ratified it either and it is in perpetual limbo. But the five weapons states have adhered to a voluntary informal test ban since the mid-1990s and seemed willing to remain in this situation indefinitely rather than actually bring the CTBT into force.

The four other nuclear weapons possessing states have loosely adhered to the informal moratorium as well, with DPRK being the only state in the world to conduct any, namely 6, nuclear tests in the 21st century.

A real nuclear test is not just a “test;” it should be a very complicated nuclear experiment. It costs millions of dollars, and could take years to prepare unless it is a completely political exercise: to produce a big bang and assert dominance. A nuclear test would be done in the name of science.

It is particularly ironic that the Trump administration would have an interest to test, given its aversion to scientific testing. It is on the record that more testing creates more problems.

A complex nuclear experiment requires hundreds of skilled workers and technicians as well as support from disciplines such as security and publicity.

If the US decided to take such a step it would first have to decide what to test. There are two highly competitive nuclear weapons laboratories in the US. They each are responsible for about half of the American nuclear weapon stockpile and it would certainly be a device from their “enduring stockpiles.”

There are no reported problems in that stockpile so the test would have to sort out the competing interests of the two laboratories and the US Government and invent a cause.

It is easy to overlook the fact that the Department of Energy (DOE) has complete responsibility for the nuclear stockpile including carrying out a test.

The Department of Defense (DoD) only has custody for the weapons for its military missions. The two departments and Congress would have to sort out what to test. The Senate’s move to add \$10 million to the DoD budget instead of DOE shows ignorance of basic governmental organization.

Most the enduring stockpile weapons have yields in excess of 150 kt. This introduces a new problem. The US is a party to the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) which limits test yields to 150 kt.

The majority of US stockpile weapons would require a test in excess of 150 kt if they are tested at full yield. Unlike withdrawing from an informal agreement, this will mean an actual violation of a ratified treaty.

Readiness to resume testing is already a US priority. DOE is required by the 1993 PDD-15 to maintain the capability to conduct a nuclear test. Several tens of millions of dollars per year are provided to the contractor running the Nevada National Security Site, formerly known as the Nevada Test Site.

I was on the management team that ran the Test Site in the late-1990s and we were contracted to be able to field a test within 24 to 36 months.

This included physical preparations: test shafts in the desert, equipment and cabling to connect to the device underground, all imaginable support functions to aid the National Laboratories to emplace a nuclear device and explode it.

One of the most steps was to ensure that the device was emplaced deep in the ground in a tightly sealed shaft so that no radiation would be released. Despite extensive experience in this technology, the National Laboratories were not always successful in achieving zero release. That was accepted as a cost of doing business in a cold war mentality but it would not be acceptable in the 2020s.

The Baneberry underground test in 1970 blew out of its shaft releasing a huge cloud of radioactive dust. This cloud and many others from the Nevada Test Site drifted east across the Republican heartland. Will the voters of flyover land be as willing to be guinea pigs for radioactive fallout in the 2020's as they were in the 1960s and 1970s?

The Trump Administration has also failed to take into account that the US Department of Energy has a well-established track record of being unable to execute major projects of hundreds of millions of dollars within budget and schedule.

The day that it announces a planned execution date, the delays and cost overruns will begin. If DOE tries to cut corners to meet deadlines, disaster looms. Otherwise it is unlikely that the event will ever take place before a new administration is seated in 2024 or beyond.

In 1997, with a team of experienced scientists, engineers and geologists we always felt that 24-36 months was optimistic. This is before even considering the scale of public protest that would be likely in the 21st century, especially from the "downwinders" in Utah who bore the brunt of above ground testing Nevada before testing moved underground in 1963.

There are two segregated holding pens at the entrance to the Nevada Test Site. They were used to hold anti-testing demonstrators in the 1990s. These pens would need to be

much larger in the 21st century and more guard patrols would be needed.

The test could also be a vehicle for multi-lateral cooperation. The US has conducted tests for the British since they lost their testing grounds in Australia. There is close cooperation with the French. Inviting Israeli scientists to test one of their devices or participate in a US test is a possibility consistent with US foreign policy, such as it is.

There is another alternative for the uncaring Trump administration. They might wittingly violate the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT). The LTBT forbids nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, the oceans and in outer space.

For a US administration willing to violate the TTBT and the informal adherence to the CTBT, doing an atmospheric test is another small indiscretion. If the purpose of the test is purely political then a highly visible explosion for the cameras is actually a plus. Dropping a nuclear bomb from an airplane, a missile test or explosion on a barge in the mid-Pacific Ocean would be highly visible. The environmental damage would be restricted but it would grab headlines around the world.

However the test might be done, it is a political statement designed to impress and threaten. If it is truly a test, an experiment to check a major weapon problem or develop a new weapon, politicians need to learn what scientists already know.

Tests and experiments sometimes do not produce the expected result. Imagine the reaction if the US invites observers to a test, fielded by amateurs who have never done a test, and nothing happens! Or it exceeds the expected yield throwing a cloud of radioactive debris into the air over adjacent US states and even beyond.

Another embarrassment for Trump awaits. Once he announces that he will test he will discover it takes several years to execute the order. He will simultaneously give license to the Russians and the Chinese to do the same. They, unburdened by democratic and environmental niceties, will be able to demand a test from their scientists on an expedited schedule. Imagine the shame when losers like Putin and Xi beat Trump to the end game!

The Trump administration has been actively tearing up arms control agreements for its entire existence. Exiting INF, New START and Open Skies all have one thing in common: nothing changes visibly in the short term in the public view. Ending inspections, commission meetings, cooperative exchanges along with the increased risk of war and spending reductions will be invisible to the general public. Nothing will visibly change in the immediate future that the public will notice.

Abrogating the voluntary test ban is markedly different. Things will change dramatically. Hundreds of millions of dollars will need to be appropriated and expended. Many new scientists and engineers will need to be recruited to carry out a complex testing experiment that has not been executed for 28 years.

The test will need to be touted widely if it is to have political impact, otherwise, there is no point. This will lead to a visible groundswell of opposition, including protests,

marches, intrusions into the test site and arrests. This will not be a silent retreat from old obligations far from the public eye. This will be a big deal, an expensive and highly visible polarizing event.

Conducting a nuclear test is a very complex process and there are many impediments on the way to execution. The political hacks who are advocating this muscle-flexing exercise have no idea what they are getting into. The world of diplomacy and the CTBTO will have many arguments against a test.

There will be valid objections about the damage to arms control agreements that have made us safer since the Reagan and Bush administrations showed wisdom and restraint. Trump is about to embark on a very slippery slope where the scientific gain is essentially zero and the opportunities for highly visible failure are lurking just beneath the surface.

Of course, it is clear that testing resumption releases a genie that has been successfully bottled up for nearly thirty years by thoughtful and experienced diplomats in the five weapons states in particular. Resuming testing is an expensive act in terms of treasure, a futile act in terms of maintaining nuclear peace and a clear signal the usable nuclear weapons are back on the strategic battlefield. Another sad day for arms control. [IDN-InDepthNews – 14 July 2020]

Okinawa Governor Refuses to Host Prohibited U.S. Nuclear Missiles

By Jaya Ramachandran

GENEVA (IDN) – Governor Denny Tamaki of Okinawa district has rejected the U.S. plans to base on the island missiles capable of threatening China – apparently as part of President Donald Trump's move to challenge Beijing and upgrade the importance of Taiwan, 500 kilometres away from the island. If a plan for Okinawa to host such missiles were to develop, Tamaki said: "I can easily imagine fierce opposition from Okinawa residents."



Photo: Governor Tamaki (right) with U.S. Marines stationed in Okinawa (2019). Public domain | Source: Wikimedia Commons

Okinawa comprises more than 150 islands in the East China Sea between Taiwan and Japan's mainland. It's known for its tropical climate, broad beaches and coral reefs, as well as World War II sites.

Okinawa has been a critical strategic location for the United States Armed Forces since the end of World War II. The island hosts around 26,000 U.S. military personnel, about half of the total complement of the United States Forces Japan, spread among 32 bases and 48 training sites.

The largest island (Okinawa) hosts the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, commemorating a massive 1945 Allied invasion, and Churaumi Aquarium, home to whale sharks and manta rays.

Missiles the U.S. plans to base on Okinawa are prohibited by the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty between the U.S. and the Soviet Union which, after dissolution, reconstituted into the Russian Federation in 1991.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan and the then Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometres.

It was the first arms-control treaty to abolish an entire category of weapons systems. Besides, two protocols to the agreement established unprecedented procedures for observers from both nations to verify first-hand the other countries destruction of its missiles.

The INF Treaty led to the elimination of 2,692 U.S. and Soviet nuclear and conventional, ground-launched ballistic and cruise missile. The U.S. President Donald Trump formally withdrew from the treaty August 2, 2019, citing Russian noncompliance with the accord. The Pentagon

tested two previously prohibited missiles in August and December 2019.

Since the United States withdrew from the Treaty, Australia, Japan, the Philippines, and South Korea have publicly said that they were not asked to nor are they considering serving as hosts for new U.S. ground-launched missiles. Secretary of Defence Mark Esper has previously suggested that he would like to see the deployment of such missiles in Europe and particularly Asia to counter China.

A senior Defence Department official told the *Los Angeles Times* that the Pentagon is "very attentive to our allies' concerns, and we recognized their political challenges". However, the official continued, "everything that's said in the media is not necessarily what's said behind closed doors".

As the Washington-based Arms Control Association reported on June 26, Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Jens Stoltenberg said on June 17 after a NATO Defence Ministerial that the alliance has "no intention to deploy new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe".

China is firmly opposed to any deployment of such missiles in the Asia-Pacific. "If the U.S. insists on the deployment, it will be a provocation at China's doorstep," said Chinese Defence Ministry Spokesperson Senior Colonel Wu Qian on June 24. "China will never sit idle and will take all necessary countermeasures," he warned.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration continues to insist that China join trilateral arms control talks with the United States and Russia and has criticized Beijing's decision not to attend the June 22 talks in Vienna on the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), the last remaining arms control agreement limiting their nuclear arsenals. Before the start of the Vienna talks, Special Envoy for Arms Control Marshall Billingslea, who led the U.S. delegation at the

negotiations tweeted a picture of the table, with some empty seats reserved with Chinese flags. "Vienna talks about to start," he said. "China is a no-show...We will proceed with Russia, notwithstanding."

Fu Cong, director-general of the department of arms control of China's foreign ministry, replied, "What an odd scene...Good luck on the extension of the New START! Wonder how LOW you can go?" The United States and Russia are currently believed to possess about 6,000 total nuclear weapons apiece, while China has roughly 300.

According to the Arms Control Association, following the Vienna talks, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on June 23 that the U.S. placement of Chinese flags at empty seats "is unserious, unprofessional and unappealing for the U.S. to try getting people's eyes in this way".

He also noted the incorrect design of the flags that the United States set on the table. "We hope certain people in the U.S. can do their homework and improve their general knowledge to avoid becoming a laughingstock," he added.

The Trump administration claims that China is engaged in a secret crash program to build up its nuclear forces and that future arms control efforts must include Beijing.

But China has repeatedly refused to join either trilateral talks with the United States and Russia or bilateral talks with the United States.

Before the talks in Vienna, Billingslea on June 8 invited Beijing to join, but the following day, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying declined the invitation. "China has repeatedly reiterated that it has no intention of participating in the so-called trilateral arms control negotiations with the United States and Russia," she said. "This position is very clear."

Billingslea urged China to reconsider. "Achieving Great Power status requires behaving with Great Power responsibility," he tweeted June 9. "No more Great Wall of Secrecy on its nuclear build-up."

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo held a meeting in Hawaii June 18 with Yang Jiechi, director of China's Foreign Affairs Office. It is not clear to what extent arms control was discussed at the meeting. After the meeting, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs David Stilwell told reporters that Washington is "looking for [Beijing's] positive engagement in trilateral arms talks... We'd like them to participate in these talks that prevent an unfortunate outcome."

Defence Secretary Esper echoed similar views at a June 18 meeting with the defence ministers of the NATO. Esper "talked about the urgency of engaging in meaningful trilateral arms control efforts with both Russia and China," according to a Defence Department readout.

Russia has refused to force China to change its position and join the talks, despite pressure from the United States to do so.

"China should itself decide whether these talks are beneficial for the country," said Russian Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Antonov June 20. "We will not force our Chinese friends."

Antonov also repeated a long-time Russian stance that, if China joins arms control talks, then U.S. allies France and the United Kingdom should as well.

Billingslea acknowledged that the U.S. "definition of multilateral might be different, but the principle remains the same". He claimed that China's nuclear build-up poses a much greater threat than the French and British nuclear arsenals. [IDN-InDepthNews – 27 June 2020]

Combating the Threat of Nuclear Weapons Needs 'Responsible' Media

Viewpoint by Dr J. Enkhsaikhan

The writer is former Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations, and Chairman of Blue Banner NGO.

ULAANBAATAR (IDN) – The first half of 2020 has demonstrated once again that the world has indeed become closely interconnected and that cooperation of states and other stakeholders is imperative to deal with the current three existential threats that know no borders: the existence of weapons of mass destruction, the climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Inaction or indifference to such threats is in itself developing into a fourth such threat. It is also witnessing increased great power political and economic rivalry that can adversely affect the international environment.

The pandemic. The above threats, especially the current pandemic, demonstrate that not unilateralism, protectionism or rivalry but rather multilateralism, mutual understanding and cooperation are needed to address the common threats and challenges meaningfully.

Today the maxim that it is better to hang together rather than hang separately underlines the importance of broad cooperation rather than narrow nationalism or rivalry. The pandemic has demonstrated that national health systems in many countries and international cooperation in promoting public health are still weak in facing the pandemic and that even the developed world was incapable of effectively countering. Time was lost to take the necessary measures, to exchange vital information and experience on how best to address it.

Developing an effective vaccine should bring together not only scientists and doctors, but the entire world. Hopefully, the world will also work closely together in addressing the other existential threats.

Weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, pose another clear existential threat to humankind. Mindful of the COVID-19 pandemic the 1972 Bacteriological (Biological) weapons convention needs to be looked again to preclude weaponizing



pandemics. As to nuclear weapons, its threat has not been eliminated with the end of the cold war. On the contrary, the number of nuclear-weapon states has increased. Though in the post-cold war three decades the number of nuclear weapons possessed by the U.S. and Russia has quantitatively been reduced, the threat of atomic weapons has not decreased but in fact, is increasing.

The essential U.S.-Russian bilateral nuclear arms elimination or reduction agreements have been revoked,

while some others are being torpedoed. Hypersonic, space and some other advanced weapons and weapons systems are being developed, while the threshold of the use of nuclear weapons is being lowered by reducing their yield.

There are talks of even resuming nuclear weapons testing which can have a far-reaching domino effect. The non-proliferation regime is being weakened due to refusal of the nuclear-weapon states, parties to the NPT, to implement their commitment 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".

Unilateral withdrawal from a multilateral agreement on Iran's nuclear program risks to unravel the deal. Talks on denuclearizing the Korean peninsula are stalled due to unwillingness of the sides to make serious commitments.

These troubling events are underway while it has been demonstrated that in case nuclear weapons were to be used either by design, due to human or systemic error or even accidentally, the threat will be, unlike the current pandemic, instantaneous with much larger casualties in which case also well-trained and dedicated physicians would practically be helpless.

Knowing well the devastating humanitarian consequence of the use of nuclear weapons as witnessed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the testimonies of the Hibakushas, in 1980 physicians of various countries have established a non-partisan professional organization known as the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) that had declared that physicians would be helpless in providing adequate medical assistance to the victims and that the best remedy available is the prevention of such a catastrophe in the first place.

The recent studies on humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons have convincingly demonstrated that the use of even a few of such weapons would result in hundreds of thousands of instantaneous deaths followed by much more agonizing deaths and sufferings of peoples and that it would also cause catastrophic disruptions in the global climate leading to the so-called nuclear famine.

Role of the mass media. The revolution underway in the means of mass communication is making the media the most direct source of information for the general public. Today it is expected to play an important role in raising public awareness, shaping public attitudes and opinions, and through the activities of peoples affect the ultimate decision-makers – the governments.

However, the media should not be a mere transmitter of widely available information since the latter includes both objectives, fact-based information as well as biased ones or the so-called fake news that can affect the users.

The media should not follow the logic that "good news is bad news" or "bad news is good news" but should promote the strengthening of peace, security and mutual understanding of peoples by serving as a responsible and effective means of providing objective information, showing the larger picture and the effects and by contextualizing the issues involved making sure that people understand well the issues involved, the challenges and opportunities and become actively involved in promoting the issues directly or through groups that share the same or identical views. [IDN-InDepthNews – 26 June 2020]

Collage of the photos of Dr J. Enkhsaikhan on the left, Blue Banner and Chinggis Khaan (Sükhbaatar) Square in Mongolia's capital city Ulaanbaatar on the right (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Time to Act on Dr King's Call to Tackle Evils of Racism, Economic Exploitation, and War

Viewpoint by Alice Slater

The writer serves on the Board of 'World Beyond War', and represents the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation at the UN.



Photo: Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking against the Vietnam War, St. Paul Campus, the University of Minnesota in St. Paul, April 27, 1967. CC BY-SA 2.0. Wikimedia Commons.

NEW YORK (IDN) –The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) just issued its 2020 Yearbook, reporting on developments in armaments, disarmament, and international security. In light of the drumbeat of frightening news about growing hostility between the dominant nuclear-armed states vying for power, SIPRI describes a bleak outlook for arms control.

It notes ongoing nuclear weapons modernization and new weapons development, space weaponization moving forward, without check or controls, and a disturbing increase in geopolitical tensions together with a rapid deterioration in practices and possibilities for cooperation and monitoring between the great powers.

All this is taking place against the background of a once in a hundred years global plague, and a rising tide of public revulsion against racism. It is apparent that people, not only in America, the heartland of racial segregation and police brutality to formerly enslaved people brought to these lands in chains against their will from Africa, but people all over the world, are protesting the violent and racist tactics of domestic police forces, whose mission is to protect people, not terrorize, maim and kill them!

As we begin to tell the truth and seek ways to repair the damage of racism, it is well to remember Martin Luther King's 1967 speech, where he broke with a sympathetic society, similarly to the way global activists today are being asked by the establishment to “tamp it down” and not ask to “defund the police” as unnecessarily provocative.

While acknowledging that progress had been made in civil rights, King called us to address “Three major evils—the evil of racism, the evil of poverty and the evil of war” to the consternation of the establishment. He noted that progress that had been made in dealing with civil rights in “shaking the entire edifice of segregation” should not “cause us to engage in a superficial dangerous optimism.”

He urged that we must also deal with “the evil of poverty” for 40 million people in the United States, “some of them

Mexican American, Indians, Puerto Ricans, Appalachian whites... the vast majority...Negroes”. In this time of the plague the grim statistics as to the disproportionate number of black, brown, and poor people who died these past few months, clearly reinforces the point King was making.

Finally, he spoke of the “evil of war” declaring that “somehow these three evils are tied together. The triple evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism indicate that “the greatest challenge facing mankind today is to get rid of war.”

We know today that the greatest existential threat our planet faces today is nuclear war or catastrophic climate change. Mother Earth is giving us a time out, sending us all to our rooms to reflect on how we address the triple evils about which King warned us.

The burgeoning arms race reported by SIPRI, must be stopped just as we are finally stopping racism and finishing the job begun by King that ended legal segregation but kept in place horrendous practices that are now being addressed.

We need to address the additional evils that include economic exploitation and to start telling the truth about the arms race so that we can put an end to war. Who is provoking the arms race? How is it being reported?

An example, of reporting gone awry is a recent article written by former Ambassador Thomas Graham: The United States took this commitment [to negotiate a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty] seriously. It already had placed a moratorium on nuclear testing in 1992, prompting most of the world to do the same, essentially adopting an informal global moratorium on nuclear-weapon tests

beginning in 1993. The negotiating conference in Geneva agreed to a CTBT within the one-year time frame.

Here Ambassador Graham erroneously credits the United States and fails to acknowledge that it was the Soviet Union, not the United States, which first instituted a moratorium on nuclear testing under Gorbachev in 1989, when the Kazakhs, led by Kazakh poet Olzas Suleimenov, marched at the Soviet test site in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan protesting the underground nuclear tests that were venting in the atmosphere and causing increased incidences of birth defects, mutations, cancers to the people living there.

In response to the Soviet testing cessation, Congress, which refused to match the Soviet moratorium saying that we couldn't trust the Russians, did finally agree to a US moratorium after the Lawyers Alliance for Nuclear Arms Control (LANAC) raised millions of dollars privately under the leadership of Adrian Bill DeWind, founder of LANAC and President of the NYC Bar Association, to hire a team of seismologists, and visited Russia where the Soviets agreed to allow the team to monitor the Soviet test site at Semipalatinsk. Having our seismologists at the Soviet test site eliminated Congress' objection.

After the moratorium, the CTBT was negotiated and signed by Clinton in 1992 but it came with a Faustian deal with Congress to give the weapons labs over six billion dollars a year for "stockpile stewardship" which included computer-simulated nuclear tests and sub-critical tests, where the US was blowing up plutonium with high explosives, 1,000 feet

below the desert floor on Western Shoshone holy land at the Nevada test site.

But because those tests didn't cause a chain reaction, Clinton said it wasn't a nuclear test! Fast forward to 2020, where the language has now been massaged by the arms "control" community to describe a ban not on nuclear tests but on "explosive" nuclear tests-as if the many sub-critical tests where we are blowing up plutonium with chemicals aren't "explosive".

Of course, the Russians followed suit, as they always have, by doing their own sub-critical tests at Novalya Zemlya! And this advanced testing and lab experimentation was the reason given by India for not supporting the CTBT and breaking out of the testing moratorium within months of its signing, swiftly followed by Pakistan, not wanting to be left behind in the technology race to continue to design and test nuclear weapons. And so, it went, and goes! And the SIPRI statistics grow grimmer!

Time to tell the truth about the US-Russian relationship and US complicity in driving the nuclear arms race if we are ever to reverse it as well as the race to weaponize space. Perhaps, by addressing the triple evils, we can fulfil King's dream and the mission envisioned for the United Nations, to end the scourge of war! At a minimum, we should be promoting UN Secretary-General António Guterres' call for a global ceasefire while our world attends to Mother Earth and addresses this murderous plague. [IDN-InDepthNews – 15 June 2020]

The CTBTO, with Dr Lassina Zerbo as Executive Secretary since August 2013, is the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. It is an international organization established by the States

Signatories to the Treaty on November 19, 1996, and has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. An Agreement (A/RES/54/28) to regulate the relationship between the United Nations and the CTBTO was adopted in 2000 by the General Assembly.

The GEM members are calling on eight hold-out Annex 2 countries to ratify the CTBT. "The most effective way to resolve possible concerns about very low-yield nuclear explosions and enforce compliance" with the Treaty, is to bring it into force. "When it does enter into force, States have the option to demand intrusive, short-notice on-site inspections to investigate suspicious activities," they maintain.

In a statement on May 29, the GEM members appeal to all responsible states to reiterate their strong support for the global norm against nuclear test explosions of any yield that has been established by the CTBT, "to take concrete action to secure its prompt entry into force, and to urge the use of diplomacy rather than intimidation to build a more peaceful and secure international security environment for all".

Awaiting entry into force of the Treaty, the verification regime to monitor the globe for nuclear explosions is nearing completion with currently more than 300 facilities certified out of the 337 originally planned for International Monitoring System (IMS) facilities already in operation. The system has proved its capabilities to detect even small nuclear tests during the announced DPRK nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016 and 2017.

The GEM members signing the statement include: Nobuyasu Abe (the UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament

Affairs from 2003 to 2006); Hans Blix (the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1981 to 1997); Grigory Berdennikov (the Governor for the Russian Federation on the IAEA Board of Governors); and Desmond Browne (currently the Chair of the Executive Board of the European Leadership Network).

Other GEM members include: Jayantha Dhanapala (among others, a former President of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs); Sérgio Duarte (the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs from 2007 to 2012 and Pugwash President); Thomas Hajnoczi (Director for Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation at the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe), Tarja Halonen (former President of Finland from 2000-2012); and Wolfgang Hoffmann (the first Executive Secretary of the CTBTO from March 1997 until August 2005).

GEM members Angela Kane (until mid-2015, served as the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs), Patricia Lewis (the Research Director, International Security at Chatham House in London), Kevin Rudd (Prime Minister of Australia and Leader of the Australian Labour Party from June to September 2013 and from December 2007 to June 2010), and Ahmet Üzümcü (a former Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapon) have also signed the statement. [IDN-InDepthNews - 30 May 2020]

Image: More than 300 International Monitoring System (IMS) facilities certified out of the 337 the CTBTO has planned are already in operation. Credit: CTBTO.

Global Civil Society Demands Bolder Action from NPT States Parties

By Jamshed Baruah



Image credit: Pixabay

GENEVA (IDN) – A diverse network of national and international peace and nuclear disarmament non-governmental organisations has in a [joint statement](#) urged government leaders, particularly from the nuclear-armed states and their allies, to act with greater urgency and cooperation to meet unfulfilled promises to reduce nuclear risks and advance progress on disarmament, and to realise their commitment to the “complete elimination of nuclear weapons”.

The statement coincided with the 25th anniversary on May 11 of the indefinite extension of the nuclear [Non-Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#).

The anniversary has been postponed in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the 84 organisations that have endorsed the statement, the postponement of the 2020 NPT Review Conference offers "an unprecedented opportunity to change the current course, move beyond bitter politicisation, and focus efforts to bring about the end of nuclear weapons". They call on NPT states parties and the international community to utilise this additional time wisely.

The joint statement comes at an historic point in time: The year 2020 marks 75 years since the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

By the end of 1945, more than 210,000 people—mainly civilians—were dead. But the surviving atomic bomb victims (Hibakusha), their children, and grandchildren continue to suffer from physical and psychological effects of the bombings, as do people from the Korean peninsula who were among the victims of the atomic bombings.

From their development, through testing and use, nuclear weapons create victims at all stages. Indigenous peoples have been especially impacted by nuclear testing and uranium mining, and radiation has disproportionate gendered impacts. The damage caused by nuclear weapons has no national borders.

The civil society organisations emphasise that the two bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 were tiny and crude by today's standards. Current capabilities are far more deadly. Moreover, reductions of nuclear weapons have tapered off in the last several years, replaced by a lavishly funded new race to develop novel and diversified capabilities to unleash nuclear devastation.

In 2010, NPT states parties agreed by consensus to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. Ten years later the opposite is true: that role has been

expanded—and not only by nuclear-armed states but also by their complicit allies—the "nuclear umbrella" states.

They point out that new risks heighten the urgency to eliminate nuclear weapons. Emerging technologies including offensive cyber capabilities and artificial intelligence combined with nuclear modernisation plans also increase risk. The scale and tempo of war games by nuclear-armed states and their allies, including nuclear drills, is increasing. Ongoing missile tests, and frequent close encounters between military forces of nuclear-armed states exacerbate nuclear dangers.

According to 2017 Nobel Peace laureate ICAN, 13,865 warheads are threatening the planet: of these, five – Russia (6,500), the United States (6,185), France (300), China (290) and Britain (200) own the largest numbers – and four Pakistan (150-160), India (130-140), Israel (80-90) and North Korea (20-30) the smaller numbers. In addition, five countries are hosting U.S. nuclear weapons: Italy (80), Turkey (50), Belgium (20), Germany (20) and the Netherlands (20).

Twenty-six other countries also "endorse" the possession and use of nuclear weapons by allowing the potential use of nuclear weapons on their behalf as part of defence alliances, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).

A new investigation discloses that the nine nuclear-armed states spent \$72.9 billion on their 13,000+ nuclear weapons in 2019, implying \$138,699 every minute of 2019 on nuclear weapons. This was an aggregate increase of \$7.1 billion from 2018.

The joint statement, therefore, calls on the nuclear-armed states to halt programmes designed to build new nuclear weapons, new delivery systems, or their key components.

Coupled with policy decisions eradicating launch-on-warning plans, ending modernisation programmes could start reducing risks, as would eliminating the role of nuclear weapons from national and regional security strategies and doctrines.

The civil society organisations maintain that completely eliminating the risk of nuclear weapons is only possible when the weapons themselves are eliminated. They ask all NPT states parties to commit to halting the development of new nuclear weapon capabilities and help stop the nuclear arms race, including by ceasing the provision of any form of assistance or encouragement to develop new capabilities.

The statement was drafted by Ray Acheson (WILPF); John Burroughs (Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy); Jacqueline Cabasso (Western States Legal Foundation); Akira Kawasaki (Peace Boat); Daryl Kimball (Arms Control Association); Allison Pytlak (WILPF); Alicia Sanders-Zakre (ICAN); Susi Snyder (PAX); and Carlos Umana (IPPNW).

"This environment," the joint statement says, "demands bolder action from all states to reduce nuclear risks by eliminating nuclear weapons; action that is rooted in 'deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons'."

The civil society organisations have put forward the following three key messages to NPT states parties:

1. *Global support for the NPT is strong, but its long-term viability cannot be taken for granted.*
2. *The grave state of global affairs and the rising risk of nuclear conflict and arms racing requires new and bolder leadership from responsible states.*
3. *Those that resist change also say the "environment" is not right for further progress, but responsible actors everywhere are rising to the challenge.*

The world cannot wait until the environment is "right" for disarmament. It is true that success in conflict prevention and resolution, control of non-nuclear military capabilities, protection of human rights, climate and environmental protection, and other important endeavours would help to facilitate nuclear disarmament.

But taking action for disarmament by negotiating agreements or through unilateral steps helps create an environment for achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons while building a climate of mutual trust that will positively contribute to solving the world's other pressing problems, says the statement. [IDN-InDepthNews – 12 May 2020]

13,865 warheads are threatening the planet: of these, five – Russia (6,500), the United States (6,185), France (300), China (290) and Britain (200) own the largest numbers – and four Pakistan (150-160), India (130-140), Israel (80-90) and North Korea (20-30) the smaller numbers. In addition, five countries are hosting U.S. nuclear weapons: Italy (80), Turkey (50), Belgium (20), Germany (20) and the Netherlands (20).

World Conference Calls for Abolition of Nuclear Weapons and Reversing Climate Change

By Santo D. Banerjee



Image credit: World Conference

NEW YORK (IDN) — In a dramatic warning from 13 Nobel Prize winners about the existential dangers of nuclear weapons and climate crisis, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists on January 23 set the hands of its iconic 'Doomsday Clock' to 100 seconds to midnight.

On April 25, during the Covid-19 crisis, over one thousand activists across the peace, climate, and social movements gathered online to take part in the first-ever virtual World Conference: Abolish Nuclear Weapons | Resist and Reverse Climate Change | For Social and Economic Justice.

The event as an in-person conference in New York coinciding with the NPT Review Conference, which was to take place at the United Nations headquarters in New York from April 27-May 22. But it is postponed to 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. "Nevertheless, the energy and motivation of the in-person conference was not lost," said an observer.

The virtual conference served as a starting point for bringing a variety of movements together for a more peaceful, just, and responsible world. A case in point was the participants' commitment to "continue to work tirelessly" for a set of objectives.

These include Immediate fulfilment of Article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which requires cessation of the arms race and the elimination of nuclear weapons. Equally critical is early entry-into-force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as an essential and reinforcing step towards a nuclear-weapons-free world.

The conference also emphasized the commitment of participants to campaign for an early establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Weapons as agreed by the States parties to the NPT.

They will furthermore continue efforts for achieving regional détente processes to end conflicts and arms racing in all regions of the world including South Asia, North East Asia, and Europe.

Global disarmament with a just transition for workers in the weapons industry and a policy of détente that reduces conflicts and favours peaceful conflict resolution is essential is yet another goal they have set themselves.

They call for military budgets to be slashed worldwide, with those funds redirected to meet human needs and protect the environment. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the centre of efforts to redistribute resources from militarism to peace, can only be realized through disarmament, they add.

The International Peace Bureau (IPB), a co-organizer of the World Conference, underlines the significance of these commitments by highlighting that while military spending

is on the rise, health budgets remain insufficient in confronting the Covid-19 pandemic.

The latest report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows global military spending in 2019 at a new high of US\$1,917 billion. Military expenditure has increased by 3.6% from 2018 and represents \$252 for every person on the planet.

"The increase is evidence that the world is in a global arms race that benefits few and raises the likelihood of a global catastrophe. It sheds light on the effectiveness of military industries' lobbying, particularly in Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania. NATO's military budget alone totals \$1,035 billion and accounts for 54% of total global military spending," says IPB.

The conference also calls for several fundamental changes. These include translating into reality the vision for the 20th century elaborated in the Charter of the United Nations.

"We are confronted with existential challenges: nuclear weapons and wars that can destroy the planet in short order and the creeping destruction caused by climate change, ecological devastation, and pandemic threats. Militarization is increasing dramatically in Europe and other parts of the world," the participants say.

They add: 75 years after the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the worldwide cry of "never again", the warnings of the Hibakusha must never be forgotten.

Seventy-five years after the end of the Second World War and the oath "never again to fascism – never again to war"; we must remain steadfast in our commitments.

Seventy-five years after the founding of the United Nations to end war; its charter and commitments must be honoured.

Fifty years after entry-into-force of the NPT, to end the nuclear arms race and achieve nuclear disarmament; its commitments must be fulfilled.

Besides, the world now suffering from millions of Covid-19 cases and hundreds of thousands of related deaths, the pandemic has illuminated national and international systemic weaknesses, policy failures and a profound lack of international cooperation.

"Yet, in crisis, there is an opportunity. The pandemic has also illustrated ways in which we can prepare for the inevitable future pandemics, as well as to reverse the threats posed by nuclear weapons and the climate crisis."

The conference points out that the world is also confronted with an increasing number of authoritarian governments and the growth of far-right radicalism and fascist threats. Undemocratic, dictatorial politics increasingly influence and dominate the political climate in more and more countries

around the world, endangering the lives of minorities and migrants. Even the most fundamental democratic rights are in danger. Democracy is in a deep crisis.

The conference participants go a step further and note that the world is confronted with the fact that governments and corporations – as well as individuals – are planet earth with ever-increasing intensity, "as if we could easily rectify the environmental degradation or move to another planet".

"Man-made climate change is becoming a daily threat to life and survival, while other ecological disasters threaten our coexistence and the shaping of the future for humans, other animals, and plants.

"The beneficiaries of these developments are few, while the vast majority of people on Earth are affected and suffer. Millions of refugees have been generated by wars, injustice, and ecological disasters on a global scale." [IDN-InDepthNews – 30 April 2020]

An Unexpected Chance for the Success of Postponed NPT Review Conference

Viewpoint by Sergio Duarte



The writer is Former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and current President of Pugwash.

NEW YORK (IDN) – It took patience from the President-designate of the 2020 NPT Review Conference, a sober assessment of the situation by a number of states, particularly from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and help from the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). In the end, the parties to the Treaty agreed to postpone the Conference to next year, "as soon as circumstances permit, but no later than April 2021".

The postponement was inevitable in view of the rapid spread of the new coronavirus. The decision leaves the door open for further consultations on procedural matters, particularly regarding the date and venue of the Conference. Some parties might have preferred to hold the Review Conference earlier, rather than later, and views on the most adequate venue were divergent, but common sense prevailed. The agreement provides a few month's respite during which countries may ponder on how best to approach the Review Conference with a view to avoiding unnecessary confrontation.

As the world tries to mitigate the disastrous effects of COVID-19, one cannot avoid reflecting on still greater calamities, including nuclear war, the greater danger that the NPT seeks to avert. The effects of the use of nuclear weapons are well known and need not be overemphasized: they will not be limited by national boundaries; existing resources will not be sufficient to deal with the ensuing humanitarian consequences; the gravity and scale of the human toll, coupled with irreversible environmental damage may herald the end of conditions of survivability on the planet.

The widespread suffering caused by the current pandemic should therefore be a clarion call for greater understanding and cooperation among nations to deal with risks and problems that affect everyone and consequently require common solutions. Assuring that the Review Conference will strengthen the Treaty's effectiveness and its vital contribution to peace and security has now acquired renewed timeliness and urgency.

On the substantive side there are a number of issues that need to be discussed constructively over the next months in order to facilitate a much-desired successful outcome in 2021. The last Review Conference ended without

consensus on a Final Document, as was the case in four previous occasions.

Some features of the current panorama regarding nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation suggest the recrudescence of an atmosphere reminiscent of the one that prevailed during preparations for the 2005 Conference. At the III Session of the Preparatory Committee in 2004, sharp disagreement fueled by deep mistrust and outright hostility among delegations prevented it from arriving at requisite procedural decisions.

The Conference itself was thus unable to even start meaningful substantive work until it was too late to expect any substantive result. The failure served to rally political will from several quarters and to a large extent paved the way to the successful adoption of an ambitious Plan of Action in 2010.

In the years that followed, general concern about the recognition of the "catastrophic consequences" of nuclear detonations was decisive for the convening of three international meetings of governments and experts. Their conclusions provided the necessary impetus for the subsequent negotiation and adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), whose relationship with and relevant contribution to the objectives of the NPT must still be better understood across political divides.

Pressing substantive issues also demands urgent consideration in preparation for the forthcoming Review Conference. Agreement on the important question of the Middle East Conference on weapons of mass destruction eluded the NPT 2015 Review. Middle Eastern states met in New York in November 2019 in an effort to keep the issue at the forefront of international concerns, despite the deterioration of the situation in the region and the indifference of key players.

Special attention must be given to how the 2021 Review Conference should approach this sensitive – yet crucial – subject. The consequences of lack of progress on this question since the 1995 Review and Extension Conference continue to haunt delegations and to undermine credibility in the Treaty.

In the last five years the international climate did not improve; on the contrary, the world became more unpredictable and unstable, as well as marked by a perilous trend towards self-centered attitudes and policies. Resumption of high-level talks among the major nuclear weapon States – particularly those possessing the largest arsenals – is essential to restoring the degree of confidence necessary for a successful outcome in 2021.

Early agreement on the extension of the New START beyond its expiration in February next year – that is, before the Review Conference – would be a welcome signal of the will of the two largest possessors of nuclear weapons to further reduce existing arsenals.

Such new reductions should not be considered as an end in themselves. Rather, they should be conceived and undertaken in explicit consonance with the commitment expressed in Article VI of the Treaty. By the same token, other nuclear weapon states should reinforce measures of restraint, avoid regional confrontation and work collaboratively to support and advance the goal of achieving their complete elimination.

Constructive proposals to reduce the risk of a nuclear war being started by accident or miscalculation have been made from different quarters. For instance, the five nuclear weapon parties of the NPT should jointly support the reaffirmation by the 2021 Review Conference of the Reagan-Gorbachev level-headed statement that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

Related measures that have been on the table for some time deal with a no-first-use commitment or an agreed decrease in the operational readiness of nuclear forces. These, among other equally reasonable and responsible proposals, deserve serious examination.

The sharp differences between states and groups within the NPT can only be reconciled by means of a general recognition of the common interest in the preservation of the Treaty so that it can continue to play a major part in preventing new countries from acquiring nuclear weapons and in promoting their elimination, besides fostering peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The NPT, however, is not a "done deal", but a dynamic construct that can only survive if seen as fit for purpose to fulfill its three-fold objectives. Complacency and self-serving claims of "mission accomplished" in view of the success in curbing horizontal proliferation must not be allowed to overshadow the imperative for similar achievements in the development of peaceful uses and especially in attaining effective, legally binding nuclear disarmament measures.

The history of past Review Conferences shows recurrent dissatisfaction with the performance of the Treaty among many of its parties. An exacerbation of this pattern could lead to any or some of them to exercise the right ensured by article X.1 and leave the Treaty. This would create a major crisis and must be prevented. The answer, however, is not simply trying to buttress the conditions for withdrawal stipulated in the Treaty but rather to increase the confidence that it will more faithfully deliver on all its articles, without exception, thereby better attending to the interests of all its parties.

In the mid-1960's the shared interest of the original promoters of the NPT – the Soviet Union and the United States – to limit the number of states acquiring nuclear

weapons prompted the two superpowers of the time to lay aside their mistrust and hostility and join forces in order to steer the transit of their joint draft treaty through the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee and the United Nations General Assembly.

The hesitation of a significant number of states to immediately subscribe to the Treaty gave way to a gradual recognition that it was indeed in their own interest not to develop such weapons. In adhering to the Treaty, such States accepted this as a legally-binding obligation, provided the other end of the bargain – nuclear disarmament – would also be complied with. The longer this objective is sidestepped and delayed, the greater discredit will the Treaty face.

Next May fifty years will have passed since the NPT entered into force. It has since become the most adhered-to instrument in the field of arms control and is rightfully considered the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. Up to the present, however, it has not produced the expected results with regard to the elimination of the threat posed by the existence of nuclear weapons. In spite of their commitment under Article VI the nuclear-weapon states have consistently increased the power of their arsenals and added new and ever more sophisticated instruments of destruction. They have stated their resolve to retain such arsenals for as long as they see fit and to use them in the circumstances they consider adequate.

No wonder that non-nuclear parties of the NPT show growing signs of exasperation with the neglect of NPT nuclear disarmament obligations. Such frustration led to the successful negotiation and adoption of the Treaty on

the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons leading to their elimination, adopted by the United Nations in 2017. This new instrument clearly states the conviction of a majority of members of the United Nations that the humanitarian, social and environmental consequences of any use of nuclear weapons are not acceptable under international law and are contrary to the civilized standards of behavior among nations.

In his book *Multilateral diplomacy and the NPT: an insider's account*, Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, former President of the landmark 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, observed: "Ultimately, the best guarantee against complacency is to be found in the level of confidence among the states parties in the basic legitimacy or fairness of the treaty. [...] There is a persisting, widespread perception amongst many states parties that the fundamental NPT bargain is in fact discriminatory after all, as many of its critics have long maintained. So how can the states parties best prevent their hard-fought bargain from deteriorating into a swindle?"^[1]

This is the urgent task that confronts all parties to the NPT. [IDN-InDepthNews – 12 April 2020]

Photo: US President Lyndon Johnson addresses the UN General Assembly during the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1968. Eventually, 188 countries signed the treaty, which was made into law in 1970. Photo credit: Screen capture from the documentary 'Good Thinking, Those Who've Tried To Halt Nuclear Weapons'.

[1] Jayantha Dhanapala, *Reflections on the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (Solna, Sweden, SIPRI, 2017), p. 104/105.

A Nobel Peace Laureate Calls for Slashing Military Spending and Investing in Healthcare

By Jutta Wolf



Image credit: IPB

BERLIN (IDN) – The world's oldest peace NGO, the 1910 Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Peace Bureau ([IPB](#)), is calling for a "dramatic reduction" of military spending in favour of healthcare and meeting social needs. A [petition](#) launched on March 27 and signed by all interested will be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly on the first day of the next session opening on September 15, 2020.

"The world spends 1.8 trillion dollars on military expenditure every year and is scheduled to spend 1 trillion dollars on new nuclear weapons in the next 20 years," notes the IPB in the petition and a [statement](#) earlier from its headquarters in Germany's capital city, Berlin. Global military exercises cost more than 1 billion dollars each year, and arms production as well as arms exports are on the increase in the world's leading economies. They are responsible for 82 per cent of global military spending, account for almost all arms exports, and hold 98 per cent of the world's nuclear bombs on their collective territory.

They comprise the Group of Twenty (G20) which the IPB says is a shared platform that brings together the interests of the main players in the global arms race. In addition, the G20 spend billions on military research, money which, the IPB believes would be better invested in health and human needs and research to help the fight against global climate change.

"The G20 cannot sweep these facts under the carpet," particularly as military spending is 50 per cent higher today than at the end of the Cold War and NATO is demanding further increases from its members.

In a separate statement on March 30, the IPB criticises the G20 for having "missed an opportunity" to support the clarion call by UN Secretary-General António Guterres on March 23 for an "immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world" in support of the bigger battle against the devastating pandemic, and points out that "this failure constitutes 'the missing link' from the G20's response to the COVID-19 pandemic".

The leaders of G20 – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union – convened in Riyadh under the presidency of Saudi Arabia on March 26, 2020 to discuss the global coronavirus outbreak.

The IPB takes note that the G20 statement recognizes that "Global action, solidarity and international cooperation are more than ever necessary to address this pandemic," that it is a "powerful reminder of our interconnectedness and vulnerabilities" and yet fails to apply this thinking to the need for peace.

Militarization is the wrong path for the world to take; it fuels tensions and raises the potential for war and conflict and

aggravates already heightened nuclear tensions, said the statement. "Even so, the policy architecture that was put in place to control nuclear expansion and disarmament is ignored or even weakened."

The IPB refers in this context to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' 2020 Doomsday Clock which in February 2020 stood at 100 seconds to midnight – the closest it has been to midnight in its 70-year history – and this global pandemic has pushed the second hand even closer.

The International Peace Bureau calls on world leaders to put disarmament and peace in the centre of policy making and develop a new agenda for disarmament that includes the banning of nuclear weapons as envisaged by The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

"Without it, we are handicapping our fight against future health pandemics, to eradicate poverty, hunger, to provide education and healthcare for all, as well as the realization of the SDG 2030 goals," the IPB argues.

Disarmament is one of the keys to the great transformation of economies, to ensure that human beings and not profit are most valued and economies in which ecological challenges – above all the crisis of climate change – will be dealt with and global social justice will be pursued.

"With disarmament, the implementation of the SDGs, a global social contract, and a new global green peace deal, we can address the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic," the IPB argues. History is witness to the fact that in such crises, democracy must be defended above all else, and it must be defended against increasingly authoritarian states.

The IPB is calling for "a culture of peace", a peaceful path that emphasises the need for a global strategy, a global social contract, and global cooperation to ensure planet-wide support for people.

Highlighting the "healthcare stress", the IPB points out that as a result of underinvesting in healthcare infrastructure, "health systems are reaching the limits of their strength and heroic front-line staff are under massive pressure". The World Health Organization (WHO) warns that the global community is facing a shortage of 18 million healthcare workers by 2030.

The lessons for the future are obvious:

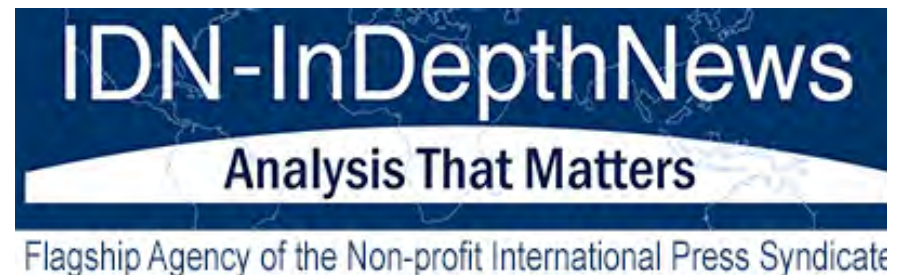
- Health is a human right for the young and old, for all people in all parts in the world.
- Healthcare and nursing care must never be slashed or subordinated in the pursuit of profit through privatization.
- The importance of decent work for all healthcare staff and continued investment in their education and training.

The IPB argues that it is high time for a Global Social Contract. "As each hour passes, the full scale of the crisis becomes clearer." The International Labour Organization

(ILO) expects a potential loss of 25 million jobs, which is more than those lost during the 2008 financial crisis. Besides, working poverty is expected to increase significantly, where up to 35 million additional people could be impacted. Income losses for workers could reach 3.4 trillion dollars.

This is the reason the IPB backs the efforts of the trade union movement globally, regionally and nationally, for economic measures and resources to protect jobs, incomes, public services, and the welfare of people.

"This requires a commitment from the business community to keep people in work and the support they are promised to receive from their governments must be conditional on their adhering to the social contract for job security and incomes," maintains the International Peace Bureau. [IDN-InDepthNews – 02 April 2020]



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