Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

2022 JOINT MEDIA PROJECT REPORT

INPS
INTERNATIONAL PRESS SYNDICATE

SGI Soka Gakkai International

IDN-InDepthNews
Analysis That Matters

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

CREDITS

The news articles, analyses and opinions in this report were published between April 2021 and March 2022 in IDN-InDepthNews (www.indepthnews.net). These were posted on the project website 'Toward A Nuclear Free World', a 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.

Publishers: The Non-Profit International Press Syndicate Europaplatz 2, D -10557 Berlin

Cover: An artist's rendering of the future U.S. Navy Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines. Credit: The US Department of Defense.

Global Coordinator | Editor-in-Charge: Ramesh Jaura

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

Layout: Radwan Jakeem.

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

CONTENTS

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

PREFACE

By Ramesh Jaura
Director-General of the Non-profit International Press Syndicate Group 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, a Buddhist NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC, is a compilation of independent and in-depth news and analyses by IDN from April 2021 to March 2022.

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

2021-2022 was the sixth 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 seventh 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 and many other languages.

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 continue to 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 40th annual peace proposal—titled "Transforming Human History: The Light of Peace and Dignity" released on January 26.

Dr. Ikeda points out: "Even in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, the world's military expenditures have continued to grow. There are more than 13,000 nuclear warheads in current stockpiles, and modernization continues with no end in sight. There is grave concern that we may see a further buildup of the global nuclear arsenal."

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 Katsuhiro Asagiri for his liaison with SGI, The Toda Peace Institute Director Professor Kevin P Clements, taking time for the Foreword, and Ms Anna Ikeda, Representative to the UN, SGI, Program Coordinator for Disarmament, SGI Office for UN Affairs, for her Message. <>

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

FOREWORD

Strengthening Awareness of Nuclear Abolition

By Professor Kevin P Clements, Director, The Toda Peace Institute

The first meeting of the States Parties who have signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons took place place in Vienna in June 2022. This is the only bright prospect on a generally paralysed arms control and disarmament agenda. If this meeting and the Treaty are to have any chance of enticing the nuclear powers to dismantle and abolish their nuclear arsenal, it is absolutely vital that world public opinion and political leaders be made aware of the Treaty and its central objectives. Among other things, the Treaty declares nuclear weapons to be militarily and morally unacceptable, and illegal according to international law. It is critical, therefore, that global media focus attention on ways in which this Treaty can generate momentum and political will to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

There are so many issues vying for political attention at the moment, (e.g., the invasion of Ukraine, the global pandemic, economic stresses and strains, challenges to democracy and climate change). These mean that the danger of nuclear warfare and the need for nuclear disarmament are often relegated in terms of public attention and political focus.

The fact is, however, that the invasion of Ukraine, and President Putin's suggestion that tactical nuclear weapons might be used in that conflict have elevated the risks of nuclear warfare to what they were in the darkest days of the old cold war.

Putin's statements have challenged the Gorbachev-Reagan assertion that nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought. In doing so they have raised important questions about the deterrent effect of nuclear weapons and challenged the nuclear taboo in relation to the use of such weapons in warfare.

This makes it absolutely vital for the world's press and opinion leaders to refocus attention on the disastrous humanitarian consequences of nuclear warfare and the importance of moving rapidly towards nuclear abolition.

If the nuclear powers are unwilling to join the Abolition Treaty, then they have to demonstrate that they are willing to reduce nuclear risk and uncertainty. At the moment, they show no signs of doing so. There are no discussions about controls of fissile material, de-alerting, no first use, modernisation and miniaturisation and lowered stockpiles.

We are living in an exceptionally dangerous period. There are 13,100 nuclear warheads held by nine countries. Russia and the USA, remain the two nuclear superpowers, with over 90 per cent of global nuclear stockpiles. Not only are both countries unwilling to lower these arsenals they have reinvested heavily in modernising, upgrading, and expanding them. Unlike the last few years of the cold war there are no negotiations planned or scheduled to reduce nuclear stockpiles. Apart from the New Start renewal there are no negotiations to reduce the risk of the accidental or deliberate use of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, the invasion of Ukraine has resulted in NATO and other strategic alliances becoming more and more dependent on the US Nuclear Umbrella.

It is absolutely critical, therefore, that news media in general and IDN-InDepthNews of the non-profit International Press Syndicate group continue to focus attention on the dangers of nuclear warfare and the central importance of new negotiations aimed at reducing nuclear risk and more optimally the total abolition of all nuclear weapons. What we know, from past experience, is that when the mass media focuses evidence-based attention on nuclear danger and risk, large scale public mobilisation and peace movements emerge. When national peace movements become global, political leaders have no alternative but to negotiate. So, thanks to INPS and IDN for their role in drawing attention to nuclear danger over the years. The struggle has not finished. Let's hope that the States Parties Meeting of the signatories to the TPNW will generate real political will to eradicate nuclear weapons forever. <>

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

MESSAGE

From Ms Anna Ikeda, Representative to the UN, SGI, Program Coordinator for Disarmament, SGI Office for UN Affairs

While the world has endured the two long years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the beginning of 2022 also saw another devastating news of the war in Ukraine, which continues to cause much suffering in the region at the time of this writing. What shocked the world in particular about this conflict is the deep concern that it could escalate into a nuclear war, and that the possibility feels quite real and urgent. For example, a recent study revealed that most Americans think the war in Ukraine has increased the possibility of nuclear weapons being used anywhere in the world.

Personally, I have heard from some friends, who usually may not think too much about nuclear weapons or the possibility of their use, that they are worried. They would then ask what they can do about it. And I think that's the key—in challenging times like this, it is through taking actions that we can remain hopeful.

For many people, nuclear weapons seem to be an abstract, distant topic, removed from their daily realities. Many feel they lack knowledge or expertise to take action, or perhaps feel that what they do would not make any difference. Now that the issue of nuclear weapons is in the public's mind more prominently, I believe that the challenge is to provide them with not only the recent developments around geopolitics surrounding the issue, but also to inform them that the consequences of any use of nuclear weapons—whether by design or accident—would be utterly devastating, and that no country or a group of people, under any circumstances, deserves to suffer such consequences.

The public should also be aware that there are many individuals—everyday people like them—taking actions for a world without nuclear weapons, including the world's hibakusha who know too well the sufferings caused by such demonic weapons.

This year, the world's governments are gathering for two important multilateral conferences on nuclear weapons: the first Meeting of States Parties to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in June, and the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in August.

As someone who has participated in such UN fora as a representative of the SGI, I believe the civil society has the power to demand accountability from the Member States and help shape the discourse, as demonstrated in the work involved in the preparations, negotiations, and entry into force of the TPNW.

SGI has also continuously promoted non-formal education to raise awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons and the importance of international instruments like the TPNW, and our members around the world take part in these as awakened global citizens.

It is my earnest hope that the media outlets like INPS will report in such a way that would inspire and compel people to take action. Rather than just provoking fear, I wish to see more stories that shed the light on the humanity of all of us. <>

Avoid Nuclear Arsenal in a Possible NATO-Russia War

Viewpoint by Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN (IDN) — "We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought," pledged the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states—China, France, Russia, UK, and the United States—in a joint statement on January 3, adding that they "consider the avoidance of war" between them and "the reduction of strategic risks" as their "foremost responsibilities". The five nuclear-weapon states are also the five permanent members (P5) of the UN Security Council, which has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Less than three months after the P5 committed themselves to "work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all," Russian President Vladimir Putin decided to raise alert level for the country's nuclear forces.

The significance of the decision is underlined by the fact that, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2021, Russia possesses the largest number of nuclear forces—6,375 as compared to 5,550 of the U.S.

Not surprisingly, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has branded Russia's decision as a "bone-chilling development". In remarks to the Press on the war in Ukraine, he noted: "The prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is now back within the realm of possibility".

Ten days later, on March 25, U.S. officials told *The Wall Street Journal* that President Joseph R. Biden has approved an old Obama-era policy that allows for a potential nuclear response to deter conventional and other non-nuclear dangers in addition to nuclear ones. In doing so, he has stepped back from a campaign vow, maintains Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association.

U.S. officials indicated that Biden's policy will declare that the "fundamental role" of the U.S. nuclear arsenal will be to deter nuclear attacks. Such a policy, the officials said, will leave open the possibility that nuclear weapons could also be used in "extreme circumstances" to deter conventional, biological, chemical, and possibly cyberattacks by adversaries.

#Image right column: Russia test-launches ICBM RS-24: TASS

"If the report is correct, President Biden will have failed to follow through on his explicit 2020 campaign promise to adopt a much clearer and narrower policy regarding nuclear weapons use, and he will have missed a crucial opportunity to move the world back from the nuclear brink," noted Kimball.

Biden wrote in Foreign Affairs: "As I said in 2017, I believe that the sole purpose of the U.S. nuclear arsenal should be deterring—and, if necessary, retaliating against—a nuclear attack. As president, I will work to put that belief into practice, in consultation with the U.S. military and U.S. allies."

Kimball finds that Putin's deadly war against Ukraine, his nuclear sabre-rattling, and Russia's policy that reserves the option to use nuclear weapons first in a conflict with NATO "underscore even more clearly how extremely dangerous it is for nuclear-armed states to threaten the use of nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear threats".

Undoubtedly, it reinforces why it is necessary to "move rapidly away from dangerous Cold War-era thinking about nuclear weapons".

"Biden has apparently failed to seize his opportunity to meaningfully narrow the role of nuclear weapons and failed, through his NPR (Nuclear Posture Review), to distinguish U.S. nuclear policy from Russia's dangerous nuclear doctrine that threatens nuclear first use against non-nuclear threats," Kimball adds.

He continues: "There is no plausible military scenario, no morally defensible reason, nor legally justifiable basis for threatening or using nuclear weapons first—if at all."

Kimball accentuates that Presidents Reagan, Biden, Gorbachev, and even Putin have all said, a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. "Once nuclear weapons are used in a conflict between nuclear-armed states, there is no guarantee it will not result in nuclear retaliation and escalation to an all-out nuclear exchange."

Arms Control Association "strongly urge(s) the administration to explain how Biden's nuclear weapons declaratory policy will differ from Russia's dangerous nuclear doctrine and under what circumstances the United States might believe it would make sense to initiate the use of nuclear weapons for the first time since 1945", when the U.S. dropped the world's first deployed atomic bomb over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Shannon Bugos, a senior policy analyst at the Arms Control Association, has expressed the view that "the final Biden NPR should also reiterate the longstanding U.S. commitment to actively pursue further verifiable reductions in the still bloated nuclear stockpiles of the United States and Russia, and to seek to engage China and other nuclear-armed states in the disarmament enterprise". "The sobering reality," she says, "is that it would take just a few hundred U.S. or Russian strategic nuclear weapons to destroy each other's military capacity, kill hundreds of millions of innocent people, and produce a planetary climate catastrophe".

Maintaining ambiguity about using nuclear weapons first is indeed "dangerous, illogical, and unnecessary", she warns. Rebecca Johnson, director of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, asks in an opinion piece in Open Democracy: "how did we get back to believing that nuclear war is possible? Why didn't 'nuclear deterrence' stop this from happening? And what comes next?"

The first thing to understand, she says, is that deterrence is a routine part of most defence strategies. "Deterrence is a relationship, not some magical property attached to nuclear bombs. Communications are key to the success or failure of any deterrence strategy; no matter what threats or weapons are being brandished, deterrence fails when one or more protagonists miscalculate or misunderstand either the situation, the signals or the intentions of other parties. Relying on nuclear weapons, however, is a gamble that risks destroying the whole world." Nevertheless, there are no signs of the nuclear-power states' departure from deterrence. Subsequently, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea do not see any reason to forego their nuclear arsenal of 156, 165, 90 and 40-50 respectively.

The five nuclear-power states early January reaffirmed commitment to their Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, including their Article VI obligation "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control". But this pledge has yet to be fulfilled.

As Dr M.V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security & Director, Liu Institute for Global Issues at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, told IDN, the obligation to disarm applies not just to the nuclear-weapon states under the NPT but also the other four countries.

In 1996, the International Court of Justice unanimously stated that "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiation leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". That obligation applies to all states, he noted. An obvious way to resolve the current quagmire is signing the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and eliminating the thousands of weapons in their nuclear arsenals. Threats of deploying nuclear weapons—by Russia or the U.S.—are far from helpful. Arms control expert Miles A. Pomper, Senior Fellow, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury, sees the war in Ukraine as "an added strain but not a fatal blow to the system that has helped to keep the world from nuclear devastation". [IDN-InDepthNews – 26 March 2022]

Growing Number of Corporations Against Investing in Nuclear Weapons

By Jaya Ramachandran

Image: Cover of the report 'Rejecting Risk'

GENEVA (IDN) — "The nuclear weapons narrative is changing. The implicit permission to make weapons of mass destruction is getting revoked by governments, parliamentarians, cities and the financial sector," says a new report, released ahead of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which marks a turning point in post-Cold War history. Significantly, the Russian invasion has also triggered the fear of a third world war, which would involve nuclear weapons.

The report 'Rejecting Risk: 101 policies against nuclear weapons', has been published by the Geneva-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, that was awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, and PAX, the largest peace organization in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

It profiles 101 financial institutions with policies that restrict investments in the companies involved in the manufacture, development, deployment, stockpiling, testing or use of nuclear weapons. This, noes the report, is an increase of 24 compared to the previously published research. Of these, 59 institutions have comprehensive policies in place. They are listed in the 'Hall of Fame'. 42 institutions have a policy that is not all-inclusive. These are listed in the 'Runners-Up'.

The Hall of Fame profiles 59 financial institutions that have adopted, implemented and published a policy that comprehensively prevents any financial involvement in nuclear weapon producing companies. The institutions in the Hall of Fame are based in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States.

The 'Runners-Up' section highlights 42 financial institutions that have taken the step to exclude nuclear weapon producers from their investments, but whose policy is not all-inclusive in preventing all types of financial involvement with nuclear weapon companies. These are are based in Aotearoa/ New Zealand, Austria,

Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

According to the report, the growing number of financial institutions not investing in nuclear weapon companies are citing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as part of the justification for these exclusions in their policies.

"There is a correlation between the growing understanding of the private sector's involvement in nuclear weapons programmes, and the number of policies excluding the companies involved," notes the report.

There were 54 policies included in the 2016 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' report before the TPNW was negotiated. After the treaty was adopted, the number rose to 77. Since the TPNW went into effect, the number of known polices has increased to over 100.

The Treaty was adopted by the Conference—by a vote of 122 States in favour, with one vote against and one abstention—at the United Nations on July 7, 2017, and opened for signature by the UN Secretary-General on September 20, 2017. Following the deposit with the Secretary-General of the 50th instrument of ratification or accession of the Treaty on October 24, 2020, it entered into force on January 22, 2021 in accordance with its article 15.

The report accentuates that the growing numbers of financial institutions listed provides a snapshot of the emerging norm within the financial sector to avoid companies contributing to existential risks.

"In addition to the increase in identified policies, the application of these policies is becoming more comprehensive, illustrating financial institutional recognition of their role in not condoning the production of inhumane weapons."

The TPNW seems to be having a powerful impact, and the report illustrates just one of the ways it is doing so. Financial institutions representing $3.9 trillion ($3,964,016,300,000) specifically named the Treaty as a reason to exclude the nuclear weapon industry from investment or financing.

This represents about a quarter of all the assets held by the financial institutions in the Hall of Fame, a tremendous $14 trillion that is kept away from the companies involved in nuclear weapons.

"Nuclear weapons are illegal under international law, and investors are seeing the companies behind the bomb for what they really are: a risky business," said report author Susi Snyder. "This change in the legal landscape is already changing the financial industry."

If a company is doing something that presents a sustainability, governance, human rights related or other problem, financial institutions have a choice whether they want to continue financing problematic actors or not.

These problem companies need to generate capital to continue their activities, and the voice of investors can sometimes change problematic behaviour. But, not always, and that's when financial ties are severed and problem companies are blacklisted. About half of the financial institutions in 'Rejecting Risk' report publish a blacklist.

The identification of policies for inclusion in this report is based on peer recommendations. "With a significant percentage of new wealth seeking investment in funds with strong environmental, social and governance criteria, along with the Entry into Force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, it can be estimated that the number of policies excluding nuclear weapon producers will continue to grow," says the report.

It continues: The financial sector always dances with risk, for without a bit of risk there's very little reward. Yet, more than 100 institutions are publicly stating the nuclear weapons business is too risky and not worth any reward. [IDN-InDepthNews – 21 March 2022]

ICAN is the international campaign to stigmatise, prohibit & eliminate nuclear weapons.

World's Largest Arms Importers Include Nuclear Powers

By Thalif Deen*

Photo: Sikorsky HSS-2 Sea King US helicopter whose production has been licensed to manufacturers in UK, Italy, Canada and Japan. Credit: US Navy

NEW YORK (IDN) — A significant spike in arms imports by Europe, East Asia and Oceania during the last five years has reaffirmed the continuously sharp increase in global arms sales—a rising trend undaunted by a faltering world economy or the two-year-long pandemic lockdown.

According to a new study by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) released March 14, Asia and Oceania remained the largest importing region for major arms, receiving 43 per cent of global transfers during 2017–21.

And six states in the region—India, Australia, China, South Korea, Pakistan and Japan—were among the 10 largest importers globally.

"Tensions between China and many states in Asia and Oceania are the main driver of arms imports in the region," said Siemon T. Wezeman, Senior Researcher with the SIPRI Arms Transfers Programme.

"These tensions are also a major factor in US arms transfers to the region. The USA remains the largest supplier to Asia and Oceania, as arms exports are an important element of US foreign policy aimed at China."

Of the world's nine nuclear powers, four are in Asia: India, Pakistan, China and North Korea, while the remaining five include UK, US, France and Russia, along with Israel (in the Middle East).

Paradoxically, five of the major nuclear powers—UK, US, France, China and Russia—are also five of the veto-wielding permanent members (P5) of the UN Security Council, whose primary mandate is the maintenance of international peace and security.

But the implementation of that mandate is largely in the hands of the P5—all of them armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons and also massive arsenals of conventional arms, including fighter planes, combat helicopters, drones, missiles, warships, battle tanks, armored personnel carriers and heavy artillery, among others.

SIPRI's latest global arms exports and imports report comes nearly six months after the findings of the SIPRI Yearbook 2021, which assessed the current state of armaments, disarmament, and international security. A key finding is that despite an overall decrease in the number of nuclear warheads in 2020, more have been deployed with operational forces.

"The overall number of warheads in global military stockpiles now appears to be increasing, a worrisome sign that the declining trend that has characterized global nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war has stalled," said Hans M. Kristensen, Associate Senior Fellow with SIPRI's Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Programme and Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

"The last-minute extension of New START by Russia and the USA in February … was a relief, but the prospects for additional bilateral nuclear arms control between the nuclear superpowers remain poor."

According to the SIPRI Yearbook 2021, Russia and the USA together possess over 90 per cent of global nuclear weapons. Both have extensive and expensive programmes under way to replace and modernize their nuclear warheads, missile and aircraft delivery systems, and production facilities.

"Both Russia and the USA appear to be increasing the importance they attribute to nuclear weapons in their national security strategies," said Kristensen.

All the other seven nuclear-armed states are also either developing or deploying new weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so. The UK's 'Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy', published in early 2021, reversed a policy of reducing the country's nuclear arsenal and raised its planned ceiling for nuclear weapons from 180 to 260.

China is in the middle of a significant modernization and expansion of its nuclear weapon inventory, and India and Pakistan also appear to be expanding their nuclear arsenals.

Wezeman told IDN that Asia has been the region with the largest arms imports, "which is of course not so surprising considering the size of the region". The Middle East ranked second, even though it is a much smaller region in area and more important population.

He pointed out that continuing or regular conflicts in many countries in the region and deeply entrenched threat perceptions feed a high demand for arms.

"Not even Israel, which has an advanced arms industry, can cater for its own demand for arms, let alone any of the other states in the region."

The oil rich countries in the region, he argued, have the means to buy significant volumes of arms from abroad, several of other states have good relations with states that are willing to finance part of their arms imports.

"Efforts to build up national arms industries are ongoing in several countries, especially Turkey, the UAE and Saudi Arabia, but there is a long way to go before that could result in major changes in arms exports to the region," he declared.

Meanwhile, the small decrease in global arms transfers masks large variations between regional trends, said Wezeman.

"Whereas there were some positive developments, including South American arms imports reaching their lowest level in 50 years, increasing or continuing high rates of weapons imports to places like Europe, East Asia, Oceania and the Middle East contributed to worrying arms build-ups."

According to the SIPRI report, Middle Eastern states imported 2.8 per cent more arms in 2017–21, than they did in 2012–16. This followed an 86 per cent increase in arms imports to the region between 2007–11 and 2012–16.

As the conflict in Yemen continued, and tensions between Iran and other states in the region remained high, arms imports played an important role in security developments in the Gulf.

Arms imports by Saudi Arabia—the world's second largest arms importer after India—increased by 27 per cent between 2012–16 and 2017–21.

Qatar's arms imports grew by 227 per cent, propelling it from the 22nd largest arms importer

to the sixth largest. In contrast, arms imports by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) shrank by 41 per cent between 2012–16 and 2017–21, taking it from the third largest to the ninth largest arms importer globally.

All three states, plus Kuwait, have placed large orders for major arms planned for delivery in the coming years, said SIPRI.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to impact oil prices, pushing average regular gas prices in the US above $4.33 a gallon—from around $2.50 last year.

Asked if the projected phenomenal rise in oil prices—triggered by the US ban on Russian oil imports—would result in further increases in arms purchases by countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Kuwait, Wezeman told IDN. Each of these countries has already significant orders for major arms, with deliveries planned in the coming years.

"The increase in oil prices—and thus increase in government revenue—will facilitate potential further arms procurement," he said.

However, he added, "it is too early to determine if such orders will materialize—and if they do, it will take some years before actual deliveries can happen, not in the least when European demand for arms is likely to increase and existing production lines for weapons are limited in output".

Meanwhile, Russia, which is at war with Ukraine since February 24, accounted for 19 per cent of all exports of major arms in 2017–21. But saw its exports shrink by 26 per cent between 2012–16 and 2017–21.

The overall decrease in Russia's arms exports was almost entirely due to a fall in arms deliveries to two recipients: India and Viet Nam. However, several large arms deliveries from Russia to India are expected in the coming years. [IDN-InDepthNews – 14 March 2022]

**Thalif Deen is a former Director, Foreign Military Markets at Defense Marketing Services; Senior Defense Analyst at Forecast International; and military editor Middle East/Africa at Jane's Information Group, US.*

The World is Plunging into a Dangerous New Cold War 2.0

Viewpoint by Dr Joseph Gerson

The writer is President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security

Image source: Los Angeles Times

NEW YORK (IDN) — Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Putin's repeated tense threats to resort to genocidal nuclear attacks if the West intervenes more directly in Ukraine must be universally condemned and opposed.

Despite Putin having told President Macron that he intends to take all of Ukraine, as demonstrations today are demanding, we must press for an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal of all foreign troops from Ukraine and negotiations.

Putin and the Russian nation did have a number of legitimate security concerns: NATO's violation of the Paris Charter and the NATO-Russian Founding Act, which guaranteed that none of the OSCE nations would seek to reinforce their security at the expense of another nation; the presence of U.S., German and other NATO forces on Russia's borders, and the potentially nuclear first-strike related missile defences in Rumania and Poland.

But clearly Putin's ethnonationalist and great power ambitions spurred the invasion which was anything but justified. With Russian troops surrounding Ukraine on three sides, Putin had the diplomatic leverage to ensure that resolution of his security concerns could have been addressed.

In track II discussions that involved senior Russian, European and U.S. former officials and advisors, a diplomatic path out of the gathering storm was developed.

It included building a moratorium on new NATO memberships, building on the Minsk 2 agreements to create a neutral and federated

Ukrainian state, updating and renewing the Intermediate Nuclear and Conventional Forces Treaties, limitations on provocative military exercises, and resumption of strategic stability talks, and New START extension negotiations had all been identified.

Even former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, Michael McFaul, whose hatred of Putin has long been palpable, had written in Foreign Affairs that it was time to negotiate a new Grand Bargain, a Helsinki 2.0, with Moscow.

Nonetheless, Putin launched his brutal invasion.

Cuban Missile Crisis in slow motion

The U.S. and NATO could have done more to prevent the war. Biden and Blinken should have publicly recognized that given French and German opposition to Ukraine ever joining NATO that should have closed the "open door" to new NATO, using a face-saving call for a 15-year moratorium on new membership—that could be extended.

Having failed to press the Ukrainian government to fulfill its part of the Minsk 2 agreement, they should have fully recommitted the United State to the agreement stating the additional goal of using it to negotiate creation of a neutral and federated Ukrainian state to address Moscow's security concerns in ways that would have preserved Ukrainian independence and democracy.

Now Ukrainians and Russians are killing one another. Ukrainian cities are being devastated. At least two million Ukrainians have fled their homes. And the world is plunging into an increasing dangerous new Cold War 2.0, also described as a new Ice Age.

With the potential for incidents and miscalculation to trigger great power nuclear or cyberwar and the diversion of limited resources from addressing essential human needs and the climate emergency to fund new arms races and militarization of our societies, humanity is plunging into the darkest of times.

Putin's nuclear threats are extremely dangerous. He has described the massive and indiscriminate economic sanctions that are cratering Russia's economy and leading Russians to rally behind their national leader and besieged nation as an act of war.

This takes us closer to the brink of a Russia-NATO war, especially if Biden bows to growing pressure to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. With U.S. and NATO planes shooting down Russian planes, a great power—quite possibly a nuclear—war would become inevitable. Short of that, accidents, incidents, and miscalculations as the war is now being fought could lead to the unthinkable.

That Ukraine surrendered the nuclear weapons it inherited from the Soviet Union in exchange for the Budapest Memorandum's guarantees of territorial integrity and sovereignty, is already leading to calls for the U.S. to deploy nuclear weapons in Taiwan, for Japan and South Korea to become nuclear powers and President Zelensky's ill-advised threat at the Munich Security Conference that in time Ukraine may again need to become a nuclear power.

Faced with what analysts in both the U.S. and Russia have described as a Cuban Missile Crisis in slow motion, the world must rally with a NO! to nuclear weapons and nuclear war that cannot be ignored, as well as its demands for a ceasefire. If there is a silver lining in this crisis—faint though it may be—it is that the nuclear threats and dangers are beginning to reawaken humanity to the urgent need for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Midst the murderous warfare and nuclear threat, there are also ironies. As ignominious as Putin's invasion and nuclear threat are, they mimic decades, even centuries, of U.S. imperialism and nuclear threats.

Russia's pursuit of a buffer against foreign intervention and a sphere of influence is the mirror image of the centuries-old U.S. Monroe Doctrine, which insists that the Western Hemisphere is the U.S. sphere, in which it has repeatedly toppled uncooperative governments and threatened to initiate nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis.

As Daniel Ellsberg and others have documented, during numerous international crises and wars, U.S. presidents have repeatedly prepared and threatened to initiate nuclear war to intimidate our rivals or to ensure that no one will come to

the aid of those the U.S. was determined to attack.

Examples include the 1946 Iran crisis, Truman and Eisenhower during the Korean War, Johnson and Nixon during the Vietnam War, and Bush I & II on the eves of their Iraq wars, and Trump's "fire and fury" threat against North Korea.

As Walt Kelly, the artist who crafted Pogo cartoons taught us, this crisis teaches us that "We have met the enemy and he is us." Hibakusha have long taught us that "Human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist".

And as Malcolm X might have said, U.S. arrogance and its imperialism—including repeated threats and preparations to initiate nuclear war have brought the chickens home to roost as we are all threatened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its nuclear threats.

Wisdom is urgently needed to ensure that as the fever of war continues to build, no one pulls too hard on the Gordian Knot that could trigger a nuclear war. Assuming that we survive this war, like all other wars, it will end with diplomatic negotiations.

We should insist that the agreements provide for Ukrainian independence and sovereignty and that the 1990s' promise of a Common Security replaces the momentum for a disastrous 21st-century ice age.

Stripped of our illusions, much as we did in winning the Limited Test Ban Treaty, the Nuclear Weapons Freeze, and the INF Treaty, we must all do what we can to lead the brutal great powers to life-affirming nuclear disarmament, new arms control agreements, and a path toward the elimination of these omnicidal weapons. [IDN-InDepthNews – 09 March 2022]

CIA reference photograph of Soviet medium-range ballistic missile (SS-4 in U.S. documents, R-12 in Soviet documents) in Red Square, Moscow. Wikimedia Commons

Is World War III a Nuclear Reality or an Empty Threat?

By Thalif Deen

Image: Nuclear warfare is a common theme of World War III scenarios. Such a conflict has been hypothesized to result in human extinction. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) — A Russian news agency quoted on March 2 Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's dire warning: If a third world war (WWIII) breaks out, it would involve nuclear weapons—and be destructive.

At a virtual Geneva meeting on disarmament, he also hinted that Ukraine has been seeking nuclear weapons to counter the Russian invasion—a rumour that remains unconfirmed.

Meanwhile, a former Ukrainian Prime Minister Oleksiy Honcharuk repeated similar fears speculating that the Russian invasion could be the start of a third world war.

Are nuclear warnings and fears of a potential World War III political realities or just empty threats?

Dr Rebecca Eleanor Johnson, former president of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), and author of the 2022 report 'Nuclear weapons are banned: What does that mean for Britain?', told IDN "Putin invaded Ukraine and then put Russia's nuclear weapons on high alert.

His egregious aggression, she said, demonstrates the existential dangers attached to nuclear deterrence theories:

"We've been warning for years that deterrence is a communication with an adversary, and if that goes wrong, then nuclear-armed leaders are likely to threaten and use nuclear weapons, with disastrous humanitarian consequences."

She pointed out that nuclear weapons and threats were embedded in the defence policies of Russia and NATO (countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in the early 1950s and since then, they have driven proliferation and insecurity around the world.

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

"The war on Ukraine is a terrible reminder of what can go wrong if any leader's possession of atomic weapons and illusions of nuclear deterrence go wrong. Putin, like Trump, Kim Jong-un, and other nuclear-armed leaders, has trumpeted nuclear threats before," Dr Johnson said.

The difference now is that Putin is increasingly cornered by his invasion and the war crimes already committed through the use of thermobaric weaponry and so-called 'conventional' explosives against Ukraine's cities and civilians, she added.

Meanwhile, the world's nuclear forces are also a grim reminder—and ominously frightening—of the potential disaster facing the world, with nine of the world's nuclear powers, namely the US, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea, on virtual nuclear-readiness.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the nine nuclear-armed states together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021. This marked a decrease from the 13,400 that SIPRI estimated these states possessed at the beginning of 2020.

Despite this overall decrease, the estimated number of nuclear weapons currently deployed with operational forces increased to 3825, from 3720 last year. Around 2000 of these—nearly all of which belonged to Russia or the US—were kept in a state of high operational alert.

Ray Acheson, Director of Disarmament, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, told IDN Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons and his decision to heighten the alert level of Russian nuclear forces underscores the inherent risk posed by the existence of nuclear weapons.

"Whether or not nuclear weapons are used in this war, in the sense of being detonated, they are already being used to help facilitate Putin's invasion of and war against Ukraine."

But this is not just an issue of Russia having nuclear weapons, she argued.

Three NATO members—France, the United Kingdom, and the United States—also possess nuclear weapons, and US nuclear bombs are stored on the territory of five other NATO members—Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and Turkey.

Each and every one of these nuclear weapons is a threat to peace and security. A nuclear war would be catastrophic, threatening all life on Earth, said Acheson.

"As long as these weapons exist, there is a risk that they will be detonated. As long as these weapons exist, they will be used to threaten and intimidate. As long as these weapons exist, they will extract billions of dollars towards their maintenance, modernisation, and deployment, when that money is so desperately needed to confront climate change and provide for social good," she warned.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) outlaws the threat to use nuclear weapons, as well as the use, development, and possession of these weapons.

"All states must join the TPNW and support the global ban on nuclear bombs. The nuclear-armed states, and the other countries that host nuclear weapons, must renounce mass destruction as an alleged security policy and eliminate their arsenals, before it's too late," she added.

"This is a moment for people around the world to wake up to the nuclear threat. This is not an historical issue. We all live with the grave prospect of nuclear war every day, and we must take action to remove this threat once and for all," Acheson declared.

Asked if Putin would order nuclear weapons to be fired, Dr Johnson said: "Yes, sadly I think he might, through miscalculation, ego or fear of failing to defeat Ukrainian resistance. Don't be fooled by talk of 'tactical nuclear weapons'—that's just military jargon. If Putin is not stopped by Russian officials, and his orders result in the atomic incineration of cities, this would be a terrible war crime and crime against humanity, with massive existential risks."

"Most of the world backed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons because they understood our evidence and arguments about the need to ban the possession as well as use and deployments of nuclear weapons to prevent nuclear war. Putin's invasion, combined with NATO's expansion and failed wars of choice in Iraq and Afghanistan for the past three decades, have led to Ukraine's suffering and this escalating crisis," she added.

Dr Johnson said Ukraine is trapped between Russia and NATO, which hold some 12,000 nuclear weapons.

ICAN-connected studies have shown what is at risk when nuclear weapons are possessed and brandished by anyone.

Predatory, narcissistic people like Putin are psychologically prone to take risks, miscalculate, and follow their threats and failures by upping the ante with more aggressive and reckless actions.

"If they are given military power and nuclear weapons, that's when failures of deterrence lead to 'use them or lose them' panics and the nuclear war that complacent militaries have refused to prevent when they could have eliminated these terrible weapons of mass destruction (WMD)," she declared.

After Putin put Russian nuclear forces on 'special alert', Boris Johnson said the UK was doing the same. Studies by Scientists for Global Responsibility and John Ainslie concluded that if 8 of the UK's Trident nuclear missiles were fired at Moscow and five other Russian cities, they would murder millions of civilians and throw mushroom clouds of radioactive dust high into the atmosphere, causing global catastrophe through nuclear winter and mass starvation.

"This isn't a theoretical game Putin and NATO are playing, it's real life," declared Dr Johnson.

According to SIPRI, while the US and Russia continued to reduce their overall nuclear weapon inventories by dismantling retired warheads in 2020, both are estimated to have had around 50 more nuclear warheads in operational deployment at the start of 2021 than a year earlier.

Russia also increased its overall military nuclear stockpile by around 180 warheads, mainly due to the deployment of more multi-warhead land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and sea-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

Both countries' deployed strategic nuclear forces remained within the limits set by the 2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START), although the treaty does not limit total nuclear warhead inventories.

The overall number of warheads in global military stockpiles now appears to be increasing, a worrisome sign that the declining trend that has characterized global nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war has stalled, said Hans M. Kristensen, Associate Senior Fellow with SIPRI's Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Programme and Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

The last-minute extension of New START by Russia and the USA in February this year was a relief, but the prospects for additional bilateral nuclear arms control between the nuclear superpowers remain poor, he added. [IDN-InDepthNews – 08 March 2022]

World nuclear forces, January 2021

Country	Deployed warheads*	Other warheads**	Total 2021	Total 2020
USA	1 800	3 750	5 550	5 800
Russia	1 625	4 630	6 255	6 375
UK***	120	105	225	215
France	280	10	290	290
China		350	350	320
India		156	156	150
Pakistan		165	165	160
Israel		90	90	90
North Korea****	...	[40–50]	[40–50]	[30–40]
Total	3 825	9 255	13 080	13 400

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2021.

Latin American and Caribbean Countries Support the Nuclear Test Ban

By Reinhard Jacobsen

Photo: CTBTO Executive Secretary Floyd meets Dominica's Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skerrit.Credit: CTBTO

VIENNA (IDN) — The Commonwealth of Dominica announced its decision early February to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) that bans nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere—on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground.

The Treaty was signed 26 years ago but it has yet to enter into force.

The reason: though 185 countries have signed the CTBT, of which 170 have ratified it, 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries have yet to sign and ratify it, including three of the nuclear weapon States: France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.

Of these eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign the CTBT. The last Annex 2 State to ratify the Treaty was Indonesia on February 6, 2012.

According to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), with headquarters in Vienna, Dominica's commitment to sign the CTBT, underlines the Treaty's universal recognition across Latin America and the Caribbean and highlights the region's leadership in non-proliferation and disarmament.

Subsequent to Cuba's signature and ratification of the CTBT in February 2021, Dominica's signature will mean all 33 countries in the region will be States Signatories to the Treaty.

"This marks a new era of partnership with Dominica, and I look forward to further strengthening the norm against nuclear testing together," said Robert Floyd, CTBTO Executive Secretary, who met the Caribbean nation's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit on February 7

Floyd was on his first visit to the region since taking over the CTBTO in August 2021 from Dr Lassina Zerbo of Burkina Faso. His 10-day visit

included engagements in Barbados, Dominica, Costa Rica and Mexico, offering an opportunity to deepen engagement with key regional partners.

The importance of the visit is underlined by the fact that the states of Latin America and the Caribbean are committed and engaged advocates of the CTBT and important technical partners to the CTBTO, hosting 43 of the organization's 337 International Monitoring System (IMS) facilities and contributing important technical and scientific expertise to the global alarm system designed to detect nuclear tests.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco (the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean), which opened for signature in 1967, established the world's first nuclear-weapon-free zone in a densely populated area.

Speaking in Mexico at an event marking that CTBT's 55th anniversary, Floyd stressed the region's integral role in achieving the shared vision of a world free of nuclear tests. CTBTO Executive Secretary Floyd said: "The Latin America and Caribbean region can stand tall and proud of its long history of leadership in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Soon you will also be able to celebrate with pride and solidarity when every state in this region will have also ratified the CTBT. Latin America and the Caribbean States, I honour you."

In Barbados, the first leg of his tour, the Executive Secretary met senior officials including the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jerome Xavier Walcott, and expressed his appreciation for the Caribbean state's diplomatic support for the CTBT.

He also explored capacity-building initiatives for the Eastern Caribbean region and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and met technical experts from various government agencies to expand cooperation in the use of CTBTO data in climate change adaptation and disaster risk management in a country affected by tropical storms and hurricanes.

Following his visits to Barbados and Dominica, Floyd travelled to Costa Rica, which hosts the CTBTO's auxiliary seismic station AS25 at Las Juntas de Abangares, overseen by the country's Volcanological and Seismological Observatory, OVSICORI.

"I have been impressed with the depth of technical capability and the active diplomacy in this country," he said, praising Costa Rica's non-proliferations efforts.

"I am also encouraged to hear a vision, which is about strong domestic implementation of responsibilities."

Engaging with students and staff at the United Nations-backed University for Peace in San José, Floyd joined the long-standing tradition of planting a corteza amarilla, a timber tree native to the region, as a symbol for CTBTO's engagement in educating and empowering the next generation.

Floyd's final destination was Mexico, where he delivered an address at an event hosted by the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) to mark the 55th anniversary of the Tlatelolco Treaty.

"What I find most powerful about the Treaty of Tlatelolco is that it allows countries in the region to speak in one voice on the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as work together to promote collective security, disarmament education and training," he said.

The CTBTO chief also met Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard, a long-standing supporter of the CTBT, to discuss Mexico's engagement to advance the universalization and entry into force of the Treaty. The country hosts five IMS facilities: three auxiliary seismic, one hydroacoustic and a radionuclide station with noble gas system.

At the Instituto Matias Romero, which educates and trains Mexican diplomats, Floyd discussed the state of play of the CTBT and the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. [IDN-InDepthNews — 25 February 2022]

CTBTO PREPARATORY COMMISSION | preparatory commission for the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty organization

Nuclear Disarmament Requires Prompt Resolution, Says a Buddhist Peacebuilder

By Ramesh Jaura

Photo: SGI President Daisaku Ikeda. Credit: Seikyo Shimbun

BERLIN | TOKYO (IDN) — Along with the United Nations, the community-based Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International (SGI) offers a beacon of hope particularly when the world is plagued by crises threatening the survival of humankind.

Every year since 1983, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, a Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder and educator, has issued a peace proposal. His latest—and the 40th—titled "Transforming Human History: The Light of Peace and Dignity"—was released on January 26.

He advances concrete proposals on "three key issue areas that require prompt resolution for the sake of current and future generations": climate justice, inclusive education and nuclear disarmament.

SGI comprises 192 countries and territories and is an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Dr Ikeda points out: "Even in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, the world's military expenditures have continued to grow. There are more than 13,000 nuclear warheads in current stockpiles, and modernization continues with no end in sight. There is grave concern that we may see a further buildup of the global nuclear arsenal."

The pandemic has also brought to light, he adds, new risks surrounding nuclear weapons by creating situations that could disrupt the chain of command: political leaders of nuclear-weapon states have had to temporarily transfer power to their deputies due to COVID-19 infection. There

were also major outbreaks aboard a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier and a guided missile destroyer.

Dr Ikeda warns against "the danger of continuing to embrace an overconfidence that we will be spared the catastrophe of nuclear weapons use". He adds: "It is only thanks to a combination of good luck and certain individuals preventing incidents from escalating disastrously that we have not seen another instance of the use of nuclear weapons since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

In "a fluid international environment, where guardrails have either been eroded or are completely absent," Dr Ikeda continues, "we can no longer afford to rely solely on such human factors or good luck".

At present, the only remaining bilateral framework for nuclear disarmament is the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which Russia and the United States agreed to extend in February 2021.

The Conference to the review the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) every five years—NPT Review Conference—previously scheduled for January has been postponed due to the impact of the pandemic. A rescheduled meeting to be held this coming August is now being considered. The last Review Conference, held in 2015, failed to adopt a final document, and this failure must not be repeated, he declares.

Dr Ikeda urges the parties to agree on concrete measures to comply with the pledge in the preamble of the NPT: "to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war".

The NPT is often seen to be based on a central bargain: the NPT non-nuclear-weapon states agree never to acquire nuclear weapons and the NPT nuclear-weapon states in exchange agree to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Dr Ikeda maintains that the spirit reaffirmed by the joint statement of the five nuclear-weapon states—that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought"—was first enunciated during the Cold War when US President Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) and Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev met in Geneva in November 1985. The importance of the spirit that animated the 1985 Geneva summit was also referenced in the statement issued after the US-Russia summit held in June 2021.

SGI President Ikeda urges the UN Security Council "to create an opportunity to discuss the steps needed to bring the era of nuclear weapons to an end, adopting the outcome of those deliberations in a resolution, thereby initiating a process of fundamental transformation".

To break out the current impasse, marked by the heightened risk that nuclear weapons will be used, Dr Ikeda believes that it is most urgent to find a way of "detoxifying" ourselves from current nuclear-dependent security doctrines.

National security may be a concern of overriding importance to nuclear weapon states. But what meaning can there possibly be in continued dependence on nuclear weapons, he argues, when they are capable of causing such devastating damage to both the opposing country and one’s own, and can irrevocably undermine the very foundations of humanity’s survival?

From this standpoint, he says, there is compelling need for beginning the process of detoxification by redirecting our focus from the actions of other countries to those of our own. In this way, all states can start to fulfill the pledge in the preamble of the NPT and truly "make every effort to avert the danger of such a war".

With an eye on the Summit of the Group of Seven (G7)—comprising Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States—that will take place in Japan in 2023, President Ikeda proposes concurrently a high-level meeting in Hiroshima on reducing the role of nuclear weapons, with the participation of the leaders of non-G7 countries.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are the two cities over which the U.S. dropped two atomic bombs on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively.

SGI President Ikeda notes that this past January 21, Japan and the United States issued a joint statement on the NPT. In it, the two governments declare: "The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, forever ingrained in the world’s memory, serve as stark reminders that the 76-

year record of non-use of nuclear weapons must be maintained."

Significantly, they also call on political leaders, youth and others to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki to increase awareness of the horrors of nuclear weapons use.

He recalls that on January 3, the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states issued a statement on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races. He calls on the UN Security Council to use this joint statement as the basis for a resolution urging the five nuclear-weapon states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, China, and France, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council often known as the P5—to take concrete measures to fulfil their obligations to nuclear disarmament stipulated by Article VI of the NPT.

The SGI President's second proposal relates to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW): he strongly urges the participation of both Japan and other nuclear-dependent states and the nuclear-weapon states as observers in the first meeting of states parties to the TPNW when it is held.

He also suggests that a commitment be made at this meeting to create a permanent secretariat to ensure fulfilment of the obligations and international cooperation stipulated in the TPNW.

The crucial stage has now been reached in efforts to abolish nuclear weapons, and completing this task is how we can fulfil our responsibility to the future.

"Firm in this belief," Dr Ikeda pledges, "the SGI will continue to advance, growing the solidarity of civil society with a special focus on youth, toward the creation of a culture of peace where all can enjoy the right to live in authentic security". [IDN-InDepthNews – 21 February 2022]

A Politically Isolated North Korea Garners Support from two Nuclear Powers at the UN

By Thalif Deen

Photo: North Korean farmers in a field. Wikimedia Commons.

.

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) — North Korea, long described as a "hermit kingdom", apparently isn't living in total political isolation or is cut off from the rest of the world.

Or so it seems, judging by the failure of the US and some of its UN allies to impose sanctions on five North Korean officials—sanctions really aimed at a country which continues to defy the West with its multiple ballistic nuclear tests.

A proposal to impose sanctions on the North Koreans, at a close-door meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC) on January 19, was blocked by two of the permanent members in the Council: China and Russia.

If the US proposal was later introduced as a formal resolution in the Council chamber, it would have been vetoed by, not one, but two of the big powers in the UNSC. But the US, conscious of the possible consequences, refused to take that path

Asked about North Korea's seventh ballistic missile test in a single month—and the longest-range missile tested since 2017—US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told ABC TV on January 30: "It is provocative, and it is something that we have very, very strongly condemned in the Security Council".

"The United States, as you know, imposed unilateral sanctions in the past few weeks against the DPRK (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or North Korea). And we have pushed for sanctions within the Security Council. And I will be engaging with our allies—the Koreans, as well as Japanese, who are also threatened by this—to look at other options for responding".

Asked whether it is time for President Joe Biden to engage personally with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, she said: "You know, we have been clear on that from the beginning. We are open to having diplomatic discussions. We've offered this over and over to the DPRK. And they've not accepted it. But we're absolutely open to a diplomatic engagement without preconditions. Our goal is to end the threatening actions that the DPRK is taking against their neighbors."

Following North Korea's first nuclear test, the Security Council initially imposed sanctions on DPRK in 2006 and additional sanctions in response to further nuclear tests triggering economic hardships in the country.

Meanwhile, despite all the humanitarian assistance from the United Nations to a country suffering from food shortages, North Korea continued with its nuclear weapons program unhindered.

According to a 2019 report from the Rome-based World Food Programme (WFP), there were 11 million people undernourished (2019 Needs and Priorities report) and 1 in 5 children stunted in a population of 25.5 million people.

John Delury, a professor of history at the Yonsei University in Seoul, was quoted in the New York Times January 28 as saying: "No amount of sanctions could create the pressures that Covid-19 created in the past two years. Yet do we see North Korea begging and saying: "take our weapons and give us some aid"?

"The North Koreans will eat grass", he said, rather than give up their nuclear weapons—a quote reminiscent of a famous statement made by Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who said: "We will eat grass, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own (nuclear bombs). We have no other choice!" Bhutto's statement followed India's "peaceful" nuclear explosion in 1974.

Of the world's nine nuclear powers, four are from Asia: China, India, Pakistan and North Korea, while the remaining five include the US, UK, Russia, France and Israel.

Joseph Gerson, President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, and Vice-President of the International Peace Bureau, told IDN the nuclear crisis with Korea has multiple origins, not the least of which are the numerous times, beginning in the Korean War, that the US has prepared and threatened to attack North Korea with nuclear weapons and missed opportunities by 21st century US presidents.

President George W. Bush, he pointed out, made a massive error when he rejected the comprehensive agreement with North Korea negotiated by former Secretary of Defense Perry and former Secretary of State Albright. It was then that Pyongyang began its nuclear weapons tests.

President Barack Obama pursed the failed policy of "benign neglect" during which North Korea advanced both its nuclear and missile capacities. Then, the refusal of President Trump and National Security Advisor Bolton to pursue a step-by-step

nuclear arms control with North Korea was another lost opportunity, said Gerson.

"North Korea, an isolated, authoritarian and highly militarized state has felt threatened by US-South Korean war games which have included practice runs for regime change in Pyongyang." He said North Korea has insisted that before progress in disarmament negotiations can be made, the US much cease its hostile policies directed against it.

"With the Biden Administration focused on reinforcing US power and influence in Europe, and now on the Ukraine crisis with Russia, and the priorities that Biden and Blinken have been giving to increasing containment pressures on China, little attention in Washington has been devoted to Korea. Hence Kim Jong UN's recent disturbing missile tests," declared Gerson.

An important step that the Biden Administration should take to signal an end to the United States' hostile approach to North Korea, would be finalizing a declaration with Seoul, now under discussion, declaring an end to the 72-year-old Korean War. "More will be needed, but it would be an important first step in building the mutual trust and confidence essential to denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia," he noted.

Kevin Martin, President, Peace Action Coordinator, Korea Peace Network, told IDN "I think it's unfortunate, but mostly consistent with DPRK actions over the years/decades". The North Korean government still feels, quite reasonably, insecure with the US/South Korea (and you can throw in Japan) military alliance arrayed against it, what it terms the "hostile policy."

The Biden Administration should commence much more urgent and serious diplomacy with North Korea, and quickly while South Korean President Moon Jae-in is still in office as a partner for peace, said Martin.

Christine Ahn, executive director of Women Cross DMZ (De-Militarized Zone), a global movement of women mobilizing to end the Korean war and ensure women's leadership in peace building, told IDN "I think the takeaway of North Korea's 7th launch this month is that it's demonstrating its ability to deter any unilateral first strike from the US".

Despite all its overtures of willing to talk to the DPRK, "anywhere, anytime," the US' "hostile" policy has not shifted one slight bit. In fact, Biden just appointed Philip Goldberg as US ROK (Republic of Korea) Ambassador who is most known as a sanctions-enforcer and regime change. This signals that the US is ready to dig in its heels and continue its failed policies of military exercises and sanctions, which only embolden North Korea to further strengthen its military capability. "This is a dangerous game of brinkmanship that can be resolved with genuine diplomacy towards replacing the ceasefire with a peace agreement," said Ahn.

According to the WFP website, the DPRK continues to face a wide range of food and nutrition security challenges, which add to the protracted humanitarian situation in the country.

Agriculture annually falls short of meeting food needs, due to shortages of arable land, lack of access to modern agricultural equipment and fertilizers, and recurrent natural disasters. Droughts, floods, typhoons and heatwaves continue to affect the country every year, causing soil leeching, erosion, landslides and damage to crops and infrastructure.

Even minor disasters can significantly reduce agricultural production and the availability of food, stressing communities' already limited coping capacities.In late 2018 a severe heat wave in the provinces considered to be the 'food basket' of the country pushed temperatures 11 degrees higher than average. This was followed in late August 2018 by Typhoon Soulik that brought heavy rains to South Hamgyong and Kangwon provinces, as well as flash floods to North and South Hwanghae provinces.

Economic and political issues add further difficulties, with restrictions on international trade and investments imposed by the United Nations Security Council. In February 2021, the WFP said the country's pandemic-related restrictions have "curtailed" the group's ability to bring in food, deploy staff members and monitor its aid program. [IDN-InDepthNews – 30 January 2022]

Clarion Call for Policies to End the Nuclear Arms Race

By Ramesh Jaura

Photo: Protest in Bonn, West Germany against the nuclear arms race between the U.S./NATO and the then Soviet Union. Wikimedia Commons.

BERLIN | PRAGUE (IDN) — On January 24, 1946, the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus its very first resolution Resolution 1 (I), which established a commission of the UN Security Council to ensure "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction".

The Resolution is entitled "Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy". Recalling the anniversary of the General Assembly identifying nuclear disarmament as a leading goal of the United Nations, a global network of organizations and eminent persons from around the world have in an Open Letter urged nuclear weapons states to adopt *no-first-use* and other policies to ensure a nuclear war is never fought.

The letter, so far endorsed by over 1000 signatories from 69 countries, was delivered on January 24 to leaders of the "nuclear five" and to heads of governments of the other 185 countries which are States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The "nuclear five" are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—also known as the P5 because they are permanent members of the UN Security Council.

The Open Letter, entitled "Fulfil the NPT: From nuclear threats to human security," was organized by NoFirstUse Global, a global network of organizations, academics, policy makers and civil society advocates.

They include former government ministers, ambassadors, and parliamentarians, two former presidents of the UN General Assembly, former military commanders, Nobel laureates, leading scientists, religious leaders, business leaders, and leading representatives of civil society organizations from around the world.

The Open Letter calls on nuclear weapon states to end the nuclear arms race by stopping nuclear weapons production, to phase out the role of nuclear weapons in security policies starting by adopting no-first-use policies, to commit to eliminating their nuclear weapons no later than 2045, the 75th anniversary of the NPT, and to shift budgets and public investments from the nuclear weapons industry to supporting public health, climate stabilization, and sustainable development.

It reminds the States Parties to the NPT that they have a legal and moral obligation to prevent nuclear war and to work in good faith to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, and also that they currently have opportunities to do so.

"First-use options are literally playing with fire in very combustible situations and have nearly led to

a nuclear war being initiated by mistake or miscalculation," the Open Letter states.

"Unilateral no-first-use declarations, bilateral no-first-use agreements and/or a multilateral no-first-use agreement can reduce these risks.…These can be followed by nuclear force restructuring and operational controls to implement no-first-use policies, and to build credibility and confidence in the policies to further reduce nuclear risks. And most importantly, the adoption of no-first-use or sole purpose policies could open the door to the nuclear armed states and their allies joining negotiations for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons."

The Open Letter is prompted by growing tensions between nuclear weapons states, with their nuclear weapons in a state of high readiness, and a renewed nuclear arms race in which all of the P5 countries are modernizing their nuclear arsenals. These conditions have elevated the risk of nuclear war breaking out, whether by malice (intentional escalation), miscalculation, misinformation, malfeasance (unauthorised use), or malfunction (accidental use).

Precisely against this backdrop, a joint statement by US organizations on January 12 called for eliminating ICBMs. It argued: "Intercontinental ballistic missiles are uniquely dangerous, greatly increasing the chances that a false alarm or miscalculation will result in nuclear war. There is no more important step the United States could take to reduce the chances of a global nuclear holocaust than to eliminate its ICBMs.

The statement refers to former Defence Secretary William Perry who explained, "If our sensors indicate that enemy missiles are en route to the United States, the president would have to consider launching ICBMs before the enemy missiles could destroy them; once they are launched, they cannot be recalled. The president would have less than 30 minutes to make that terrible decision".

Perry further wrote: "First and foremost, the United States can safely phase out its land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force, a key facet of Cold War nuclear policy. Retiring the ICBMs would save considerable costs, but it isn't only budgets that would benefit. These missiles are some of the most dangerous weapons in the world. They could even trigger an accidental nuclear war."

Besides, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has announced that its Doomsday Clock would remain set at 100 seconds to midnight for the third year in a row—closer to midnight than ever in its history—attesting to a continued high level of risk from today’s nuclear arsenals and nuclear policies.

The endorsers of the Open Letter recall that on January 3, the P5 countries released a joint statement in preparation for the 2022 Review Conference of the NPT (meanwhile postponed until August 2022 due to Covid-19) in which they affirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". But the P5 also re-affirmed the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies.

This is how some of the eminent endorsers of the Open Letter have commented on the current state of affairs as follows:

Maria Fernanda Espinosa, former Foreign Minister of Ecuador and President of the 73rd UN General Assembly says: "Nuclear weapons threaten current and future generations. They cannot resolve the conflicts between countries, and they are counter-productive to the human security issues of today and tomorrow—the COVID pandemic, climate crisis, food security, cybersecurity, and achievement of the sustainable development goals. It's time to fulfil the NPT and the goal established by the UN in 1946 to eliminate nuclear weapons globally."

Ambassador Thomas Graham Jr., Chair of the Global Security Institute Nonpartisan Security Group and Head of the United States Delegation to the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, has warned: "Tensions generated by the Iran situation, the North Korean issue, rapidly increasing temperatures from climate change and other critical issues have made the possibility of nuclear war more likely today than 10-15 years ago."

He adds: "One significant way to address this is if the United States were to formally declare that it will never use nuclear weapons first, and ask other nuclear weapon States to join such a pledge."

Lord David Hannay, Co-chair of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Security and Non-proliferation and former UK Ambassador to the United Nations and the European Union opines: "It’s high time the five Permanent Members of the

UN Security Council sat down and had a serious discussion of how to reduce the risks of nuclear war, including such concepts as No First Use and Sole Purpose. After all it is only days since they collectively re-affirmed the Reagan / Gorbachev view that a nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought."

Gareth Evans, Founder of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network a former foreign minister of Australia, considers "embracing 'no first use' is the litmus test". Without that the P5 declaration that 'a nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought', as overdue and welcome as it is, is just empty rhetoric, he adds.

Professor Giorgio Parisi, the 2021 Nobel Laureate in Physics, notes: "The Non-Proliferation Treaty has been respected by the non-nuclear-countries, but the nuclear-countries have not respected their obligations. As a citizen of a non-nuclear-country I am particularly offended by their refusal to start the negotiations for achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons."

Frank von Hippel, Professor of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and Former Assistant Director for National Security in the White House explains: "Our growing understanding of the many mutual vulnerabilities of modern societies is a new deterrent to all-out wars. That understanding should make it easier to commit to no first nuclear use as a first step toward nuclear disarmament."

Former military commanders and veterans who endorsed the Open Letter believe that current policies which leave open the option of first use of nuclear weapons increase the risk of a nuclear catastrophe and put military commanders in impossible positions, especially if they are ordered to launch their nuclear weapons.

For example, Commander Robert Forsyth, UK Royal Navy (retired), said: "Submerged on patrol, commanding officers of strategic submarines have no way of knowing why they have been ordered to fire, what the target is, or the consequences on civil population of doing so. As such, I was not prepared to launch a first strike with Polaris missiles from my submarine in the 1970's and remain strongly opposed to First Use of any nuclear weapons."

"War is not the answer to the problems we face in the 21st century," said Adrienne Kinne, outgoing President of Veterans for Peace. "This is also true of nuclear weapons and equipment which have already had dire impacts on people and our environment and will for generations to come. It is past time to divert our money, resources, and intelligence into finding solutions that meet the needs of the world today."

Signatories to the Open Letter also affirmed that adopting no-first-use policies could transform current gridlock in nuclear arms control and disarmament negotiations, opening the door to significant steps toward a nuclear weapon free world.

For example, Vladimir P. Kozin, Member of the Russian Academies of Military Sciences and Natural Sciences, said, "Nuclear weapons states are increasing the accuracy of their missiles and bombs, proliferating dual-capable air-based delivery systems, and moving to new types of nuclear weapons such as forward-based assets outside their national territory.

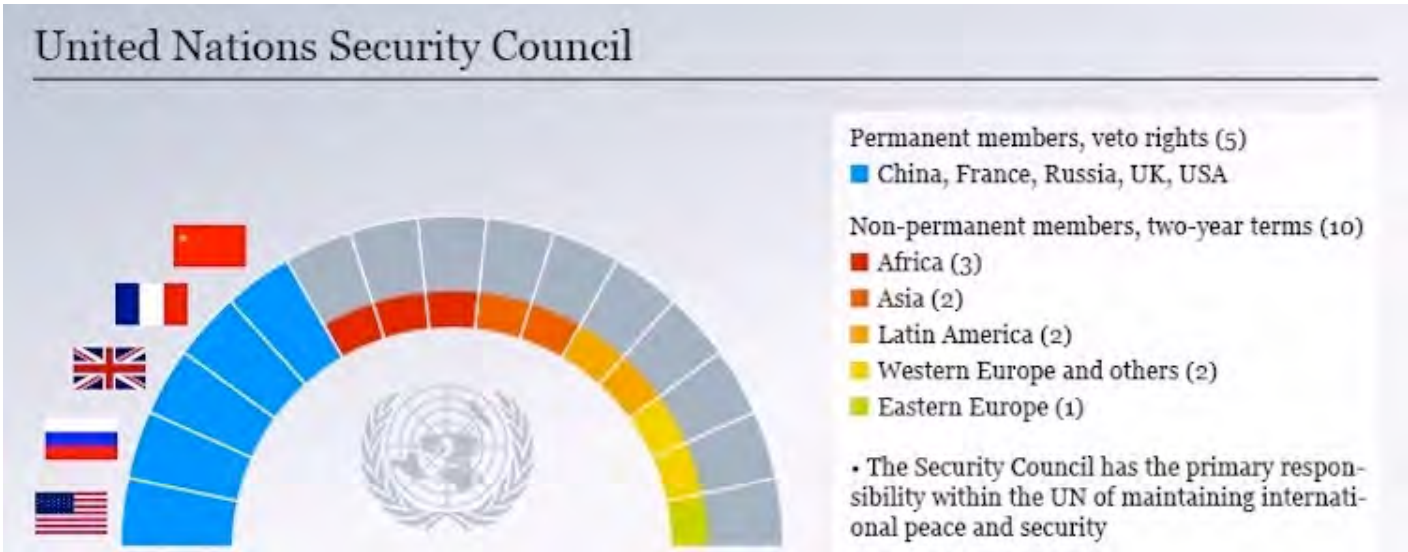
"All this adds up to more justifications for using strategic and tactical nuclear weapons in their national nuclear strategies. These are dramatic and dangerous developments, made worse by the fact that so far nuclear weapons states have never conducted official negotiations on downsizing or banning use of their tactical nuclear arsenals and delivery systems.

"On the other hand, if a pledge of no first use of nuclear weapons were accepted by all nuclear weapons states, it could produce a revolutionary turn initially leading to the erosion of nuclear weapons and finally to the complete elimination of such weapons of mass destruction from our planet, for the benefits of all its inhabitants and international security at large."

Military and political feasibility and advisability of nuclear armed states adopting no-first-use policies is assessed in the working paper, No-First Use of Nuclear Weapons: An Exploration of Unilateral, Bilateral and Plurilateral Approaches and their Security, Risk-reduction and Disarmament Implications. The paper was sent to the NPT States Parties along with the Open Letter. [IDN-InDepthNews — 26 January 2021]

World's Major Nuclear Powers Pledge to Avoid Wars but Continue to Upgrade Arsenals

By Thalif Deen



NEW YORK (IDN) — When the world's five major nuclear powers—the US, UK, China, France and Russia—pledged to prevent nuclear wars and abandon the pursuit of more weapons, their joint statement released January 3 explicitly left out several of the demands from anti-nuclear activists, including an end to the upgrading and enhancing of existing arsenals.

Rebecca Johnson, director of the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, told IDN "the weak and inadequate statement" might have been welcomed because few people thought the five major powers—who are also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—"would manage to agree on anything these days".

"Their nod in the direction of recognizing that nuclear wars should not be fought would have been great if they had followed up with relevant actions."

"Yes, of course, they need to avoid military confrontations and not target each other, but what about signing the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and eliminating the thousands of weapons in their nuclear arsenals?" she asked.

"But no, after reiterating the 1985 Reagan-Gorbachev statement that 'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought', this statement ignored the TPNW and offered no concrete disarmament actions to give meaning to those words," she pointed out.

This was barely even gesture politics, as they also ignored the fact that there are actually nine nuclear-armed states, not just five, and all of them are busy upgrading and enhancing their nuclear arsenals, said Johnson, who is the founding first president of the Geneva-based International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

She also said: "While condemning 'unauthorized or unintended' uses of nuclear weapons, these five proclaimed that nuclear weapons were okay if used for 'defensive purposes only. Was that supposed to reassure the rest of the world?"

Just one unauthorized, unintended, or so-called defensive use of nuclear weapons would cause a humanitarian catastrophe and be likely to spark a nuclear war. Beneath the rhetoric, she argued, there is dangerous arrogance and denial of reality.

"The way things are going, any of the nine nuclear-armed leaders could be foolish enough to launch nuclear weapons—by mistake or intention."

"As long as nuclear weapons continue to be possessed, advertised or brandished by anyone, the whole world is at risk of nuclear war. That is why more and more governments are adhering to the Nuclear Ban Treaty, which aims to end this kind of nuclear posturing and exert greater financial and political costs and pressures on the nuclear

programs and ambitions of all the nuclear-armed states, whether they ignore it or not", declared Johnson

And, meanwhile, one of the realities is that the world has nine, not five nuclear powers.

The other four nuclear-weapon states—who are not parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—include India, Pakistan, Israel, and North Korea who collectively possess an estimated 461 nuclear warheads, according to estimates provided by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

But all four were explicitly missing in action (MIAs) even in a follow-up statement by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, which also did not single out any of the nuclear powers by name.

Asked about the omission, UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said: "Look, our message and the Secretary-General's message is clear is that he would like to see all nuclear weapons eliminated. And that, as he said in the statement, it's a dialogue with those countries that have nuclear weapons, that those countries that have openly nuclear weapons as stated in the statement that was issued and all other Member States."

Dujarric said the Secretary-General takes the opportunity to restate what he has said repeatedly: the only way to eliminate all nuclear risks is to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

He reiterates his willingness to work with the nuclear-weapon States and all Member States to achieve this goal as soon as possible.

World nuclear forces, January 2021

Country	Deployed warheads*	Other warheads**	Total 2021	Total 2020
USA	1 800	3 750	5 550	5 800
Russia	1 625	4 630	6 255	6 375
UK***	120	105	225	215
France	280	10	290	290
China		350	350	320
India		156	156	150
Pakistan		165	165	160
Israel		90	90	90
North Korea****	...	[40–50]	[40–50]	[30–40]
Total	3 825	9 255	13 080	13 400

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2021. All estimates are approximate. SIPRI revises its world nuclear forces data each year based on new information and updates to earlier assessments.

So, they are strictly off-the-record and not for attribution.

In a report released in 2019, SIPRI said both Russia and the United States were pursuing "extensive and expensive programs to replace and modernize their nuclear arsenals, missiles and delivery systems".

In 2018, the US Department of Defence set out plans to develop new nuclear weapons and modify others to give them expanded military roles and missions, SIPRI said in its briefing. "The nuclear arsenals of the other nuclear-armed states are considerably smaller, but all are either developing or deploying new weapon systems or have announced their intention to do so."

Jackie Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation, told IDN the inconvenient truth is that nuclear weapons will continue to exist as long as nuclear-armed states continue to cling to the dangerous doctrine of nuclear deterrence—the threatened use of nuclear weapons.

More than 50 years after the NPT entered into force, the behaviour of the NPT Nuclear-Weapon States points in the opposite direction, she noted. "All of the nuclear-armed states, including the four outside the NPT (India, Israel, Pakistan, and North Korea) are engaged in costly programs to

qualitatively upgrade and in some cases quantitively increase their nuclear arsenals". Despite these reassuring-sounding words, Cabasso said, the reality is that a new nuclear arms race is already underway.

"This time it is compounded by offensive cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, developing hypersonic capacities, a return to intermediate-range delivery systems, and the production of delivery systems capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear payloads." In 2010, she pointed out, the NPT States Parties agreed by consensus to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. Twelve years later the opposite is true; that role has been expanded.

"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," she noted.

"With potential flashpoints over Ukraine and Taiwan, the risk of another use of nuclear weapons is as high as it has ever been. The nuclear disarmament process is stalled, and the five NPT Nuclear-Weapon States cannot credibly claim they are meeting their NPT Article VI obligations."

Obviously, the four nuclear-armed states outside the NPT will have to be involved in negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons, declared Cabasso.

Dr M.V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security & Director, Liu Institute for Global Issues at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, told IDN the statement, by the five major nuclear powers, was evidently prepared for the NPT Review Conference (which was scheduled for the first week of January but postponed to August because of the spreading coronavirus pandemic).

"To me, that explains why the non-parties to the NPT are not part of the statement. Further, the statement implicitly extends to them in the sense that a nuclear war among them, say between India and Pakistan, cannot be won either and should not be fought."

"That said, I have two comments: First, the obligation to disarm applies not just to the nuclear-weapon states under the NPT but also the other four countries. In 1996, the International Court of Justice unanimously stated that 'There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control'." That obligation applies to all states, he noted.

Second, while it is good to reiterate what was said decades ago by Reagan and Gorbachev, the statement is disappointing in not making any commitments to reverse the ongoing nuclear modernization process and continued investment in maintaining their existing arsenals, declared Dr Ramana. In their joint statement, the leaders of the five major nuclear powers said: "We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons—for as long as they continue to exist—should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war. We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented".

"We reaffirm the importance of addressing nuclear threats and emphasize the importance of preserving and complying with our bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments. We remain committed to our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations, including our Article VI obligation 'to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control'."

Meanwhile, the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) says despite progress in reducing nuclear weapon arsenals since the Cold War, the world's combined inventory of nuclear warheads remains at a very high level: Nine countries possessed roughly 13,150 warheads as of mid-2021. Approximately 91 per cent of all nuclear warheads are owned by Russia and the United States who each have around 4,000 warheads in their military stockpiles; no other nuclear-armed state sees a need for more than a few hundred nuclear weapons for national security. [IDN-InDepthNews – 09 January 2022]

Review Conference on Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Stalled due to COVID

By Thalif Deen

Photo: The UN General Assembly Hall will have to wait until August 2022 or beyond to host the delayed 2020 NPT Review Conference. Credit Sophia Paris/UN.

NEW YORK (IDN)— The United Nations, which has been brought to a virtual standstill because of an upsurge in coronavirus infections in New York City, has been forced to postpone a long-awaited 10th review conference (REVCON) of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), scheduled to take place 4-28 January.

Diane Barnes, NGO Liaison Office at the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), was explicit: "There will be no Review Conference in January 2022, in any format".

This is the third postponement of the REVCON, the last two in January 2021 and August 2021. The UN went into a lockdown mode in March 2020.

The review conference on the NPT Treaty is held every five years.

In a letter to delegates, Gustavo Zlauvinen, President-designate of REVCON, said: "I realize that it is deeply disappointing for States Parties not to be able to carry out the important work of the Review Conference, but the present circumstances do not leave us any choice".

One delegate jokingly said: "In the battle between the spreading pandemic and nuclear weapons, it's the pandemic that keeps winning," a virus which has claimed over 5.4 million lives worldwide since December 2019.

On 27 December, the Chef de Cabinet wrote to the President-designate of REVCON to advise him that, considering the latest developments regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat will not be able to service an in-person meeting of the tenth NPT Review Conference in January 2022.

The primary reason is the UN staffers numbering over 9,900 are working mostly from home. The temporary "return to office" (RTO) was suspended last month and the "flexible arrangement" of working from home will continue through 9 January—and until further notice.

Following the Secretariat's advice regarding the availability of facilities and services at UNHQ in 2022, the President-designate asked for a tentative hold to be placed on the dates of 1 to 26 August 2022 for the Review Conference. Those dates are subject to formal confirmation by States Parties later.

Asked if there were any expectations of a breakthrough in the postponed four-week long

conference, Joseph Gerson, President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, and Vice-President of the International Peace Bureau, told IDN expectations for the outcome of the NPT Review Conference have been extremely low, and this postponement does nothing to raise the hopes of nuclear weapons abolitionists and arms controllers around the world.

Why low expectations? "The refusal by the nuclear weapons states to fulfil their Article VI obligations, their failure to fulfil the agreements of the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences, the reality of their increasingly dangerous arms races, and the confrontations over Taiwan, Ukraine and Kashmir which could trigger a catastrophic nuclear war by accident or miscalculation," he added.

Here in the United States, said Gerson, it appears that among the reasons that the Biden Administration will not adopt a "No First Use" doctrine in its Nuclear Posture Review, is the fear that China would interpret such a doctrinal change as an invitation to repossess Taiwan.

That, plus the continued commitment to spending nearly two trillion dollars to upgrade the U.S. nuclear arsenal are reasons for profound concern and for popular actions to insist on changes in U.S. policies, he pointed out.

Short of a breakthrough when the Review Conference is finally held, Gerson argued, it is possible that language addressing the need to fulfil the obligation to make progress toward the creation of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons and WMD Free-Zone can be found to avoid what is termed a "failure" of the RevCon. And, hardly a breakthrough, something approximating credible commitments to take meaningful steps toward the fulfilment of previous RevCon agreements is to be hoped for.

In a statement on 20 December, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) said "set against a backdrop of a global pandemic, uncertainty surrounding the Iran nuclear talks, and countries upgrading or increasing their nuclear weapons stockpiles, there might not seem to be much room for consensus on the many contentious issues that will be discussed".

One area on which many States agree is the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the monitoring system the CTBTO has built to detect nuclear explosions anywhere by anyone. This state-of-the-art system is unique in the world and is critical for achieving universal, non-discriminatory, and verifiable nuclear disarmament, the statement said.

Asked about the areas of contention which may elude consensus in the upcoming REVCON in 2022, Gerson said the greatest area of contention will likely be over language that requires nuclear powers to take credible steps toward fulfilment of their Article VI nuclear weapons obligations.

The loss of confidence by many of the world's nations that nuclear powers have any intention of engaging in good faith negotiations for the elimination of the world's nuclear arsenals was the force that drove negotiation of the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, he argued.

"There is every reason to believe that the nuclear powers remain committed to preserving the nuclear apartheid disorder. This is unlikely to change until we find a means to mobilize international understanding of the urgency of the continuing nuclear dangers, and forceful popular actions to change governmental policies," Gerson declared.

U.S. embrace of language requiring progress toward the creation of a Middle East Nuclear and WMD-Free Zone will be difficult to achieve, he warned.

President Biden and the Democratic Party are increasingly on the defensive in the face of the undemocratic U.S. electoral college system, right-wing campaigns to disenfranchise voters of colour, and the seizing of control of state and local election offices, Gerson added. "In this circumstance, the Biden Administration will be unlikely to risk offending voters who are uncritical of Israeli policies," he noted.

Meanwhile, in its statement, the CTBTO said the CTBT bans all nuclear explosions everywhere, by everyone, and for all time. Adherence to the Treaty is nearly universal—185 States have signed and 170 have ratified—but it has not yet entered into force. To do so, it must be ratified by all 44 States listed in the Treaty's Annex 2, of which eight are still missing. [IDN-InDepthNews – 01 January 2022]

Stockholm Initiative Determined to Achieve the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

By Ramesh Jaura

Photo: Gathering of Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament against the backdrop of the city of Stockholm (August 2020) showing the Kastellet, Vasa Museum, and Nordic Museum.

BERLIN | STOCKHOLM (IDN) — The 16-nation *Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament* has urged the upcoming Tenth Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) from January 4-28, 2022, "to demonstrate political leadership, honour commitments and achievements made under the Treaty, and set ourselves on a decisive path towards a world free of nuclear weapons, in the interest of preserving humanity".

Launched by Sweden in 2019, the Stockholm Initiative aims to inject fresh practical impetus into nuclear disarmament and build bridges between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states.

The Group's fifth ministerial on December 14 in Stockholm further resolved: "We remain united in our resolve to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons in an irreversible, verifiable, and transparent manner, and to reduce the risks they pose in the interim".

The meeting was co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany Annalena Baerbock. Their counterparts from Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Spain, and Switzerland joined.

Ms Baerbock was appointed as Germany's Foreign Affairs Minister on December 8. 2021. Before her joining the Fifth Ministerial Conference first time, the Foreign Office in Berlin said: "Germany seeks to take on a leading role in bolstering international disarmament initiatives." This is indeed what the country did with Heiko Maas as Ms Baerbock's predecessor.

At the Berlin Ministerial 2020, Foreign Ministers adopted a declaration on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the NPT including a set of proposals ("stepping stones") to advance nuclear disarmament—measures ranging from full transparency on nuclear arsenals, stricter restraint in nuclear doctrines, steps to reduce

escalation risks to the extension of the landmark U.S.-Russia New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) in January 2021, further stockpile reductions and broader arrangements in the future. All States parties were invited to sign up to these 22 Stepping Stones for advancing nuclear disarmament.

The Stockholm group gathered this time some three weeks ahead of the Tenth NPT Review Conference scheduled—two years after the Treaty's 50th anniversary.

The fifth ministerial meeting said: "The upcoming NPT Review Conference is a pivotal opportunity for all states to show high- level commitment to nuclear disarmament. The Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament has presented a feasible way forward in this regard. We offer our full support to the President-designate of the Review Conference, Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen, in guiding delegations to secure the continued success of the Treaty."

The gathering welcomed the additional 20 NPT States Parties that have formally aligned themselves with the Initiative's documents. Expectedly, the Stockholm Peace Initiative encourages all States Parties "to draw upon the language and feasible ideas contained in these documents, notably in the drafting of any outcome to the Review Conference".

The Stockholm Initiative Ministers not only welcomed New START, but also the June 2021 presidential statement announcing a U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue, which included a reaffirmation by that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

These are no doubt positive developments that respond to two of the stepping stones for nuclear disarmament of the Stockholm Initiative. Ministers further noted the Summit Meeting between the U.S. and China held on November 16, 2021.

However, despite some progress, there is considerable work that remains to be done. The five NPT-recognized nuclear-weapon states need to reduce their nuclear arsenals, bearing a special responsibility to do so under the Treaty. Also evident is the clear unwillingness to disarm among other nuclear possessing states.

The fifth ministerial meeting noted: "Rebuilding trust and confidence among the nuclear-weapon states will help end the longstanding stasis in global nuclear disarmament."

They urged all nuclear weapon states to take clear and decisive steps to lay the groundwork for next-generation arms control arrangements, to reduce or further reduce nuclear arsenals, to show leadership in putting a definite end to nuclear weapon test explosions, commencing negotiations on a treaty prohibiting fissile material production, as well as to support efforts to develop multilateral nuclear disarmament verification capacities.

Ministers reiterated their call in the "Stepping Stones for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament" to engage with the young generation, including through dialogue platforms, mentoring, internships, fellowships, scholarships, model events and youth group activities. They also reiterated their call to encourage visits to and interaction with communities affected by nuclear weapons, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and former nuclear test sites such as Semipalatinsk and in the Pacific.

Further, they remained resolved to integrate a diverse gender perspective and promote the full and effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament decision-making. [IDN-InDepthNews – 25 December 2021]

Elimination of ICBMs Would Greatly Reduce the Chances of a Global Nuclear Holocaust

Viewpoint by Norman Solomon*

Photo: An unarmed Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile launches during an operational test on October 29, 2020, at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. Credit: U.S. Air Force.

SAN FRANCISCO, USA (IDN) — Nuclear weapons are at the pinnacle of what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the madness of militarism." If you'd rather not think about them, that's understandable. But such a coping strategy has limited value. And those who are making vast profits from preparations for global annihilation are further empowered by our avoidance.

At the level of national policy, nuclear derangement is so normalized that few give it a second thought. Yet normal does not mean sane. As an epigraph to his brilliant book *The Doomsday Machine*, Daniel Ellsberg provides a chillingly apt quote from Friedrich Nietzsche: "Madness in individuals is something rare; but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs, it is the rule."

Now, some policy technocrats for the USA's nuclear arsenal and some advocates for arms control are locked in a heated dispute over the future of ICBMs: intercontinental ballistic missiles. It's an argument between the "national security" establishment—hell-bent on "modernizing" ICBMs—and various nuclear-policy critics, who prefer to keep the current ICBMs in place. Both sides are refusing to acknowledge the profound need to get rid of them entirely.

Elimination of ICBMs would substantially reduce the chances of a worldwide nuclear holocaust. The ICBMs are uniquely vulnerable to effective attack and thus have no deterrent value. Instead of being a "deterrent," ICBMs are actually land-based sitting ducks, and for that reason are set up for "launch on warning."

As a result, whether a report of incoming missiles is accurate or a false alarm, the commander in chief would have to quickly decide whether to "use or lose" the ICBMs. "If our sensors indicate that enemy missiles are en route to the United

States, the president would have to consider launching ICBMs before the enemy missiles could destroy them; once they are launched, they cannot be recalled," former Defense Secretary William Perry wrote. "The president would have less than 30 minutes to make that terrible decision."

Experts like Perry are clear as they advocate for scrapping ICBMs. But the ICBM force is a sacred cash cow. And news reports currently feature arguments over exactly how to keep feeding it.

The Guardian reported on December 9 that the Pentagon has ordered an external study of options for ICBMs. Trouble is, the two options under consideration—extending the life of the currently deployed Minuteman III missiles or replacing them with a new missile system—do nothing to reduce the escalating dangers of nuclear war, whereas eliminating the nation's ICBMs would greatly reduce those dangers.

But an enormous ICBM lobbying apparatus remains in high gear, with huge corporate profits at stake. Northrop Grumman has landed a $13.3 billion contract to proceed with developing a new ICBM system, misleadingly named the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent. It's all in sync with automatic political devotion to ICBMs in Congress and the executive branch.

The sea-based and air-based portions of the "nuclear triad" (submarines and bombers) are invulnerable to successful attack—unlike ICBMs, which are completely vulnerable. The subs and bombers, able to destroy any and all targeted countries many times over, provide vastly more "deterrent" than anyone could ever reasonably want.

In sharp contrast, ICBMs are the opposite of a deterrent. In effect, they're prime targets for a nuclear first strike because of their vulnerability, and for the same reason would have no "deterrent" capacity to retaliate. ICBMs have only one foreseeable function—to be a "sponge" to absorb the start of a nuclear war.

Armed and on hair-trigger alert, the country's 400 ICBMs are deeply entrenched—not only in underground silos scattered across five states, but also in the mindsets of the U.S. political establishment.

If the goal is to get big campaign contributions from military contractors, fuel the humongous profits of the military-industrial complex, and stay in sync with the outlooks that dominate corporate media, those mindsets are logical. If the goal is to prevent nuclear war, the mindsets are unhinged.

As Ellsberg and I wrote in an article for *The Nation*, "Getting trapped in an argument about the cheapest way to keep ICBMs operational in their silos is ultimately no-win. The history of nuclear weapons in this country tells us that people will spare no expense if they believe that spending the money will really make them and their loved ones safer—we must show them that ICBMs actually do the opposite." Even if Russia and China didn't reciprocate at all, the result of the U.S. closure of all its ICBMs would be to greatly reduce the chances of nuclear war.

On Capitol Hill, such realities are hazy and beside the point compared to straight-ahead tunnel vision and momentum of conventional wisdom. For members of Congress, routinely voting to appropriate billions of dollars for nuclear weaponry seems natural. Challenging rote assumptions about ICBMs will be essential to disrupt the march toward the nuclear apocalypse. [IDN-InDepthNews – 16 December 2021]

The history of nuclear weapons in this country tells us that people will spare no expense if they believe that spending the money will really make them and their loved ones safer—we must show them that ICBMs actually do the opposite.

Middle East Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone, Long Elusive, is Making Progress

By Thalif Deen

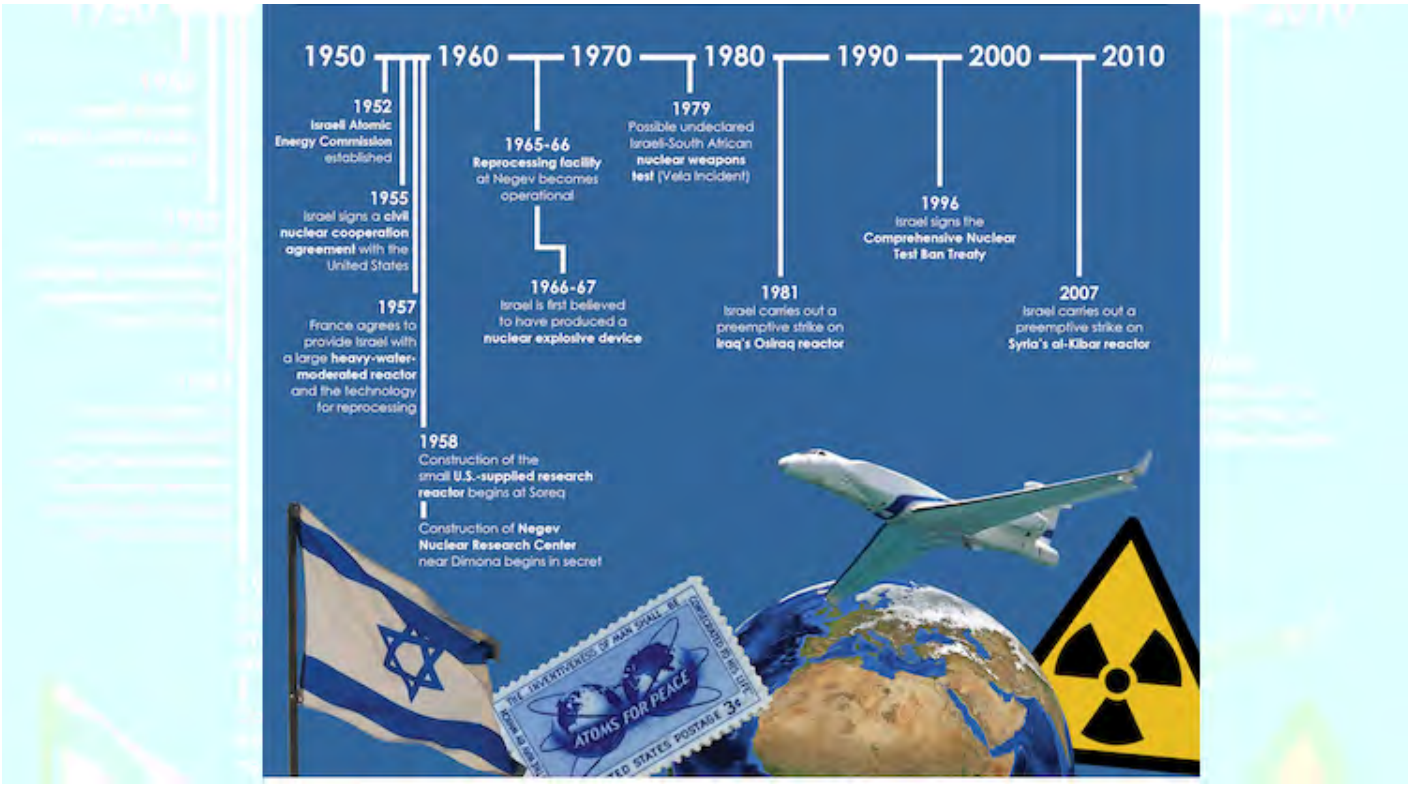


Image credit: Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

NEW YORK (IDN) — A longstanding proposal for a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the politically and militarily volatile Middle East remains elusive. Since 1967, five nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) have been established worldwide—in Latin America and the Caribbean, South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Africa and Central Asia.

Speaking at the second "UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs)," which took place November 29 to December 3, UN Secretary-General António Guterres pointed out that the five existing zones include 60 per cent of the UN's 193 Member States—and cover almost all of the Southern Hemisphere.

"Expanding such zones to more regions will strengthen global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation norms and contribute to building a safer world."

That is particularly the case in the Middle East, where concerns over nuclear programmes persist, and where conflicts and civil wars are causing widespread civilian casualties and suffering, undermining stability and disrupting social and economic development, he warned.

Alyn Ware, Director of the Peace and Disarmament program at the World Future Council, told IDN the UN Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDFZ) is a vitally important process to address the very real concerns about actual and/or potential nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs in the Middle East.

Amongst the countries in this region:

Israel has not joined the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is believed to have produced nuclear weapons; neither Egypt nor Israel have ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention CWC); Syria is believed to have

violated the CWC through the use of chemical weapons; and a number of countries have not signed the biological weapons convention, including Comoros, Djibouti and Israel.

The UN conference, he pointed out, shines a light on these issues, and contributes to political pressure to curtail the WMD programs in the region and achieve signature and ratification of the relevant treaties.

The process will not be easy, he warned.

"There are intense conflicts in the region that have sometimes erupted into armed conflict, and which continue to undermine trust and thwart diplomatic efforts to achieve such a zone. But the very fact of initiating the UN Conference is an important start.

It provides opportunities for states in the region to share perspectives, consider proposals and approaches, and give diplomacy an opportunity to work," Ware noted.

He said the conference is open-ended—with a mandate provided by General Assembly decision A/73/546 to continue meeting annually, '*until the conference concludes the elaboration of a legally binding treaty establishing a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction*.'

"This was a wise move by the UN, in order to allow time for all states in the region to become engaged in the process. Only one state in the region (Israel) has not joined the UN conference".

Their lack of participation, he said, doesn't necessarily mean that no progress can be made. "Indeed, a lot can be done to discuss the legal, technical and institutional requirements to establish such a zone, at the same time as a diplomatic dialogue is advanced with Israel on what arrangements could be made to bring them into the process," he noted.

Tony Robinson, Operations Director, Middle East Treaty Organization, told IDN the second UN Conference on a WMDFZ in the Middle East is already paving the way forward toward establishing such a zone.

Having 22 countries of the Arab League and Iran around the negotiating table is fantastic, he said. The only regional country absent was Israel but there is no reason why those in the room can't make progress in a process that Israel can then join at any time.

The political declaration that came out of the 1st session shows that states of the region can achieve consensus and build on areas of common ground. Until this conference was set up there was no dedicated forum for countries of the region to discuss major security issues—including WMD disarmament', Robinson said.

"This annual conference will continue to take place until all regional countries agree to a WMD Free Zone treaty. And by coming back year after year to this conference and organizing work between the sessions, it will build trust and confidence among the regional countries—giving more reasons for Israel to also join. Obviously, it's not going to happen overnight, but all dialogue among these countries must be welcomed and the process itself protected," he noted.

As this conference started, so too did the talks in Vienna to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—(a nuclear agreement between Iran and Western powers). A breakthrough in Vienna will not only make sure Iran's nuclear program remains peaceful and US crippling sanctions are removed but also reinforce the importance of dialogue and diplomacy.

Meanwhile, said Robinson, the region is also going through some key changes with renewed efforts among Gulf States to engage in dialogue with one another to Israel's recent agreements with four Arab states, which all goes in a positive direction of increased engagement and reducing tensions in the region.

"While this conference contributes positively towards establishing the Zone, there are other parallel processes that are complementary, with progress on any or all moving us closer to the goal. Specifically, the decades old process within the NPT that is dedicated and vital to establishing the Zone."

"So, we believe that the conference in New York for the Zone that is within the NPT. There is no doubt that countries of the region, in their statements to the NPT RevCon will report on the progress made," declared Robinson.

Ware said if Israel continues to resist joining such a process, there is also the option of negotiating a treaty that other states in the region can sign and ratify, but which would not become legally binding until all states in the region (including Israel) sign and ratify.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco (Latin America NWFZ), for example, was adopted on such a basis at a time when Cuba, Brazil and Argentina were not ready to join. (They have now joined). All this points to the high value and importance of this UN process, he pointed out.

"In addition, progress on advancing a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other WMD is critical for the stability of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty."

In 1995, Ware said, the NPT was extended indefinitely on agreement by states parties on achieving a Middle East NWFZ, amongst other things. To not take action in implementation of these commitments could erode confidence in the NPT and lead to some states considering withdrawal.

"The connection between the UN Conference and the NPT is reinforced by the fact that the three depository governments of the NPT are also invited to participate in the UN Conference on the Middle East Zone. Two of those depository governments (Russia and the UK) have participated in both of the sessions," he added.

Meanwhile, the political declaration adopted at the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, reads: We, the representatives of participating States at the first session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction, having met at Headquarters from 18 to 22 November 2019, pursuant to General Assembly decision 73/546:

(a) Welcome all initiatives, resolutions, decisions and recommendations on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;

(b) Believe that the establishment of a verifiable Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction would greatly enhance regional and international peace and security;

(c) Declare our intent and solemn commitment to pursue, in accordance with relevant international resolutions, and in an open and inclusive manner with all invited States, the elaboration of a legally binding treaty to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by consensus by the States of the region;

(d) Call upon all States of the Middle East and all other States to refrain from taking any measures that preclude the achievement of the objectives of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;

(e) Convinced that the realization of this long-standing goal would be facilitated by the participation of all States of the Middle East, extend an open-ended invitation to all States of the region to lend their support to the present declaration and to join the process;

(f) In that spirit, we believe that the Conference, through the elaboration of a legally binding treaty establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, could contribute to building regional and international confidence therein;

(g) Commit to undertaking efforts to follow up on the declaration and on the outcomes of the Conference and to engaging in preparations for the second session of the Conference, commend the efforts of the Secretary-General in convening the first session of the Conference, and request his continued efforts and those of relevant international organizations and the strong support of the international community towards the success of the Conference in establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction". [IDN-InDepthNews – 04 December 2021]

The NPT Will Probably Endure, But Its Longevity May Be at Stake

Viewpoint by Sergio Duarte

The writer is President of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Photo: Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen, President-designate of the Tenth NPT Review Conference, addresses the opening of the regional meeting on November 13-14.

NEW YORK (IDN) — The NPT turned 50 in 2020. The anniversary should have coincided with the Tenth Review Conference, but unfortunately, it had to be postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic. President-designate Gustavo Zlauvinen wisely used the delay to deepen his consultations with states parties in an effort to ensure the success of the Conference.

Adoption of a Final Document is usually considered an indication of "success". Divergent views and lack of consensus, however, have plagued the NPT during these five decades of its existence. Since the last Review in 2015, persistent differences have not been settled and new problems have cropped up.

Its current woes notwithstanding, the NPT will probably endure for the immediately foreseeable future, but its longevity may be at stake due to its overall poor implementation record regarding disarmament.

A quick look at the history of General Assembly decisions during the decades prior to the adoption of the NPT provides some interesting observations. Many successive General Assembly resolutions adopted then already stressed the need for effective measures of nuclear disarmament together with non-proliferation provisions.

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

The very first resolution of the Assembly, adopted in January 1946, created a Commission "to deal with the problems raised by the discovery of nuclear energy" and charged it, *inter alia,* to make specific proposals for the "elimination of atomic weapons". Rivalry and mistrust between the two major powers, however, prevented any progress.

Widespread concern with a possible increase in the number of nations possessing nuclear weapons led to General Assembly Resolution 1665, promoted by Ireland. It was adopted without a vote in 1961 and called for negotiations to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states beyond the ones already possessing them but did not mention disarmament.

In 1965 the General Assembly adopted Resolution 2028(XX) by 93 affirmative votes. There were five abstentions, including by one nuclear weapon state—France. All other nuclear-weapon states existing at the time voted in favour and no negative votes were recorded. The resolution called upon the Eighteen-nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC)[1] to negotiate, as a matter of urgency, a treaty to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and set forth the principles on which that instrument should be based.

Among the main principles laid out for the proposed treaty were that it must not permit nuclear and non-nuclear states to proliferate, directly and indirectly, nuclear weapons; it should embody an acceptable balance of responsibilities and obligations of nuclear and non-nuclear states; and should be a step toward general and complete disarmament and more particularly, nuclear disarmament.

The two co-Chairs of the Committee[2] presented separate drafts and later a joint text. In March 1968 the co-Chairs introduced a new draft treaty which in their view incorporated the proposals made during the work of the Committee. That draft, however, failed to obtain consensus.

Several non-nuclear members of the Committee felt that it did not contain an adequate balance of the rights and obligations of nuclear and non-nuclear states and that it was necessary to include stronger, legally binding disarmament obligations.

In response, the co-Chairs proposed what constitutes now Article VI of the Treaty. Some members also saw in other provisions a serious impairment of their efforts in the pursuit of peaceful applications of atomic energy and a number of amendments were presented. No further changes, however, were introduced in the draft and the co-Chairs decided to send it "on behalf of the Committee"[3] to the General Assembly annexed to a report which did not obtain consensus.

Predictably, there was no consensus on the draft treaty at the Assembly. It was adopted by 95 votes in favour and became Resolution 2373(XXIII). A significant number of delegations either did not cast affirmative votes (21) or voted against (4). This result shows that despite ample support for the need to prevent proliferation through an international treaty there was also strong disagreement on certain important elements of the proposed NPT.

Gradually, however, the overwhelming majority of the international community found it in their interest to accede to the Treaty, despite its shortcomings. It took almost thirty years for the NPT to reach its current membership—four short of universality. All four holdout states came to develop their own capabilities and obtained their own nuclear arsenals. None of the current nine possessors of nuclear weapons seems willing to accept legally binding, independently verifiable and time-bound commitments to disarm.

The Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is today the most adhered to the instrument in the field of arms control. Yet, in the absence of stronger and trustworthy disarmament commitments doubts about its continuing credibility remain and account for explicit demonstrations of dissatisfaction.

Non-nuclear parties have increasingly pointed out the Treaty's shortcomings and argue for stronger, legally binding and time defined disarmament commitments. The five states that are recognized as "nuclear weapon states" under Article IX.3 continue to insist that keeping and modernizing their nuclear arsenals is necessary to ensure their own security and seem to regard the NPT as entitling them to retain such weapons for as long as they see fit and to use them at their discretion.

All nine existing nuclear-weapon states have consistently resisted nuclear disarmament demands. 50 years on, the NPTs disarmament promises remain unfulfilled.

Concern with the humanitarian aspects of the use of nuclear weapons led to three conferences of officials and experts in 2013 and 2014. The findings of these conferences, together with frustration with the impasses at multilateral deliberative and negotiating organs led to the creation of a working group to "take forward disarmament negotiations" and resulted in the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) at a United Nations conference in 2017. The TPNW entered into force on January 22 2021. The first meeting of its Parties is set for March 2022 in Vienna.

The TPNW draws relentless opposition from nuclear-weapon states. Nevertheless, at the forthcoming NPT Review Conference, it will not be possible to evade debate on its existence and significance for the progress of nuclear disarmament. Regardless of the extremist positions taken by some of its opponents, the TPNW is inextricably linked to Article VI of the NPT, which contains the undertaking of each of its parties "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament". 122 of its non-nuclear parties did exactly that in 2017 by promoting General Assembly 71/258 to convene negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. It is therefore incongruous to try to dissociate the TPNW from the NPT. All parties to the latter would do well to recognize and highlight the convergence between the two texts.

Lack of consensus on a Final Document is not an unusual outcome for NPT Review Conferences. Five out of the nine held so far have failed to produce agreement on a concluding text and some of those who did merely registered divergent views. It is true that important conceptual results were achieved in 1995, 2000 and 2010. However, paramount commitments such as those regarding the Middle East and on the review procedures agreed in 1995, both of which made possible the indefinite extension of the Treaty, have not yet produced tangible results. Neither have the "13 Steps" on nuclear disarmament agreed in 2000. The same can be said of the lengthy list of recommendations contained in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference. All efforts leading to concrete measures for the elimination of nuclear weapons have been effectively thwarted.

The forthcoming Review Conference will have to deal with many thorny issues. Some precede the inception of the treaty itself. Others reflect recent changes and renewed tensions in the security situation in different parts of the globe. All of them make for the particularly critical juncture in which the conference will take place.

It is remarkable that the NPT has been able to survive to the mature age of 50 despite the steady increase in frustration and impatience among non-nuclear parties. It is fair to recognize that even if not entirely successful in containing proliferation—arsenals keep increasing and four new NWS emerged—the treaty has played an important role in preventing an even wider dissemination of nuclear weapons.

Any objective assessment of the performance of the NPT over the last half-century must however conclude that its greatest failing has been not delivering effective measures of nuclear disarmament, thereby frustrating the legitimate expectations of a large majority of its parties.

The few positive signs along that road, such as reductions in the nuclear forces of the U.S and Russia or the resumption of dialogue between these two countries have been offset by a vigorous drive to "modernize" existing arsenals and are hardly sufficient to dispel the growing anxiety about security conditions. Humanity seems closer to a nuclear catastrophe than ever before.

Parties to the NPT should remind themselves that its central bargain is renouncing the nuclear option in exchange for nuclear disarmament. As long as that fundamental deal remains unfulfilled, the credibility and the longevity of the instrument will remain at stake. The Tenth Review Conference will tell if confidence in it will come out strengthened—or further eroded. [IDN-InDepthNews – 30 November 2021]

[1] France was a member of the ENDC but chose not to attend its meetings.
[2] The representatives of the USA and the USSR.
[3] Document A/7072 DC/230, 19 March 1968.

The Challenge of Nuclear Submarine Proliferation

By J Nastranis and Tariq Rauf

Photo: An artist's rendering of the future U.S. Navy Columbia-class ballistic missile submarines.

NEW YORK (IDN) — While many well-meaning experts have written legal, policy and technical tomes on how to verify naval nuclear fuel and to convert such fuel from weapons-grade highly-enriched uranium (HEU) to low enriched uranium (LEU), the unfortunate reality remains that none of the nuclear navies using HEU is interested in converting to LEU fuel or to allow International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or any other inspectors within a Scandinavian mile of their nuclear fleets—that is a generous 10 kilometres.

The United States Navy pioneered naval nuclear ship propulsion reactors and their fuel based on HEU starting with the *Nautilus* nuclear-powered attack submarine (SSN). On January 17, 1955, under the command of Captain Eugene Wilkinson, *USS Nautilus* (SSN-571) made the first voyage of a nuclear vessel, powered by a 70 MWth (S2W) pressurized water reactor (PWR) built by the Westinghouse Electric Company. Wilkinson flashed the historic message, "Underway on Nuclear Power" to Commander Submarine Forces Atlantic.

This revolution in marine propulsion and naval technology continues to this day.

The chronology of naval nuclear propulsion after the launch of the *Nautilus* was: June 4, 1958, *K-3* Soviet Navy SSN; January 10, 1963, HMS *Dreadnought*, Royal Navy ballistic missile submarine (SSBN); August 23.1971, People's Liberation Army Navy *Han* SSN; December 1, 1971, *Le Redoubtable* French Navy SSBN; 1988 Soviet SSN leased to the Indian Navy and on December 14, 2014, INS *Arihant*, Indian Navy SSBN was launched (nuclear power unit copied from Soviet design).

Unfortunately, proliferation of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed submarines already has taken place. It was the Soviet Union that in 1986

became the first State to "lease" a (*Charlie*-class) nuclear cruise missile submarine to India. Then, in February 2004, Russia "leased" an *Akula*-class fast nuclear attack submarine to India. And, in 2019, India "leased" yet another *Akula*-class fast attack nuclear submarine from Russia to be transferred by 2025.

Reportedly, India copied design information from the *Akula*-class SSN for building its own nuclear submarines, whose reactors are of Russian design provenance and reportedly built with substantial Russian help. As an aside, it might be recalled that all 22 of India's pressurized heavy water reactors (PHWRs) operational or under construction are unauthorized copies or derivatives of the Canadian-supplied CANDU PHWR.

As India, is *not* a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), it does not have an INFCIRC/153-type comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA; rather it has an "item-specific" INFCIRC/66/Rev.2-type safeguards agreement and hence India can have civilian nuclear activities under safeguards and parallel nuclear weapon activities obviously outside safeguards.

On the civilian side, in addition to Soviet/Russian nuclear-powered ice breakers and a new floating nuclear power plant, there have been four nuclear-powered ships. On July 21, 1958, the US nuclear-powered passenger-cargo ship, the *Savannah*, was launched and its first voyage under nuclear power was in 1962.

Between 1962 and its withdrawal from service in 1970, the *Savannah* cruised for nearly half-a-million nautical miles under power drawn from a 74MWth pressurized water reactor fuelled by a total of 74 kilograms (163 pounds) of 4% enriched Uranium-235 uranium oxide fuel—the cost of the reactor and fuel was US$28.3 million.

Germany had the *Otto Hahn* launched on October 11, 1969, Japan the *Mutsu* launched in 1991; the Soviets launched the *Sevmorput* on February 20, 1986—after a refit in 2016, the *Sevmorput* remains in service today. It is powered by a KLT-40 pressurized water reactor (for ice breakers) rated at 135 MWth, with a score of 150 kilograms (332 lb) of highly enriched uranium. The 150 MWth KLT-40S variant is currently used in the Russian floating nuclear power station *Akademik Lomonosov*. The KLT-40S small-medium reactor (SMR) uses 14% LEU fuel on a three-year refuelling cycle.

There were unconfirmed reports that the secretive small team headed by the Biden administration's national security advisor (Jake Sullivan) did not consult the US Navy in advance of making the announcement to provide fast-attack nuclear-powered guided-missile submarines (SSGNs) to the RAN—the Royal Australian Navy.

The problem the IAEA is facing relates to the exemption from safeguards of naval nuclear fuel regardless of whether it is Australia or any other non-nuclear-weapon State with an INFCIRC/153 (Corr.) type safeguards agreement in force. Not only is there not any definition or interpretation of the paragraph 14 exemptions, nor of what is meant by "non-peaceful" and "non-proscribed" military activities; let alone any understanding of, or procedures to, implement paragraph 14 provisions.

For the three partner States of a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States (AUKUS) for the Indo-Pacific region announced on September 15, 2021—to take it upon themselves to interpret and to define paragraph 14 exemptions, with or without the IAEA Secretariat's involvement, cannot command confidence without adequate consultations involving interested Member States and experts.

Implementation of paragraph 14 derived safeguards exemptions necessarily must first be discussed in consultations or negotiations involving all interested Agency Member States to arrive at common understandings that can be put before the Board for its consideration and approval. Australia or AUKUS is not being singled out; the matter is bigger and broader than them and concerns all Agency Member States and the Secretariat.

By creating *within* the NPT/IAEA regime a new system of pre-or non-NPT types of arrangements under which a State can operate two parallel nuclear programmes, one under and one outside IAEA safeguards, Australia would be weakening the uniformity of the structure and implementation of comprehensive Agency safeguards in NPT NNWS and in practice

emulating India, a State not party to the NPT, having one part of its nuclear activities under safeguards and another outside.

Should Australia be able to exempt weapon-grade highly-enriched uranium-based naval fuel from Agency safeguards, then why not others such as, for example, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Iran, Japan and South Korea?

For many years Brazil has been avoiding concluding an additional protocol with the IAEA citing its naval nuclear propulsion research and development programme. Both Brazil and Iran have claimed that one requirement for their uranium enrichment activities is the possibility of acquiring nuclear-powered submarines.

Reportedly, the AUKUS States have communicated to the IAEA Director-General their intention to provide a fleet of SSGNs to the Royal Australian Navy. This means that at some future time Australia could be invoking paragraph 14 of its NPT safeguards agreement to exclude significant quantities of highly-enriched uranium for naval nuclear fuel—up to 1600 to 2000 kg or more of weapon-grade HEU.

Australia's acquisition of SSGNs under AUKUS could well open up a Pandora's Box of proliferation as other non-nuclear-weapon States such as Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Iran, Japan, Saudi Arabia and South Korea among others, and even Taiwan (China), may feel emboldened to develop or acquire nuclear-powered ships or submarines and keep nuclear fuel (both low- and highly-enriched uranium) outside the scope of IAEA comprehensive safeguards.

The AUKUS States apparently have initiated non-transparent and secret discussions with the IAEA on how best to take advantage of a "grey area" or "loophole" in IAEA comprehensive safeguards to exclude weapon-grade highly-enriched uranium from Agency safeguards. There is no clear and agreed understanding and interpretation of the technical and policy modalities on the interpretation and implementation of this "grey area".

China and the Russian Federation already have launched diplomatic fusillades across the bow of the Agency's Board of Governors criticising the AUKUS plan for providing nuclear-powered submarines to Australia. Many Western Group States intimidated by the pressure and influence by the AUKUS alliance seem to be taking a back seat and waiting to see the colour of any agreement cooked up by the AUKUS States and the Agency.

Thus, giving Australia the benefit of doubt and showing sympathy for the US' confrontation with China. The Non-Aligned States (NAM) have not yet shown their hand, but many are caught in a Catch-22 situation fearful of both not antagonizing China and not antagonizing the US and its Asia Pacific partners.

Now is the time to further strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the IAEA safeguards system, not to weaken it and not drive a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines through it. [IDN-InDepthNews – 27 November 2021]

Note: This article is based on Tariq Rauf's extensive article

IAEA
International Atomic Energy Agency

IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi assumed office on 3 December 2019.

North Korea Flexes its Nuclear Muscles – and Defies the Western World

By Thalif Deen

Image: North Korea Test-Fires New 'Long-Range Cruise Missile':KCNA

NEW YORK (IDN) – North Korea, long dubbed as a "hermit kingdom" has continued to remain cut off from the rest of the world—politically, economically and geographically.

But neither rigid sanctions, nor international isolation and growing food insecurities, have prevented the country—officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)—from making significant advances as the world's ninth nuclear power, along with the US, Britain, France, Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Israel. In a news story originating in the South Korean capital of Seoul, the *New York Times* reported that North Korea on October 11 displayed its growing military arsenal, including an array of ballistic missiles.

"The exhibition was one of the biggest displays of weaponry North Korea has staged in recent years," said the Times.

"We are a nuclear power with self-reliance," one of the huge banners proclaimed, with a sense of nationalistic pride. "We are a great missile power," read another banner.

Matt Korda, Associate Researcher with the Nuclear Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation Program at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN despite some apparent attempts to meet with DPRK negotiators, the administration of US President Joe Biden, has had little success in convincing North Korean leader Kim Jong-un that its approach to the Korean Peninsula will be meaningfully different than that of his predecessor.

This is a serious problem, he said, because Kim has been quite clear that he isn't going to come back to the negotiating table until the United States unilaterally changes its approach.

"And if the Biden administration declines to do so, we're probably going to see quite a lot of new DPRK weaponry over the coming years", said Korda, who is also Senior Research Associate and Project Manager with the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

He also pointed out that nuclear-armed ballistic missiles are a 1950s-era technology, and the concepts themselves aren't necessarily prohibitive—especially if you have help from other countries, as the DPRK did at the beginning of its nuclear program.

"At this point, North Korean scientists and engineers have become quite adept at developing indigenously-designed systems, and unless the security drivers of the DPRK's nuclear program are addressed very soon, I fully believe that it will be only a matter of time before we see Pyongyang roll out some dramatic new capabilities, including road-mobile solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missiles," declared Korda.

Joseph Gerson, President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, told IDN North Korean development of its nuclear weapons and its increasingly advanced and dangerous delivery systems are the logical/illogical response to historical and current perceived threats of attack.

"Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program is the logical, response to the repeated nuclear threats made by the United States and the military threats posed by the U.S.-Japanese-South Korean alliance system. You point your gun at me, I point mine back at you. You develop missile defenses that may be able to disarm our nuclear forces, we will build nuclear weapons that can circumvent your systems," he said.

It is a classical spiraling nuclear arms race and is not entirely different from China's development of its "minimum deterrent" nuclear arsenal, which appears to be on the very of being increased and upgraded to become a "medium deterrent" arsenal,

said Gerson, who is Co-Founder of the Committee for a Sane U.S.-China Policy, and author of "Empire and the Bomb: How the U.S. Uses Nuclear Weapons to Dominate the World."

Like the United States and other nuclear powers' preparations for nuclear war, North Korea is practicing what C. Wright Mills termed "crackpot realism". Were their nuclear weapons to be launched (their display is already a "use"), at a minimum, they would result in the genocidal murder of tens of millions of innocent people.

"Worse, their use could ignite omnicidal nuclear exchanges, bringing on nuclear winter and ending civilization and nearly all life as we know it," Gerson warned.

Cable News Network (CNN) reported October 13 that the North Korean leader, standing against a backdrop of missiles, said weapons are needed to defend the country against a "hostile" United States.

"The US has been frequently sending signals that they are not hostile towards our country, but there is no single evidence that they are not hostile," Kim was quoted as saying.

Photos of the exhibition, released by state media KCNA, appeared to show what analysts believe is the Hwasong-16—one of the world's largest ballistic missiles.

Also pictured is a hypersonic glide vehicle, which allows missiles to theoretically fly as fast as 20 times the speed of sound and can be very maneuverable in flight—making them almost impossible to shoot down, experts said.

Kim described the missiles as "our precious (weapons)" and said every country should maintain strong military power, even in peaceful times, according to CNN.

In a statement released August 30, the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it is "deeply troubled" by indications that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea appears to have restarted its Yongbyon nuclear reactor.

The 5-megawatt reactor is widely believed to have produced plutonium for nuclear weapons and is at the heart of North Korea's nuclear program, the agency said.

At a news briefing, UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric, said Secretary-General António Guterres was aware of the reports "and concerned by the latest developments".

"He calls for the DPRK to refrain from any nuclear weapon-related activities and to resume talks with the other parties concerned.

"Diplomatic engagement remains the only pathway to sustainable peace and complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," he added.

Asked about the status of its relationship with DPRK, Ned Price, Spokesperson for the US State Department, told reporters October 15: "As you know, part of our strategy when it comes to the DPRK is to work closely with our allies and partners, to work in lockstep with our allies and partners towards our ultimate objective—and that is the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. That is why we have put such a premium on our coordination, on our consultation with our Japanese allies, with our allies from the Republic of Korea".

He pointed out that the first physical trip the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken undertook, upon his confirmation in the job, was to Japan and the Republic of Korea. He was accompanied by the Secretary of Defense, where he met jointly with foreign minister counterparts and the minister of defense counterparts as well in a 2+2 format with—in Japan and South Korea.

"But we're also committed to the trilateral relationship, knowing just how important it is. And we've had any number of opportunities to meet with our Republic of Korea and Japanese counterparts in a trilateral format," he said.

In fact, Price said, the Secretary did that just the other week on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York (late September). He has done that on other travels as well. Special Representative Sung Kim has done the same with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts.

"I don't have any meetings to announce at this time but suffice to say that we are—we continue to work closely on a bilateral basis as well as on a trilateral basis with our Japanese and South Korean counterparts to advance that ultimate policy objective," Price declared. [IDN-InDepthNews – 17 October 2021]

UN Warned of an Impending Threat from a Climate-Nuclear Nexus

By Thalif Deen

Marie-Claire Graf (Switzerland), the member of the World Future Council's Youth Present initiative and the Global North Focal Point for YOUNGO.

NEW YORK (IDN) — When the United Nations hosted a high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament on September 28, the annual event was characterized by one underlying fact: the participation for the first time of young climate activists who warned of an impending threat from a Climate-Nuclear nexus.

Marie-Claire Graf (Switzerland), the member of the World Future Council's Youth Present initiative and the Global North Focal Point for YOUNGO, said: *"We are experiencing the effects of past and current decisions—not made by us youth, but which bind us with you in multiple existential crises, the most critical of which are the climate crisis and the nuclear threat."*

"Both have transboundary and trans-generational impacts. Both require that global cooperation and common security take precedence over national self-interest and militarism," she added.

Graf also pointed out that the Climate-Nuclear nexus is incorporated into civil society initiatives such as the Move the Nuclear Weapons Money Campaign and Protect People and the Planet: Appeal for a Nuclear Weapon Free world.

UNFOLD ZERO, a platform for UN-focused initiatives and actions for the achievement of a nuclear-weapons-free world, says new thinking and action led by youth is vital to success in both the climate and nuclear disarmament movements.

Meanwhile, the high-level meeting also commemorated the annual International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26.

The UN meeting took place 4 days after the island nation of Vanuatu announced it was launching a process in the UN General Assembly to seek an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legal responsibility to stabilize the climate in order to protect current and future generations.

Vanuatu's move was initiated by Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change and *World's Youth for Climate Justice.*

This initiative was inspired by the *1996 ICJ Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, in which Vanuatu also played a leading role.

Over 60-75 speakers, including heads of state, foreign ministers, and ambassadors, addressed the three high-level meetings—on food insecurity (September 23), climate change (September 20) and nuclear disarmament (September 28).

Perhaps one of the best responses came from climate activist Greta Thunberg of Sweden who mocked world leaders when she said of the climate summit—which may also apply to the other two high-level meetings— "Net-zero, blah, blah, blah. Climate-neutral, blah, blah, blah. This is all we hear from our so-called leaders—words, words that sound great but so far has led to no action or hopes and dreams."

Alyn Ware, member of the World Future Council and Global Coordinator of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, told IDN there are connections between the climate crisis and the threats from nuclear weapons.

In addition, the use of nuclear weapons in armed conflict could cause catastrophic climatic consequences, and climate change is a conflict escalator that increases the risks of a nuclear conflict. And the global nuclear weapons budget—nearly $100 billion per year—is desperately needed to help finance carbon emission reductions and the phase-out of fossil fuels, he added.

John Loretz, Senior Consultant, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), a non-partisan federation of national medical groups in over 63 countries, told IDN: "Obviously, every gathering of states that focuses on the elimination of nuclear weapons is important and should receive much wider media coverage

than they usually get". The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons is no exception.

But "I honestly think, however, that a more important meeting on the horizon is the first meeting of States parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which has been rescheduled for mid-March next year. If we're to see any evidence of headway, it will be there".

"I would suggest some markers for measuring headway during the run-up to that meeting and coming out of it: 1) how many more member states will we have added between now and then? 2) How many non-member states will send observers, and will any nuclear-armed states be among them? 3) Will the agenda revitalize the focus on the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war as the basis for elimination? 4) Will member states come up with a practical/effective plan for using the treaty to ratchet up the pressure on the nuclear-armed states and their allies, especially when it comes to stigmatizing nuclear weapons and deterrence?" he asked.

"A lot of this comes down to an over-arching question about whether the unprecedented coalition of states, civil society, and international organizations that produced the treaty can hold together and re-establish the sense of urgency that drove the ban treaty process in the first place".

Achieving global nuclear disarmament is one of the oldest goals of the United Nations and it was the subject of the General Assembly's first resolution in 1946, which established the Atomic Energy Commission (dissolved in 1952), with a mandate to make specific proposals for the control of nuclear energy and the elimination of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.

"The United Nations has been at the forefront of many major diplomatic efforts to advance nuclear disarmament since. In 1959, the 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. Every United Nations Secretary-General has actively promoted this goal."

Yet, today around 13,080 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", said the United Nations.

Addressing the high-level meeting, Secretary-General António Guterres said the decision by the Russian Federation and the United States to extend the New START Treaty and begin a strategic dialogue is a welcome step. So too, was January's entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

"I call on all States to support the Treaty's goals and recognize its place in the global disarmament architecture. And the next year will bring fresh opportunities for the Member States to build on these developments."

This includes the long-delayed Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. A critical moment to reaffirm and build on past commitments.

"As part of these discussions, we have a window of opportunity to adopt new measures to reduce the risk of a nuclear detonation. Of course, eliminating nuclear risk means eliminating nuclear weapons. And we must continue working towards that goal," Guterres declared.

This is at the core of the Disarmament Agenda—the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, but also addressing the proliferation of conventional and new battlefield technologies.

"But until nuclear weapons are eliminated, it is in the interests of all States to prevent any possible use. I look forward to working with all Member States to make these upcoming meetings a success, and support their efforts to operationalize the new Treaty," he said. [IDN-InDepthNews — 29 September 2021]

Thalif Deen is a former Director, Foreign Military Markets at Defense Marketing Services; Senior military editor Middle East/Africa at Jane's Information Group. He is also co-author of the 1981 book on "How to Survive a Nuclear Disaster" and author of the 2021 book on the United Nations titled "No Comment – and Don't Quote me on Defense Analyst at Forecast International; and That"— both of which are available on Amazon.

A US-UK Submarine Deal Triggers Nuclear Fears Down Under

By Thalif Deen

Photo source: Warfare.Today

NEW YORK (IDN) — A tripartite deal, under which the US and UK have joined hands, to provide a nuclear-powered submarine to Australia (AUKUS) has prompted anti-nuclear activists to express fears it may eventually lead to a new nuclear power in the region.

The Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said the three nations had agreed to "a new enhanced trilateral security partnership". The new arrangement, he asserted, "does not signal a move towards domestic nuclear power or nuclear weapons".

But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) says they could have confidence in the Prime Minister's statement if he signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

"Not to do so, leaves the door open for a future stealthy slide towards nuclear weapons", the Foundation warned.

So far more 50 states have ratified the Treaty. Australia is not among them.

According to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the Treaty was open for signature on 20 September 2017. So far, 50 States have signed the treaty, with three (3) States also depositing their instruments of ratification with the Office of Legal Affairs.

Australia is not among them.

Dave Sweeney of the ACF says "while there is much we still don't know about the new defence deal with the US and UK, this is a significant move with serious implications for Australia."

Nuclear powered submarines pose specific environmental and security concerns—to Australian ports, shipyards and seas, he said.

Meanwhile, the French are furious that the deal has scuttled a hefty $66 billion contract with Australia—for 12 French-made diesel-electric submarines—threatening a political rift between France and UK-US.

The AUKUS deal is also viewed as an effort to reset the naval balance in the Pacific even as China also asserts its presence in the south China sea and expands its territorial claims reaching out to Taiwan, fully armed and equipped by the US.

Dr Rebecca Johnson of the British-based Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy (AIDD), told IDN that as the COP26 climate change conference (scheduled for 31 October-12 November in Glasgow, Scotland) approaches "we need to recognise that this nuclear submarine deal is a dangerous distraction from the real security and climate challenges that face the planet."

She said nuclear submarines are essentially for playing military games of hide-and-seek while threatening nuclear war.

"Australia's decision to break its contract with France has been framed in terms of defending against China, but with global heating threatening every year, this is like fussing with the chairs as a dozen nuclear powered Titanics hit the ocean floor", she warned.

Dr M. V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security and Director, Liu Institute for Global Issues at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, told IDN the AUKUS partnership and the proposal to transfer nuclear powered submarines definitely increases tensions with China and adds fuel to the arms race that has been ongoing.

"Because this step draws in more countries into this race, it will likely lead to the Chinese leadership feeling more encircled. To that extent, it does make war a bit more likely, even if not imminent," he argued.

The other impact of this decision to share sensitive military technology is to further damage the nuclear non-proliferation regime, which is already weak, he said.

"There has always been concern about non-nuclear-weapon states developing nuclear powered submarines, as for example with Brazil. This is because it is impossible to track the enriched uranium or plutonium in the nuclear reactors that are powering these submarines," said Dr Ramana.

When these nuclear submarines are out at sea, he pointed out, they will be in unidentified locations, and cannot be tracked by, for example, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Transferring nuclear powered submarines, that too fuelled by highly enriched uranium, sets a very bad precedent for other countries, declared Dr Ramana.

Dr Johnson said going in with Britain and US to get doubly dangerous uranium-fuelled submarines put regional and international security at greater risks and makes it harder to find diplomatic and cooperative solutions.

Instead of embarking on a slippery slope of breaching the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and security agreements with other South Pacific Nations such as the Treaty of Rarotonga, she said, Australia's interests would be best served by signing and implementing the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as would the overall security of Britain, France, China and the United States.'

"'We all have to wake up and smell the planet burning. Instead of escalating threats that could lead to nuclear war, now is the time to prioritise collective humanitarian security and put far more resources into deeper cuts in greenhouse gases to prevent climate meltdown.", she declared.

Dino Patti Djalal, a former Indonesian Ambassador to the US, was quoted as saying: "The picture is one of three Anglo-Saxon countries drumming up militarily in the Indo-Pacific region. "

It plays to the narrative offered by China that "outsiders" are not acting in line with the aspirations of regional countries, he added.

"The worry is that this will spark an untimely arms race, which the region does not need now, nor in the future". [IDN-InDepthNews — 25 September 2021]

UN Presses for Entry into Force of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

By J Nastranis

Photo: Kazakh Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tileuberdi and CTBTO Executive Secretary Dr. Robert Floyd during his visit to Astana, Kazakhstan.

NEW YORK (IDN) — As the race for modernisation of cyber and nuclear technologies gains momentum, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) "the centrepiece of global efforts to eliminate nuclear tests once and for all". A statement delivered on his behalf by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu said this Treaty has the power to protect future generations from the human suffering and environmental catastrophe produced by nuclear tests.

The CTBT, according to the UN Chief, is an invaluable contribution to nuclear non-proliferation. "It is a powerful barrier to the development of new weapons, putting a brake on the nuclear arms race."

The statement was issued on September 8 at the high-level plenary session to commemorate and promote the International Day Against Nuclear Tests (IDANT). The UN General Assembly also underlined the crucial role of the CTBT in the international nuclear arms control framework.

The CTBT bans all nuclear explosions everywhere, by everyone, for all time. Adherence to the Treaty, which opened for signature on September 24, 1996, is nearly universal, but it has not yet entered into force. Against this backdrop, Guterres has urged "those States that have not ratified the Treaty to do so without delay".

One hundred and eighty-five countries have signed the Treaty, of which 170 have also ratified it, including three of the nuclear weapon States: France, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom. But 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries must sign and ratify before the CTBT can enter into force. Of these, eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign the CTBT. The last Annex 2 State to ratify the Treaty was Indonesia on February 6, 2012.

The CTBT's unique verification regime includes an International Monitoring System (IMS) based on four key technologies—seismic, hydroacoustic, infrasound and radionuclide—to ensure that no nuclear explosion can go undetected. Currently, 302 certified facilities—of a total of 337 when complete—are operating around the world.

Addressing the UN General Assembly for the first time as Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Dr Robert Floyd also pointed to the success of the CTBT in underpinning a near-universal norm against nuclear testing over the 25 years since it opened for signature.

He is the CTBTO's fourth Executive Secretary, following Zerbo (2013-2021), Ambassador Tibor Tóth of Hungary (2005-2013) and Dr Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany (1997-2005). He was elected by States Signatories to CTBT in May 2021 and began his term on August 1.

Dr Floyd was previously Director-General of the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office (ASNO), Australia's national authority for implementing various treaties to control weapons of mass destruction, whose mandate includes overseeing operation of 23 facilities in the CTBT's International Monitoring System (IMS) to detect nuclear explosions.

Marked annually on August 29, IDANT was established in 2009 by the General Assembly to remember the consequences of nuclear tests and express support for the CTBT. The date commemorates both the anniversary of Kazakhstan's closure of the former Soviet Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in 1991, and the date the first Soviet nuclear test was conducted there in 1949.

In his statement to the High-Level Meeting, Dr Floyd said on September 8: "As we commemorate this important day, it is essential that we continue to listen to the voices of those affected by the tragic consequences of nuclear testing."

He recalled that in "a bold and visionary act", thirty years ago, the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, signed a decree closing the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, known as the Polygon.

Just two weeks earlier, Dr Floyd stood at one of the ground zeros at Semipalatinsk.

"With more than 450 nuclear tests conducted at the Polygon, and a total explosive yield equivalent to 2,500 Hiroshima bombs, the scope of the impacts on human health and the environment may never be fully understood," he said.

"Yet for the communities affected by exposure to nuclear tests, there and at other nuclear test sites around the world, including in my own country, the pain and anguish is representative of the sad legacy of an era of unrestrained nuclear testing."

He added: "But let us also not lose sight of the even greater suffering and loss that would result from a nuclear war, which would tear apart every shred of our collective humanity."

Dr Floyd called for commitment: to making sure that the world never again suffers from the disastrous consequences of nuclear testing; to reducing nuclear risks and preventing nuclear war; and to building a safer and more secure world for future generations by taking concrete actions to advance nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

A joint statement issued by Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, and CTBTO Executive Secretary Dr. Floyd called on all States to continue to observe the moratoria on nuclear explosions.

The statement added: "We urge those States that have not yet signed and/or ratified the Treaty to do so without delay.

We call on the eight remaining Annex 2 States, whose ratifications are required for entry into force of the CTBT, to demonstrate their commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament by taking this important step in support of international peace and security.

"We conclude that it is high time to bring the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty into force to advance nuclear disarmament and create a safer and more secure world for future generations." [IDN-InDepthNews – 09 September 2021]

A New Online Youth Platform Promotes Nuclear Disarmament

By Jamshed Baruah

Image: 'Youth Fusion' imposed on Youth Disarmament

GENEVA (IDN) — Worldwide youth are standing up for peace and nuclear disarmament and taking a wide range of innovative actions. The Youth Working Group of Abolition 2000 global network to eliminate nuclear weapons builds cooperation amongst these youth actions, brings youth voices into key UN and other disarmament processes. The group has launched a new online platform and youth action plan for a nuclear-weapons-free world: Youth Fusion.

Set up in conjunction with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 2020, the networking platform for young individuals and organizations focuses on youth action and intergenerational dialogue, building on the links between disarmament, peace, climate action, sustainable development and building back better from the pandemic. It informs, educates, connects and engages fellow students, activists and enthusiasts.

Against this backdrop, UN Secretary-General António Guterres in a message for International Youth Day, observed on August 12, said: "I urge everyone to guarantee young people a seat at the table as we build a world based on inclusive, fair, and sustainable development for all." In fact, 'Youth 2030' sums up the organisation's strategy. Ms. Jayathma Wickramanayake, the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, appointed in June 2017 at the age of 26, has been working towards making the UN a home to the youth of the world.

Youth Fusion collaborated with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs' (UNODA) #Youth4Disarmament, to mark the International Day against Nuclear Tests on August 29, 1991. The Day was unanimously proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly at the initiative of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev. This historic decision sent a strong political message and contributed to international efforts that led to the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996. 2021 marks 30 years of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site.

Youth Fusion availed of the occasion to call on young people to #StepUp4Disarmament, by walking or running 8.29 kilometres or the approximate equivalent of 10.9,000 steps.

This campaign sought to raise awareness of the devastating health consequences of nuclear testing through the emphasis on physical activity, while also promoting Sustainable Development Goal 3 on ensuring good health and well-being for all at all ages.

Youth Fusion partnered with Docmine, a Swiss-based creative studio, in promotion of Nuclear Games, an innovative film and online platform addressing nuclear history and the risks and impacts of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy.

It was launched together with a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), anti-nuclear activists and youth leaders with the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics on July 23.

[https://www.indepthnews.net/index.php/armaments/nuclear-weapons/4599-nuclear-games-for-the-young-coincides-with-tokyo-olympics]

As part of an ongoing project, Youth Fusion is highlighting the importance of inter-generational dialogue and of youth learning from the experience of those who have been long-time and effective leaders in the peace and disarmament fields. "In this regard, we recognise and affirm *Youth Fusion Elders*, those we hold in high esteem, and whose leadership, accomplishments, ideas and wisdom we highlight online and through our activities," says the group.

The Youth Fusion Elders include Bruce Kent, Uta Zapf, Mogens Lykketoft, Ana María Cetto, Tolegen Mukhamejanov, Andreas Nidecker and Scilla Elworthy.

Mr. Kent is a lifelong peace campaigner and changemaker, always working at the intersections of his Catholic faith and multifaceted social and political activism. Ms. Zapf has been a member of the German parliamentarian, (Bundestag) for 23 years. Mr. Lykketoft was the president of the 70th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and is a leading figure of the Danish Social Democratic party. Prof. Ana María Cetto is a distinguished physicist, Pugwashite and long-time champion of women and Latin American voices in science and technology.

Mr. Mukhamejanov is a poet, author of symphonies, operas, chamber music, music for films, theatre productions, songs, romances, popular instrumental music. He actively participated in the "Nevada-Semipalatinsk" social movement. Author of the popular songs such as "Zaman-Ai", a national anthem of the people's anti-nuclear protest. He is also President of International Association "Peace Through Culture", Co-Chair of the World Forum of Spiritual Culture, and a Member of World Academy of Art and Sciences.

Prof. (em.) Andreas Nidecker MD is a prominent Swiss physician, nuclear disarmer and President of the Basel Peace Office, as well as an early member of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). Dr Elworthy has spent the last four decades building peace and preventing conflict by non-violent means. She is the founder of such flagship initiatives as Oxford Research Group, Peace Direct and Rising Women Rising World, and a three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee.

Youth Fusion website also offers blogs and articles, aimed at exploring facets of nuclear disarmament and provide the readers with expanded perspectives on the matter.

These blogs and articles are the product of our volunteer teams and Youth Fusion's staff, and they remain open to submissions from young writers and academic minds from around the world.

Among these is an interview with Dr Tong Zhao, senior fellow in the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, based in Beijing at the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center for Global Policy. Dr. Zhao speaks about his personal experiences and China's No-First-Use (NFU) and nuclear disarmament policy.

Dr Zhao points out that "China's NFU was established by China's first-generation paramount leaders, such as Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong. Because they supported NFU, the policy became a central element of China's traditional nuclear strategy. So, the unique authority of China's first-generation political leaders really helped ensure that China would stick to NFU policy for a long time despite the change of leadership in following decades."

Dr Zhao adds: "Because of China's traditional adoption of NFU, it really affected how Chinese nuclear and military strategies make development and deployment plans for China's nuclear weapons.

They don't plan for preemptive use of nuclear weapons. They mostly practice using nuclear weapons after being struck by an enemy nuclear attack." [IDN-InDepthNews – 05 September 2021]

The Role of Citizen and Science Diplomacy Interactions in Nuclear Disarmament

By J Nastranis

Photo: Protesters. Source: Atomic Reporters.

NEW YORK (IDN) — The year 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of the closure of the Semey test site, the 76th anniversary of the United Nations, Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, of the first atomic testing Trinity, 51 years of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), 25 years of the The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) which is not entered into force, collapse of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and extension of New START *Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty* (New START) until February 2026.

Marzhan Nurzhan, a UNODA/OSCE Scholar for Peace and Security, has availed of the opportunity to write a two-part series of articles in 'Atomic Reporters', titled "Roles of key civil society actors in nuclear disarmament—Epistemic communities in multi-track diplomacy fora". Nurzhan showcases some of the instances of track 2 diplomacy activities through citizen and science diplomacy interactions.

"These occasions," says Nurzhan, "serve as a reminder to further continue pursuit of global nuclear disarmament in retaining negative peace implications and reinforce the need for more engagement on the topic of nuclear arms and international security through civil society empowerment, disarmament education, peacebuilding activities and mediation via multi-track diplomacy channels".

She was Fellow at the Nuclear Nonproliferation Education and Research Center at the KAIST. She was also the Education/Outreach Coordinator for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization's (CTBTO) Youth Group in 2019-2020.

In 2017, Nurzhan was chosen by the President of the UN General Assembly as the youth speaker for the United Nations High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament that was held that year.

Guided by the principle of social responsibility to the dual nature of science, the roles and actions of the scientists to be a part of the discussions laid the foundation of the term "citizen scientist", states Nurzhan.

One of the most prominent examples of the actions of citizen scientists was the collaboration on a manifesto issued jointly by Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russel in 1955, which emphasized the dangers of nuclear arms and called for peaceful resolution of international conflict caused by the Cold War.

The manifesto was launched under the chairmanship of Joseph Rotblat, a nuclear physicist, who worked to develop the first atomic bomb in the framework of the Manhattan project. With a strong belief that science and research should purport peace, Rotblat assembled a group of scientists and others from the east and west blocks under the auspices of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, that he established to provide platform for dialogue on the issues of disarmament and global security.

He was also recognized as a citizen scientist while being awarded a Nobel Peace Prize (1995) shared with the Pugwash movement for "their efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in international politics and, in the longer run, to eliminate such arms".

Although an American epistemic community pioneered the foundation of the internationally common knowledge and system of nuclear arms control, collaboration with the Soviets to avert nuclear war and retain strategic stability strengthened security regime between the opposing sides, continues Nurzhan. Thanks to the establishment of an international negotiation agenda based on the epistemic community engagement, policy proposals were taken into consideration and implemented in various ways.

Track two diplomacy was practiced not only within scientific circles, but also encouraged citizen diplomats, among the ordinary public, to join the efforts to promote peace and preserve humankind from the catastrophe of nuclear conflict. One of the instances was connected with the American girl

Samantha Smith, who wrote a letter to then Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov, to convey her concern regarding the possible nuclear exchange between two superpowers in 1982. She was invited to visit the Soviet Union which displayed the peacebuilding initiative that resulted in the establishment of cultural exchange programs with the United States fostering further growth of citizen diplomacy.

Another example of the citizen diplomacy is the American-Soviet peace walks comprised of a five-week long trip from Leningrad to Moscow that took place in 1987 and brought together 230 Americans and 200 Soviets impacting the way of their interaction and creating better understanding between the people from two axis of powers.

Amid these citizen diplomacy initiatives, the doctors from the USA and the USSR founded an organisation called International Physicians for the Prevention of the Nuclear War (IPPNW) in 1980, which was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1985. Despite the ideological divide, they demonstrated a common interest in preserving humankind from atomic warfare. They organised anti-nuclear protests to stop worldwide testing and to raise awareness of the public regarding the health, humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

Another fact of citizen diplomacy was depicted by the decision of Soviet officer, Stanislav Petrov, to save the world from the nuclear conflict whereas his duty was to register external missile attack, when in one of the days in 1983 the Soviet Union early-warning systems elicited an incoming nuclear strike which must had been reported and he instead chose to dismiss it as a false notification.

All these examples of citizen diplomacy actions along with science diplomacy and track two diplomacy interactions led to more appearance and diversity of informed civil society actors, resulting in the rise of non-governmental organisations to participate in international deliberations and demanding nuclear disarmament, notes Nurzhan. For instance, the NPT Preparatory Committee meetings and Review Conferences serve as a main forum for civil society actors and NGOs to officially take part in public meetings, deliver speeches and statements, organise side-events since 1994.

In 1995 at the Review Conference of the NPT, 195 NGOs attended as observers, where the indefinite extension of the Treaty was made. United in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and abolition of the nuclear arms, representatives of the NGOs jointly prepared a statement consisting of 11 points which called for a nuclear weapons convention that considers a verification aspect, the illegality of the use and threat to use nuclear arms, the completion of a truly comprehensive test ban treaty, a start of negotiations on a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons within a specific timeframe and etc.

"Since then, civil society actors actively participate in every NPT meeting at the United Nations and have the opportunity to address the delegations within given time, to make interventions at the official meetings, to organise briefings, to engage in a dialogue with the representatives of the governments and voice their issues," states Nurzhan.

However, there are also some limitations related to the participation of the NGOs in the closed meetings between the States Parties due to security concerns given the confidential nature of arms control negotiations and mechanism of the NPT process.

Nevertheless, there is a recent practice of including civil society actors, scientific or political researchers in most of the cases, members of the parliament into the States delegations at the table of negotiations to influence policy field to function as advisors, which is in line with the recommendation based on the UN Study on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education (2002).

Thus, throughout time, activities of civil society in the nuclear field transformed from being seen as activists or protesters to becoming more professional as epistemic community representatives, and their role in multilateral negotiations was decisive in exerting pressure and influence by campaign work, advocacy initiatives and lobbying to adopt several agreements such as the CTBT in 1996, advisory opinion on the legality of threat or use of nuclear weapons by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued in 1996. [IDN-InDepthNews — 18 August 2021]

Japan Should Propose New Security Alternatives to Nuclear Deterrence

Interview with Mr. Tetsuo Saito, Vice Representative, Komei Party

By Katsuhiro Asagiri

Photo: Hirohima Peace Memorial Park. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

TOKYO (IDN) — Hiroshima and Nagasaki mark the anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs on August 6 and 9 for the first time since the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) came into force on January 22. The survivors of atomic-bomb (Hibakusha) and various civic groups made active contributions to this historic achievement.

While the Japanese government, which relies on the US nuclear umbrella for Japan's national security, has thus far maintained its stance against joining the TPNW. Public opinion polls conducted in Japan from mid-2020 to January 2021 consistently show that a clear majority of Japan's population, 72% at its highest, believe that Japan should join the TPNW.

Against this backdrop, junior partner in the ruling coalition, Komei Party, has been urging the Japanese government to take the initiative in proposing new security alternatives to nuclear deterrence and has proposed that Japan should, at the very least, take part as an observer to the first meeting of the TPNW Conference of the States-Parties in order to participate from the very beginning.

In an E-mail interview with Katsuhiro Asagiri (KA), IDN's Asia-Pacific Bureau Chief, Mr. Tetsuo Saito (TS), Vice Representative of Komei Party, explained that as the only country to have experienced the horror of nuclear devastation in war, Japan should strive to enlist the support of the world in joining the TPNW. Following is complete text of the interview:

KA: You spent your senior high school days as well as 18 years as the prefectural representative of the Komei party in Hiroshima. We understand that people in your constituency keep asking you: "Why can't Japan join the TPNW, despite the fact that we experienced a devastating attack using atomic bombs?" What has been your reply to this important question?

TS: My personal sentiment is that Japan should become a signatory to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. If that isn't possible, then our country should at the very minimum take part as an observer to the Conference of the States-Parties to the Treaty, which is what I've been asserting in the Diet. At the same time, I realize that the Japanese government's reticence in signing the TPNW rises from its dependence on the US-Japan Security Treaty, which is based on the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, for Japan's national security.

KA: As a member of the ruling coalition, Komei Party has requested that the Government consider participation as an observer in the meeting of the state parties after the Treaty, which has meanwhile entered into force. And the state parties are scheduled to meet in January 2022.

Your party's stance is that Japan must seriously come to terms with the TPNW if it wants to fulfil its role as the a-bombed nation." What do you think is standing in the way of Japan not acting on your appeal?

Tetsuo Saito, Vice Representative of Komei Party Credit: Tetsuo Saito.

TS: As I noted earlier, Japan relies on the US nuclear umbrella for its national security as our country faces a very challenging security environment in which some nations in this region do not abide by the same values as we do and possess nuclear weapons. That is the reality we are confronted by. Having said that, as the only country to have experienced the horror of nuclear devastation in war, Japan should strive to enlist the support of the world in joining the TPNW.

KA: Also, Izumi Nakamitsu, the UN Under-Secretary-General has said: "I think that Japan, as the world's only nation attacked by nuclear weapons, should not pass up the opportunity to participate in the dialogue about the treaty." Do you think Ms Nakamitsu's remarks have left your senior coalition partner unimpressed?

TS: There are legislators in the Liberal Democratic Party that agree with the UN Under-Secretary-General's statement. Komei Party intends to work closely with them.

KA: Have you planned any campaigns to convince the Government to heed such calls?

TS: At the budget committee hearing held on February 22 this year, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi's response to my queries was ground-breaking. What he acknowledged was the formulation of a new doctrine to supersede nuclear deterrence. I see it as an opening to further discussion.

There are many ways to contribute to and inform a proper discourse of the Conference of the States-Parties by establishing, for example, the definition of "hibakusha" precisely because the Japanese are the only people to have experienced the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I feel that this would be informative for the countries possessing nuclear weapons as well. At the very least, Japan should take part in the Conference as an observer from the very start. [IDN-InDepthNews – 6 August 2021]

Nuclear Games for the Young Coincides with Tokyo Olympics

By Thalif Deen*

Image credit: Nuclear Games

NEW YORK (IDN) — The widely-televised Tokyo Olympics, which was inaugurated in the Japanese capital on July 23, wasn't the only game in town.

> Coinciding with the opening ceremony, a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), anti-nuclear activists and youth leaders launched "Nuclear Games," an innovative film and online platform addressing nuclear history and the risks and impacts of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy.
>
> Perhaps it was also a reflection of the longstanding cat-and-mouse game played by the world's nine nuclear powers—the US, UK, France, China, Russia, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel—violating the Olympic ideals of peace and humanity with a resurgent nuclear arms race.
>
> The coalition says Nuclear Games shines a light on nuclear issues which are deliberately downplayed by governments, including by Japan as it presents the Olympics with a virtually empty stadium because of coronavirus restrictions.
>
> Japan experienced nuclear bombings in 1945 and suffered one of the world's most devastating nuclear power accidents in 2011 and remains deeply affected by them.
>
> "Nuclear Games" also tells the stories of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Chernobyl disaster, the victims of uranium mining and nuclear testing and the North Korean nuclear program, using a unique combination of manga, historical footage, and interactive online content designed largely to engage younger audiences.

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

After following the Nuclear Games initiative, Tariq Rauf, former Head of Verification & Security Policy at the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told IDN: "I was struck by a comment at the launch by one of the young women presenters."

And he pointed out "that at many forums on nuclear weapons matters, most of the people involved were 30 years older than the younger folks."

"I think the manga format is well done and more impactful than talking-heads or academic-type writings. The visual medium in this day and age has taken over the printed word to a great extent", he noted.

As nuclear dangers increase and persist, said Rauf, it is important to tell the personal stories of those affected by the Cold War nuclear arms race and near misses of nuclear conflict.

However, conflating nuclear weapons with nuclear energy might not be a wise way to go, he cautioned, given climate change and burning forests.

Alyn Ware**,** Global Coordinator of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and Member of the World Future Council, told IDN the launch event was "superb".

"It was youth run and included youth leaders (peace, human rights, climate, disarmament) from Africa, Central Asia, NE Asia, North America and Europe. It uses a pop-art, animation style that is very dramatic."

Moreover, he pointed out, it's fresh, very people-centred, and seems to be capturing the interest of youth.

"Vanda Proskova is a star. She was the young person chosen to speak at the UN High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament last October. She is well worth interviewing."

So too is Kehkashan Basu, the keynote speaker for the launch event, and also a youth speaker at one of the UN High Level Meetings on Nuclear Disarmament (about three years ago), said Ware.

The link to her speech at the launch event follows: https://www.facebook.com/BaselPeaceOffice/videos.

In a press release, the coalition of NGOs said that nuclear dangers and tensions are rising today. According to the Pentagon, the risk of nuclear war is growing. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Doomsday Clock in 2021 remained at 100 seconds to midnight. It was last advanced in 2020.

"But many young people aren't even aware of the Cuban missile crisis, let alone the fact that nuclear dangers are worse now than in 1962," said Vanda Proskova, a Youth Fusion convener and a graduate student in international law who is active on nuclear issues.

"That's why nuclear education efforts like this are so important. When they learn the facts and the history, many young people want to do something about it," she noted.

"'Nuclear Games' is a wonderful tool for engaging more of them in the nuclear disarmament movement," said Proskova, who serves as Vice Chair of PragueVision Institute for Sustainable Security and is Co-Director of the Gender, Peace and Security program at Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament.

"Nuclear Games" was developed by interactive video books pioneer Docmine, a Swiss-based creative studio, with support from Basel Peace Office*,* Youth Fusion , Physicians for Social Responsibility Switzerland and the World Future Council.

It is offered in English and German and aimed at non-usual suspects: people who don't typically watch political documentaries or engage in anti-nuclear advocacy work, says the coalition.

"It will have particular resonance with younger viewers, many of whom are unfamiliar with the history it conveys of nuclear disasters, near misses, and ongoing threats and impacts".

A trailer for the feature film is posted here.

Joseph Gerson, President of the Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security, and Vice-President of the International Peace Bureau, told IDN: "In addition to appreciating the film's pointing to the ongoing existential nuclear dangers on the eve of the 76th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombings, I am glad that the Game's press release points to the hypocrisy of the Olympics being held midst the pandemic".

He said the Japanese government has cynically spent trillions of yen to prepare for the Olympics and then insisted on holding them against the opposition of most people in Japan.

"With only a quarter of the Japanese population vaccinated against Covid-19, we should reflect on how many more Japanese people would be alive today and next year were those yen, and others spent on building one of the world's most advanced militaries, instead been devoted to developing and purchasing vaccines. I hope that Japanese voters will bear this in mind when it is election time this fall," Gerson declared.

In the runup to July 23 opening ceremony, the Olympic torch relay was deliberately routed through Fukushima Prefecture, including the towns where the plant is located, and others nearby that were long abandoned in the wake of the disaster. Olympic baseball and softball competitions are also being held in a stadium in Fukushima Prefecture.

"This is government spin, deliberately minimizing and normalizing the disaster, and ignoring Fukushima's ongoing impacts and threats to public safety," said Dr Andreas Nidecker, MD, Basel Peace Office president and the originator of the "Nuclear Games" concept.

"Billions will watch the Olympics and get the carefully crafted message that everything in Fukushima is fine, and that nuclear meltdowns are quickly lived down. But that's dangerous denialism. We need a global education effort to promote basic literacy about nuclear dangers in order to make future nuclear disasters less likely," he declared. [IDN-InDepthNews – 25 July 2021]

** Thalif Deen is a former Director, Foreign Military Markets at Defense Marketing Services; Senior Defense Analyst at Forecast International; and military editor Middle East/Africa at Jane's Information Group. He is also the author of a newly released book on the United Nations titled "No Comment – and Don't Quote Me on That" available on Amazon.*

UN Determined to Counter Cyber Crime and Ensure Peace and Security

By J Nastranis

Photo credit: ITU

NEW YORK (IDN) — As digital advances continue to revolutionize human life, the United Nations has called for remaining "vigilant" about malicious technologies that "could imperil the security of future generations". Currently, there are over 4.6 billion internet users around the world.

It was not surprising, therefore, that UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet responded on July 19 to "Revelations regarding the apparent widespread use of the Pegasus software to spy on journalists, human rights defenders, politicians and others in a variety of countries are extremely alarming and seem to confirm some of the worst fears about the potential misuse of surveillance technology to illegally undermine people's human rights".

The revelations underlined the significance of what head of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA), Ms Izumi Nakamitsu, said in a recent Security Council meeting focused on peace and security:

"Digital technologies are increasingly straining existing legal, humanitarian and ethical norms, non-proliferation, international stability, and peace and security".

Moreover, she continued, they are lowering access barriers and opening new potential domains for conflict—giving both State and non-State actors the ability to wage attacks, including across international borders.

By 2022, an estimated 28.5 billion networked devices will be connected to the internet, a significant increase from the 18 billion in 2017, according to the ODA chief.

From disinformation to deliberate network disruptions, in recent years there has been a dramatic jump in malicious incidents targeting information and communications technology (ICT) that diminish trust between States and threaten critical infrastructure that depends on it.

Ms. Nakamitsu recalled the Secretary-General António Guterres' concern over increasing cyberattacks on healthcare facilities during the COVID pandemic, calling on the international community to do more to prevent and end them.

"Online violent extremism and trafficking have an often-overlooked differentiated impact on women, men and children, as do other ICT-related threats such as cyberstalking, intimate partner violence and the non-consensual dissemination of intimate information and images".

This, she said, is the reason why "equal, full and effective participation" of both women and men in decision-making in the digital arena must be prioritized.

Fighting rising cyber crime

While ICT threats are on the rise, so too are efforts to address them. For more than a decade expert groups at the government level have studied and made recommendations to address existing and emerging ICT dangers to international security,

including confidence-building, capacity-building and cooperation measures. A so-called Open-ended Working Group has adopted "concrete, action-oriented recommendations", the UN official said.

Meanwhile, regional organizations are also undertaking efforts, from implementing voluntary, non-binding norms on States to pioneering regional confidence-building measures or adopting regional tools to reduce ICT risks.

The primary responsibility for international security lies with States. But since ICTs are an integral part of societies, participants too have a role to play in securing cyberspace, the High Representative declared.

"Perspectives from the private sector, civil society and academia contribute a unique and important part of the collective solution to cybersecurity that the international community is seeking."

Ms. Nakamitsu said the UN "stands ready to support States" and others in promoting a peaceful ICT environment, and cited the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation along with subsequent roundtable discussions.

On 11 June 2020, for example, Mr. Guterres presented a set of recommended actions for the international community to help ensure all people are connected, respected, and protected in the digital age. The Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation is the result of a multi-year, multi-stakeholder, global effort to address a range of issues related to the Internet, artificial intelligence, and other digital technologies.

The action-oriented Roadmap presents the Secretary-General's recommendations for concrete action by diverse stakeholders that would enhance global digital cooperation in the following areas:

- Achieving universal connectivity by 2030—everyone should have safe and affordable access to the internet.
- Promoting digital public goods to unlock a more equitable world—the internet's open source, public origins should be embraced and supported.
- Ensuring digital inclusion for all, including the most vulnerable—under-served groups need equal access to digital tools to accelerate development.
- Strengthening digital capacity building—skills development and training are needed around the world.
- Ensuring the protection of human rights in the digital era—human rights apply both online and offline.
- Supporting global cooperation on artificial intelligence that is trustworthy, human-rights based, safe and sustainable and promotes peace.
- Promoting digital trust and security—calling for a global dialogue to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Building a more effective architecture for digital cooperation—make digital governance a priority and focus the United Nation's approach.

The Secretary-General's Roadmap builds on recommendations made by the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, and input from Member States, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and other stakeholder groups.

Ms. Nakamitsu pointed out that also the UN chief's Agenda for Disarmament, addresses new generation technologies that pose challenges to "existing legal, humanitarian and ethical norms; non-proliferation; and peace and security", she added.

The agenda calls for working with scientists, engineers and industry on technological innovation for peaceful purposes, and engaging with Member States to "foster a culture of accountability and adherence to emerging norms, rules and principles on responsible behaviour in cyberspace".

As the digital space has come to underpin most aspects of daily life, the scale and pervasiveness of ICT "insecurity" is a major concern, the UN Disarmament chief said.

She urged caution over assigning responsibility for ICT attacks, which could cause "significant consequences, including unintended armed responses and escalation"; States adopting "offensive postures" for hostile technology uses; and the development of "potentially destabilizing capabilities" by non-State armed and criminal groups, "with a high degree of impunity". [IDN-InDepthNews – 19 July 2021]

US Should Commit to A No-First-Use Nuclear Policy

Viewpoint by Van Jackson*

Image: A Trident II missile fires its first stage after an underwater launch from a Royal Navy Vanguard-class ballistic missile submarine. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (IDN) — It was one of the most potent lessons of the Cold War—nukes are good for deterring others from using nukes, but not much else. Weapons capable only of spasmodic mass violence are too crude as a credible tool of coercion in most circumstances.

If the United States seeks only deterrence, but not political advantage from nuclear weapons, then adopting a no-first-use nuclear policy is not just low-risk—it's necessary.

Most of the leading candidates campaigning for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination publicly endorsed a no-first-use policy. Legislation requiring it has growing support in the US Congress. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any scenario where the United States gains from using nuclear weapons before an adversary, especially when Washington's conventional arsenal has a global reach. A no-first-use nuclear policy would therefore be an honest nuclear policy. No sane president would use nuclear weapons before an adversary did, except perhaps out of tragic misperception. But since the Trump presidency, the imperative of a no-first use policy has grown more urgent.

Only a fool would trust in US strategic competence after the decision-making of the Trump era. Trump was a symptom not an anomaly of US politics today. He has spawned many imitators in the Republican Party, who traffic in conspiracy theories and promote antagonistic, militaristic and racialised foreign policies to score domestic political points.

Who wants to entrust a candidate of the far right with the authority to launch nuclear weapons? No first use is the most meagre of many measures needed to restrain US presidential authority in the nuclear realm.

While US President Joe Biden has spoken favourably about a no-first-use policy in the past, his administration's nuclear thinking is so far mostly indistinguishable from that of the Trump era. In the past four years, the United States has

withdrawn from most arms control agreements, expanded investments in hypersonic glide vehicles, advanced development of low-yield 'tactical' nuclear weapons, threatened nuclear use in the most gratuitous ways, and committed to a US$1.5 trillion nuclear modernisation plan.

Why, then, would preserving a first-use nuclear option be a good idea, especially when the context is not one of US restraint but rather an uninhibited US arms build-up? Opponents of no first use offer three justifications.

First, nuclear advocates claim that China, Russia and North Korea won't believe no-first-use declarations. Yet the fact that it sometimes pays to deceive in statecraft does not repudiate a no-first-use policy. If adversaries assume the worst about US nuclear planning, what's the harm in claiming they need not worry about US nukes unless they use theirs?

If the credibility of a pledge is a priority, Washington can strengthen it through additional changes. Legislation constraining presidential authority is one mechanism, so is eliminating the ICBM component of the nuclear triad, re-entering arms control agreements abandoned during the Trump years, and curbing investments in intermediate-range ground-launched missiles and 'tactical' nuclear warheads. When multiple signals are combined with a common message—especially costly and hand-tying signal—the context in which judgments are made changes and declarations become credible.

Second, an ambiguous policy encourages enemy uncertainty about whether the United States could use nuclear weapons against them. This is supposed to keep adversaries from using nuclear weapons against the United States or its allies. But in what scenarios do Washington's enemies think it will use nuclear weapons *first* when the United States has conventional munitions with global reach?

If a credible threat of nuclear retaliation cannot deter China, Russia or North Korea, why would an ambiguous US nuclear policy? US nuclear threats will not keep aggressors from making land grabs, threat-making or invading the neighbouring territory. The notion that the United States should keep enemies guessing about its intentions on nuclear strategy imports battlefield logic into peacetime circumstances.

If the United States really saw fit to make nuclear first-use threats in conflict, shifting from no-first-use to a declaratory policy of ambiguity would be better for 'keeping the enemy guessing'. There is no peacetime deterrence gained from allowing the fog of war to shroud geopolitics at all times.

The third argument is that allies reliant on US extended nuclear deterrence would worry about Washington's ability or willingness to deter threats on their behalf. So, what? No ally is in it *just* for the nukes. Because allies' fears of abandonment or entrapment can never be fully mollified, the United States must be cautious about being held hostage to them.

In extremis, the absence of US extended deterrence for Japan, South Korea or Australia *could* mean them going nuclear. But the old bargain—Washington does arms-racing so allies don't—makes no sense in a world where US politics is depressingly awry. Allied nuclear proliferation poses its own risks, but it may be a better alternative to US nuclear preponderance and presidential first-use launch authority.

While the arguments against a no-first-use policy don't add up on their merits, reasonable people have long debated these points. But circumstances have changed dramatically. The nuclear policy must reconsider giving a potentially unhinged or fascistic president the discretion to launch nuclear weapons before America's enemies do.

If the aim is to make US foreign policy less reliant on nuclear weapons over time while minimising risks of nuclear war, adopting no first use is the least the United States can do to make a down payment on a saner world. [IDN-InDepthNews – 10 July 2021]

* *Van Jackson is Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Defence and Strategy Fellow at the Centre for Strategic Studies, Victoria University of Wellington. He is also a Senior Associate Fellow at the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. He was previously a strategist and policy adviser in the Office of the US Secretary of Defense.*

Nuclear-Weapon States Urged to Take Decisive Steps Towards Disarmament

By Aar Jay Persius

Image Source: Geneva Centre for Security Policy

BERLIN (IDN) — *"A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."* On June 16, at their meeting in Geneva, US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin re-affirmed this fundamental truth, famously coined by their predecessors, Reagan and Gorbachev, at the last peak of the cold war, write the Foreign Affairs Ministers of Germany (Heiko Maas), Spain (Arancha González Laya) and Sweden (Ann Linde) in an article published in the German newspaper *Rheinische Post* on July 5

Back then, they recall, that sentence marked the beginning of a US-Soviet arms-control engagement beneficial to all humankind. Today, it instils new hope that the world can get back on the path of nuclear disarmament.

The three Foreign Affairs Ministers accentuate: "We need progress more than ever. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agreements have crumbled in recent years. Renewed tensions and mistrust between global powers have undercut further reduction of nuclear arsenals in the past years."

A case in point, they write is: "The Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, one of the basic instruments for arms control, was terminated in 2019." In fact, technological advance increases complexity, creates new risks and may even fuel a new arms race. "And regional proliferation challenges, such as Iran and North Korea, continue to demand our full engagement."

The three Foreign Ministers published the article in the aftermath of the fourth ministerial meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament in Madrid on July 5. Sweden launched the meeting with 16 Foreign Ministers from non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS) at their gathering 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. The members of the Initiative span 16 states from all continents: Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. After the launch of the Initiative in Stockholm, the ministers met at their second meeting in Berlin in February 2020 and virtually in June 2020. The third ministerial gathering was held in Amman, the capital of Jordan on January 6, 2021. On the occasion of that meeting, the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, told the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament: "Individually, you represent different regions. Together, you represent a collective commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons".

In their joint article, the three Foreign Ministers point out that in the four Ministerial meetings, the Initiative has developed more than 20 actionable proposals to reinforce the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the implementation of its disarmament goals ahead of its upcoming Review Conference in August 2021.

The extension of the New START Treaty earlier this year through February 4, 2026, the prospect of new talks between Russia and the US on the future of arms control and risk reduction measures, and a new commitment to restraint at the highest political level, as expressed on June 16 in Geneva by the US and Russian presidents, they write, are good news. "These ideas figured among the 'stepping stones' that our initiative had proposed."

While they welcome these positive developments, they encourage nuclear-weapon States to take further decisive steps towards disarmament. These may include reducing the role of nuclear weapons in policies and doctrines, minimising the risk of conflict and of accidental nuclear weapon use, further reducing stockpiles, and contributing to next-generation arms control arrangements. [IDN-InDepthNews – 09 July 2021]

Miles Before the World Moves Further from the Brink of Nuclear Catastrophe

By Aar Jay Persius

Image: The US-Russia arms race. Source: china.org.cn

BERLIN (IDN) — U.S. President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin reaffirmed at their June 16 summit in Geneva the principle agreed on by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". They also decided to engage in a robust "strategic stability" dialogue to "lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures".

But, as the 2017 Nobel Prize winner, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), pointed out, "the outcome of the Geneva Summit does not reflect the gravity of current nuclear risks". Presidents Putin and Biden, the ICAN adds, have made "no further commitments to reduce their nuclear arsenals, which would be in line with the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and global opinion".

Russia (6,255) and the United States (5,500) together control 90% of the world's nuclear arsenals SIPRI estimates at a total of nearly 14,000, which are many times more powerful than the nuclear weapon dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945. The other nuclear weapon states are the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea. Thirty-one other states endorse nuclear weapons.

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association, is of the view that the Geneva summit communiqué, albeit "modest and overdue is a vital recognition that the status quo is dangerous and unsustainable". It is a chance for a course correction that moves the world further from the brink of nuclear catastrophe.

In a joint statement on strategic stability released following their June 16 meeting, the U.S. President and his Russian counterpart Putin further said the strategic stability dialogue would be "integrated," "deliberate," and "robust." However, it remains to be seen to which extent each side will walk the talk. The U.S. and Russia appear to have different priorities for discussion in the upcoming strategic stability dialogue.

Biden said that the dialogue would "work on a mechanism that can lead to control of new and

dangerous and sophisticated weapons that are coming on the scene now that reduce the times of response, that raise the prospects of accidental war." He did not explain what specific weapons systems he has in mind. Both presidents said, the date and location of the dialogue is not yet set but will soon be determined by officials at the U.S. State Department and, as Putin noted, by the Russian Foreign Ministry.

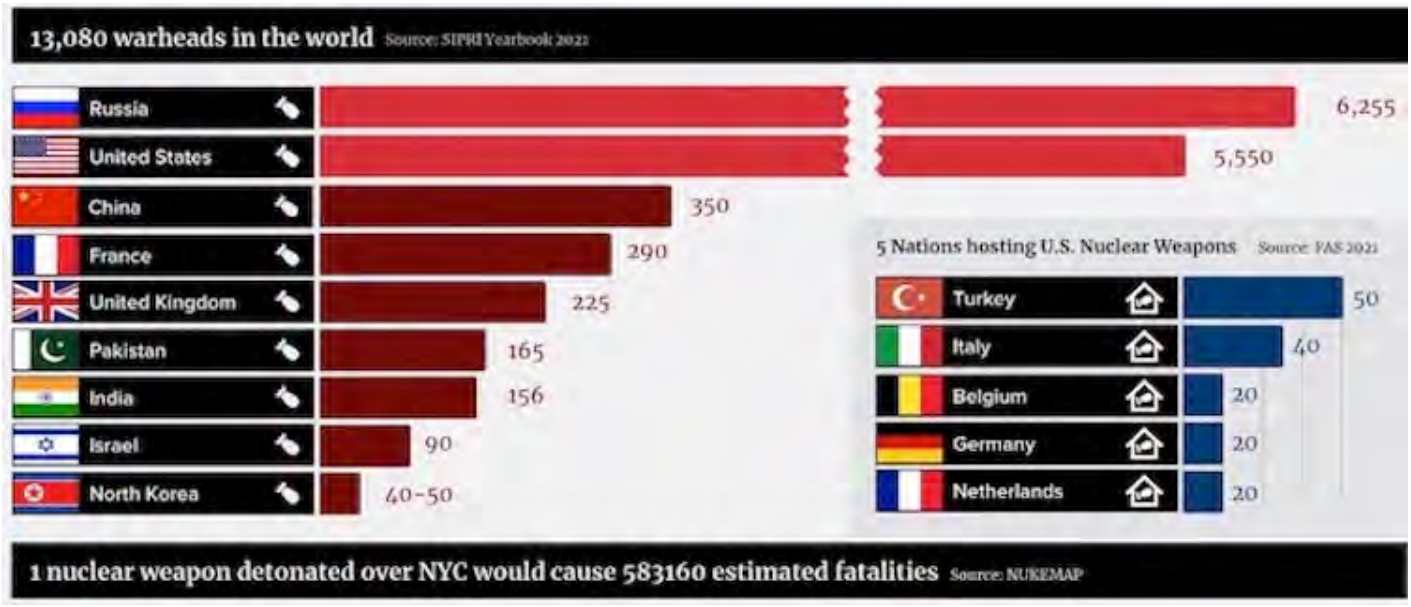
Arms Control Association's Kingston Reif, Shannon Bugos and Hollis Rammer have drawn attention to what Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said at the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference on June 22 that Moscow has proposed to Washington "as a first step a joint review of each other's security concerns".

The next step would be to "outline possible ways how to address these concerns," with the goal being an agreed framework that "will be instrumental for further engagement in actual negotiations on eventual, practical agreements and arrangements".

Significantly, the Geneva Summit Joint Statement marked the first step in a long-drawn-out process towards further progress on nuclear arms control after over a decade of deadlock. And this before the last remaining arms control agreement between the world's two largest nuclear powers expires in five years.

The previous strategic stability dialogue was last held in August 2020 under the Trump administration in the lead up to the expiration of the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) in February. But two days before the treaty's expiration, Biden and Putin agreed to extend New START by five years until 2026.

During a round of the strategic stability dialogue in June 2020, the United States and Russia agreed to form three working groups, which met in July of that year. A U.S. official at the time said that the topics for the working groups were nuclear warheads and doctrine; verification; and space systems. Whether those groups have continued their work since then is unclear.



Arms control observers say that the strategic stability dialogue would be separate from any future negotiations on a potential arms control agreement to follow New START, but it could help set the foundation for those formal follow-on talks. Rose Gottemoeller, chief U.S. negotiator of New START, emphasized in an op-ed in Politico on June 14 that the goal for the strategic stability dialogue should be "a good discussion rather than a treaty, although over time the two sides may agree to some measures to build mutual understanding, confidence and predictability".

Concerning future negotiations on a replacement for New START, Gottemoeller urged Biden and Putin to "issue clear, simple guidance about what exactly the new treaty will cover and when it should be completed."

Arms Control Association has refer to National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's remarks on June

10 that the Biden administration will aim to discuss "the very complex set of nuclear arms issues that face our two countries". These include what may come after New START, "how do we deal with the fact that the INF Treaty is no more, [and] how do we deal with our concerns about Russia's new nuclear systems".

Signed in 1987, the INF Treaty led to the elimination of 2,692 U.S. and Soviet nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometres.

Washington has expressed its desire to address Russian nonstrategic nuclear weapons and bring China into the arms control process. Sullivan said that "whether additional elements get added to strategic stability talks in the realm of space or cyber or other areas, that's something to be determined as we go forward".

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on June 9 that "anything that affects strategic stability must be discussed during a dialogue," including "nuclear and non-nuclear, and offensive and defensive weapons." Russia has, in addition, proposed the inclusion of not only China in arms control but also France and the United Kingdom.

His deputy, Ryabkov, told the Carnegie International Nuclear Policy Conference on June 22: "The parties may decide to adopt a package of interrelated arrangements and/or agreements that might have a different status if necessary. Moreover, it might be possible to design some elements in a way to make the room for others to join."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on June 17, one day after the Geneva Summit: "China welcomes the agreement reached between the U.S. and Russia on engaging in a bilateral dialogue on strategic stability".

He assured: "China always actively supports international efforts in nuclear arms control and will continue to hold discussions on a broad range of issues bearing on strategic stability with relevant parties within such frameworks as the cooperation mechanism of the five nuclear weapon states, Conference on Disarmament, and the UNGA [United Nations General Assembly] First Committee."

He added: "We also stand ready to have a bilateral dialogue with relevant sides with mutual respect and on an equal footing." A few days earlier, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi had called for the five nuclear-weapon states to reaffirm the Reagan-Gorbachev principle that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". [IDN-InDepthNews – 01 July 2021]

The US Builds A 'Systemic' Pact to Counter China's Growing Influence

By J Nastranis

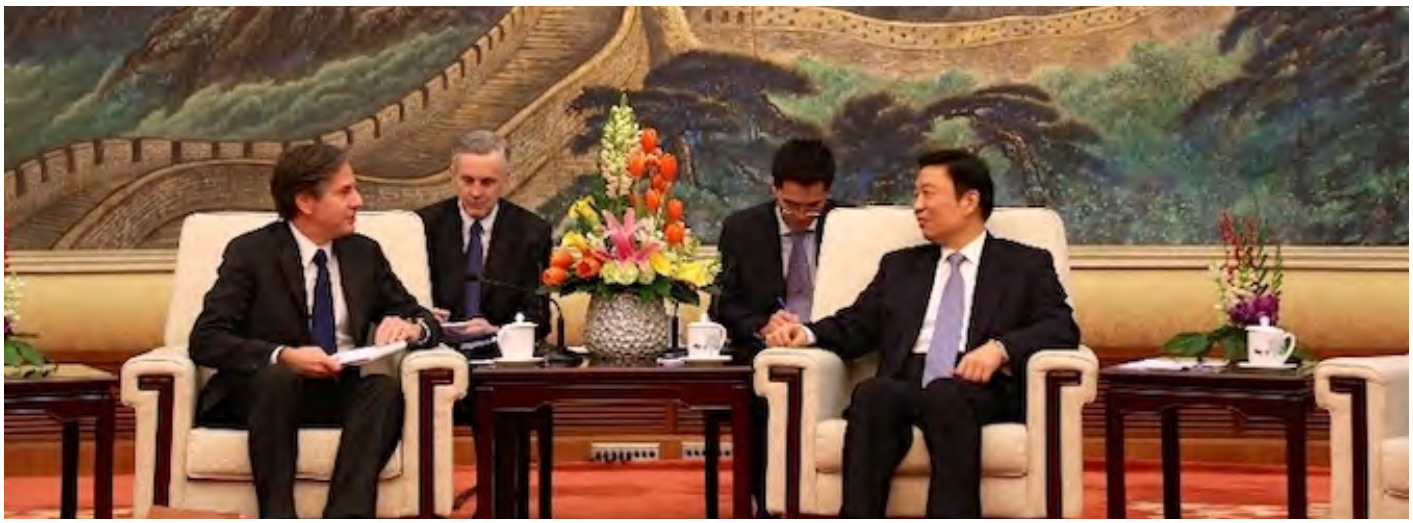


Photo: Deputy Secretary of State Antony "Tony" Blinken meets with Chinese Executive Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing, China, on February 11, 2015. [US State Department] *(Continued on next page)*

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEASPONS

NEW YORK (IDN) — Nearly five months after the termination of Donald Trump's erratic presidency, US President Joe Biden has triggered a sort of 'systemic' pact against China—with partners in the Group of Seven (G-7), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union (EU) at the June 11-15 summits.

Thirty NATO allies agreed that "[we] will engage China with a view to defending the security interests of the Alliance. … China's stated ambitions and assertive behaviour present systemic challenges to the rules-based international order and to areas relevant to Alliance security."

Members of the alliance also called on NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to develop a new strategic concept for adoption at the next year's summit in Madrid. "For Washington, it was a win to have NATO, the cornerstone of the United States' network of alliances, acknowledge the challenge posed by China and expand its predominantly trans-Atlantic focus," writes Daniel Baer, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and former US ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) from 2013 to 2017. The OSCE has 57 participating States from Europe, Central Asia, and North America.

The NATO statement was followed by the G-7's focus (June 11-13 in Cornwall) on China's human rights failures, in addition to the challenges from Beijing on security and rule of law: "we will promote our values, including by calling on China to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, especially in relation to Xinjiang and those rights, freedoms and a high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law," the summit's communiqué reads.

That, says Baer, is a step-up from the last G-7 in-person summit in 2019, which merely noted the Joint Declaration and Basic Law and called for violence to be averted, rather than actually calling for rights and freedoms to be respected.

And the last summit statement contained no reference to the Chinese campaign against Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang, which both Biden and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken have said constitutes genocide.

The US-EU summit joint statement included a mutual pledge to coordinate policies and echoed the G-7 in making a direct reference to China's menacing behaviour in the Taiwan Strait. "That had never before been mentioned in a joint statement between a US president and the EU leadership".

However, as Reuters reported, China on June 16 rejected and deplored the joint statement made by the United States and the European Union criticising China. The Chinese government firmly opposed any country imposing their own demands on other countries, Zhao Lijian, a spokesman from China's foreign ministry, said at a regular news briefing. This was in response to the US and the EU pledging to cooperate on a host of global issues including addressing China.

"The soup is never eaten as hot as it's cooked," remarked an observer. The EU is China's largest trading partner, and in 2020, China overtook the US in becoming the EU's largest trade partner. Most of this trade is in industrial and manufactured goods. Between 2009 and 2010 alone, EU exports to China increased by 38% and China's exports to the EU increased by 31%.

Besides, China came to Italy's aid when the country was at the epicentre of the COVID-19 outbreak this year in Europe when the EU failed to give medical assistance and supplies to Italy.

Against this backdrop, Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association has warned against "alarmism" and pleaded for engaging China on arms control.

He refers to recently leaked documents pointing out that for more than six decades, the United States has been worried about China's regional influence, military activities—and nuclear potential. For instance, in 1958, US officials considered using nuclear weapons to thwart Chinese artillery strikes on islands controlled by Taiwan. "Then, as now, a nuclear conflict between the United States and China would be devastating."

Also, Adm. Charles Richard, head of U.S. Strategic Command, warned in February: "There is a real possibility that a regional crisis with Russia or China could escalate quickly to a conflict involving nuclear weapons, if they

perceived a conventional loss would threaten the regime or state."

Worse yet, adds Kimball, as tensions between the United States and China continue to grow, many members of Congress, along with the U.S. nuclear weapons establishment, are hyping China's ongoing nuclear weapons modernization effort as a major new threat.

During testimony before Congress in April, Richard claimed that China's military is engaged in a "breathtaking expansion" of its arsenal of some 300 nuclear weapons. He argued that this requires fortifying the US nuclear armory, which is already 10 times larger than China's.

Instead, argues Kimball, US policymakers need to avoid steps that stimulate nuclear competition with China and pursue serious talks designed to prevent miscalculation and reduce the risk of conflict. The United States also needs to develop a realistic strategy for involving China and the other major nuclear-armed states in the nuclear disarmament process.

According to US projections, China could increase the size of its arsenal. It is deploying new solid-fuelled missiles that can be launched more quickly than its older liquid-fuelled missiles, increasing the number of its long-range missiles that are armed with multiple warheads, putting more of its intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) on mobile trucks, and continuing to improve its sea-based nuclear force.

"These moves, while concerning, do not justify alarmism. China is not seeking to match US nuclear capabilities. Rather, it is clearly seeking to diversify its nuclear forces so it can maintain a nuclear deterrent that can withstand potential US nuclear or conventional strikes," states Kimball.

Beijing's nuclear plans are also likely designed to hedge against advancing U.S. missile defense capabilities, such as the sea-based Standard Missile-3 Block IIA system, which could potentially compromise China's nuclear retaliatory potential, he adds.

Although China's arsenal may be smaller, it is still dangerous. Beijing's nuclear modernization efforts make it all the more important to pursue meaningful progress on nuclear arms control—particularly as the Chinese leaders claim to support non-discriminatory disarmament and minimum deterrence. "Yet they have said they will engage on arms control only when US and Russian leaders achieve deeper cuts in their much-larger nuclear arsenals."

The United States and Russia can and should do more to cut their bloated nuclear stockpiles. But as a nuclear-weapon state party to the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, China is also obligated to help end the arms race and achieve disarmament sooner rather than later, Kimball further argues.

A former Foreign Secretary of India and a former Ambassador to China Vijay Gokhale would appear to have a different perspective. In an OpEd in the eminent daily newspaper *The Hindu,* on March 20, 2020, Mr. Gokhale argued that Beijing has abandoned the 'mantra' of Chinese diplomacy.

He writes: "Chinese diplomats measured their words and kept their dignity. They projected power but rarely blustered. They were masters of their brief because Zhou (Premier Zhou Enlai) had taught them that the real advantage in negotiations was to know more than the other side."

In July of 1971, Premier Zhou Enlai met with Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor to US President, who was on a secret mission to China. Both sides made a public announcement that US President Richard Nixon would be invited to visit China soon.

The Zhou policy was continued in the 1980s when Deng Xiaoping took up the reins. "Deng died in 1997. China prospered just as Deng had imagined… A new generation of diplomats, with knowledge of the English language and a careerist mindset, has started to whittle away at the anchors laid down by Zhou and Deng. Arrogance has replaced humility. Persuasion is quickly abandoned in favour of the stick when countries take actions contrary to Chinese wishes," concludes Mr. Gokhale. [IDN-InDepthNews – 27 June 2021]

Canadian and French Nuclear Weapons Policies Challenged for Violating the Right to Life

By Jaya Ramachandran

Photo: UN Human Rights Committee session. Credit: Jaurocks

GENEVA (IDN) — Spurred by civil society organisations, the UN Human Rights Committee has challenged the nuclear weapons policies of Canada and France as being in violation of the Right to Life, a right enshrined in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person.

In addition to Canada and France, civil society organisations have also challenged the nuclear policies of Iceland, North Korea, Russia and the United States. The nuclear weapons policies of Denmark have been challenged as part of the periodic review of their obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The importance of issues brought up in the UN Human Rights Committee lies in the fact that a single nuclear warhead could kill hundreds of thousands of people, with lasting and devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences.

Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea possess an estimated total of nearly 14,000 nuclear weapons, most of which are many times more powerful than the nuclear weapon dropped on Hiroshima. Thirty-one other states are also part of the problem.

Besides, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey all host U.S. nuclear weapons. The United States insists that it maintains operational control of these weapons but their stationing in these countries helps U.S. nuclear war planning.

Twenty-six countries (plus the five hosts) 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).

The challengers in the UN Human Rights Committee come from groups of civil society organisations. In submissions made as part of the periodic review of the obligations of Canada and

France under the ICCPR, they have made recommendations to the governments on actions they could take in order to conform to the right to life with respect to the protection of this right from the threat or use of nuclear weapons.

Canada does not have any nuclear weapons of its own. But on Canada's nuclear weapons policy and the Right to Life, the submissions argue: "Canada's support for and participation in NATO policy and practice of the threat to use nuclear weapons, and in preparations by NATO to potentially use nuclear weapons including the option to initiate a nuclear war, are violations of Canada's responsibilities under the ICCPR to protect the right to life."

The challengers in the UN Human Rights Committee are Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Basel Peace Office, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, Religions for Peace Canada, World Federalist Movement Canada, World Future Council, and Youth Fusion high

The UN Human Rights Committee adopted General Comment 36 in October 2018, which affirmed, among others, that the threat or use of nuclear weapons 'is incompatible with respect for the right to life and may amount to a crime under international law'. The Comment further noted that States parties to the ICCPR must 'refrain from developing, producing, testing, acquiring, stockpiling, selling, transferring and using them, to destroy existing stockpiles, and to take adequate measures of protection against accidental use, all in accordance with their international obligations'.

The Human Rights Committee's Statement adds that States parties *'must also respect their international obligations to pursue in good faith negotiations in order to achieve the aim of nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control and to afford adequate reparation to victims whose right to life has been or is being adversely affected by the testing or use of weapons of mass destruction.'*

France possesses 290 nuclear weapons. The challengers say France is violating its obligations to protect the Right to Life under the ICCPR by the development, testing, production and maintenance of nuclear weapons and by the deployment, threat to use and preparations to use nuclear weapons in a wide range of security scenarios, including the option to use nuclear weapons first in an armed conflict.

Obligations to protect the Right to Life*,* the civil society organisations say, also have been challenged by the failure to provide adequate reparations to people impacted by French nuclear tests, and opposition to initiatives and processes for multilateral nuclear disarmament.

Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Basel Peace Office, Initiatives pour le Désarmement Nucléaire, World Future Council and Youth Fusion have submitted Submission to the UN Human Rights Committee.

Submissions from the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and from the Canadian Pugwash Group & Rideau Institute recommend that "Canada should proceed on a national basis to disavow the policy of nuclear deterrence and cease any activity, within NATO or elsewhere, in support of that policy and the nuclear forces associated with it".

A more detailed submission from Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Basel Peace Office, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, Religions for Peace Canada, World Federalist Movement Canada, World Future Council and Youth Fusion, recommends that Canada welcome the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and participate in the First Conference of States Parties as an observer country. That conference is scheduled to take place January 12 -14, 2022 in Vienna.

Canada is further asked to announce support for the adoption of no-first-use policies by all nuclear-armed states and propose to the next NATO Summit adoption of a policy of No-First-Use of nuclear weapons and a goal for NATO to eliminate nuclear deterrence from its security policy within 10 years.

The civil society organisations also reaffirm the Reagan-Gorbachev dictum that *'a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought'* and propose that the States Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) also adopt this dictum along with supportive policy measures, such as No-First-Use and a commitment to achieve the global prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons no later than 2045, the 75th anniversary of the NPT and the 100th anniversary of the United Nations. [IDN-InDepthNews – 07 June 2021]

NATO Plans to Focus on Russia and China

By Robert Johnson

Photo: US Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and other members of NATO Ministers of Defense and of Foreign Affairs meet at NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, October 14, 2010.

BRUSSELS (IDN) — "What we are currently experiencing is the brain death of NATO," French President Emmanuel Macron declared in a blunt interview with The Economist in November 2019. Europe stands on "the edge of a precipice", he said, and needs to start thinking of itself strategically as a geopolitical power; otherwise, we will "no longer be in control of our destiny."

That was two years after Donald Trump took over as the U.S. President. But the apprehensive environment prompted NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg to appoint the "NATO Reflection Group," co-led by former German Defence Minister Thomas de Maiziere and former US State Department official Wess Mitchell. This was also in view of the fact that NATO's "Strategic Concept" outlining threats and capabilities to counter them has not been revised since 2010.

"Nuclear deterrence" has been at the core of NATO's mutual security guarantee and collective defence since its inception in 1949. The very first NATO Strategic Concept the same year referenced the requirement to "*ensure the ability to carry out strategic bombing promptly by all means possible with all types of weapons without exception*."

Both the 2010 Strategic Concept and the 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review made clear that the current 30-nation North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) seeks its security at the lowest possible level of forces and is fully committed to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

The United States committed nuclear weapons to NATO in July 1953, with the first American theatre nuclear weapons arriving in Europe in September 1954.

NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements, which were already in place by the time negotiations for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) began in the 1960s, were codified by the United States and the Soviet Union as a precursor for the final agreed NPT text.

The United Kingdom has also extended its nuclear forces, including its current single submarine-based system and Continuous At-Sea Deterrent, to the protection of NATO Allies for over 50 years.

Since the height of the Cold War, it has unilaterally reduced the size of its land-based nuclear weapons stockpile by over 90 per cent, reducing the number of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe and its reliance on nuclear weapons in strategy, stresses NATO.

Since progress on arms control and disarmament must take into account the prevailing international security environment, NATO argues, at the Warsaw Summit in 2016, NATO leaders recognised that conditions for achieving further disarmament were unfavourable given Russia's aggressive actions and military build-up in recent years.

During the 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels, Heads of State and Government once again affirmed NATO's long-standing commitment to nuclear deterrence, stating that "*as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance*."

The NATO Reflection Group, set up by NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, presented its final report on November 20, 2020. Titled "NATO 2030: United for a New Era", the report focuses on the challenges of today and tomorrow. These, it says, are "Russia's aggressive actions, the threat of terrorism, cyber-attacks, emerging and disruptive technologies, the security impact of climate change, and the rise of China."

The report pleads for NATO adapting to meet the needs of "a more demanding strategic environment marked by the return of systemic rivalry, persistently aggressive Russia, the rise of China", and the growing role of Emergent and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs), at the same time that it faces elevated transnational threats and risks.

The report wants NATO to continue the "dual-track approach of deterrence and dialogue" with Russia. In other words, the Alliance must respond to Russian "threats and hostile actions in a politically united, determined, and coherent way, without a return to 'business as usual' barring alterations in Russia's aggressive behaviour and its return to full compliance with international law".

At the same time, NATO would remain open to discussing peaceful co-existence and to reacting positively to constructive changes in Russia's posture and attitude. Besides, NATO's dual-track strategy will result in raising "the costs for Russian aggression"— even of "hybrid forms of Russian aggression", while at the same time supporting increased political outreach to negotiate arms control and risk reduction measures.

Also, NATO needs to devote much more time, political resources, and action to the security challenges posed by China—based on an assessment of its national capabilities, economic heft, and the stated ideological goals of its leaders.

The report adds: NATO should develop a political strategy for approaching a world in which China will be of growing importance through to 2030. The Alliance should infuse the China challenge throughout existing structures and consider establishing a consultative body to discuss all aspects of Allies' security interests vis-à-vis China.

It must expand efforts to assess the implications of China's technological development and monitor and defend against any Chinese activities that could impact collective defence, military readiness or resilience in the Supreme Allied Commander Europe's (SACEUR) Area of Responsibility.

The NATO Summit in Brussels on June 14, 2021, at the Alliance HQ in Brussels, Belgium will be "a unique opportunity to reinforce NATO as the enduring embodiment of the bond between Europe and North America," says a NATO press release. [IDN-InDepthNews — 12 May 2021]

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

Time to Think Beyond Current NWFZs

Viewpoint by Dr Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan

The writer is Chairman of Blue Banner NGO, Former Mongolian Permanent Representative to the UN.

Photo: Dr Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan (Credit: Global Peace Foundation) against the backdrop of Chinggis Khaan (Sükhbaatar) Square in Ulaanbaatar, the capital and largest city of Mongolia. CC BY-SA 4.0

ULAANBAATAR (IDN) — Post-cold war peace dividend has not realized. Though the number of nuclear weapons of the two largest nuclear weapon holders—Russia and the United States—was reduced but then the reduction process came to a complete halt. The number of states possessing nuclear weapons has almost doubled against the background of further modernization of such weapons, lowering the threshold of their possible use and the increase in nuclear weapon spending. The non-proliferation regime is gradually weakening.

One of the contributions of non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS) to reducing nuclear proliferation has been the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) that are recognized as practical contributions to non-proliferation and confidence building.

The main elements of NWFZs are: agreement among members of a particular region not to acquire nuclear weapons or allow placing nuclear weapons on their territory, agreement on a verification mechanism and acquiring security assurances from the five nuclear-weapon states (the P5): Russia, the United States, China, France and the United Kingdom.

Issue of correctly defining NWFZs. Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) makes reference to *the* right of *groups of States* (emphasis added by the author) to establish NWFZs[1]. It is understandable that in the late 1960s interest of negotiators of the NPT was to encourage establishing regional zones that would involve many NNWS.

Based on the experience of establishing the first NWFZ in Latin America and in fact encouraged by

it, UN General Assembly in 1974 called for a "comprehensive study of the question of NWFZs in all its aspects" to promote the establishment of such zones in other parts of the world. Ad Hoc Group of Qualified Governmental Experts established for that purpose had produced in 1975 a report on the issue.[2] Despite its name, the focus of the study was on regional zones only (known as 'traditional zones').

However, at the same time, the study also recognized that life was rich in its diversity and therefore it did not rule out non-traditional cases. Indeed, there can be situations when individual states, due to their geographical location or for some valid political or legal reasons, cannot be part of traditional zones. The question is: Should such cases be regulated and protected by international law? Otherwise, many blind spots and grey areas may appear in the nuclear-weapon-free world that we all are trying to build.

Mindful of that, the report had pointed out that obligations relating to the establishment of NWFZs may be assumed not only by groups of states, entire continents or large geographical regions but even by individual countries.[3]

Having considered the report, the General Assembly in its resolution 3472 (XXX)[4] had defined NWFZs. Regarding the scope of the definition, the Assembly had declared that the definition "in no way impaired the resolutions which the General Assembly has adopted or may adopt with regard to specific cases of nuclear-weapon-free zones nor the rights emanating for the Member States from such resolutions."[5] Due to differences of views on this issue, the resolution was adopted by a vote of 82-10-36, underlining that the definition did not enjoy universal support.

Based on this regional approach to NWFZs, five traditional zones have been established, i.e. in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, on the entire African continent and in Central Asia, that include 118 states, making up almost 40% of world population and 60% of UN membership. That is a practical contribution of NNWS to nuclear non-proliferation. Currently, efforts are underway to establish the second generation of regional NWFZs in regions with conflicts or where great powers have geopolitical interests and stakes. They include the Middle East, Northeast Asia and the Antarctic. Encouraged by the progress in establishing of NWFZs in the South Pacific, Southeast Asia and on the African continent, in January 1997 the General Assembly had asked the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC), its subsidiary organ that considers and makes recommendations on disarmament issues, to help promote the establishment of additional regional zones by elaborating guidelines thereon.

The UNDC adopted in 1999 the guidelines that again underlined that each NWFZ was the product of the specific circumstances of the region concerned and that the guidelines needed to be regarded as a "non-exhaustive list of generally accepted observations in the current stage of the development of NWFZs"[6], hinting thus on the need to look at the issue of defining NWFZs in broader terms.

Mongolia's experience. During the cold war, Mongolia was an ally of one of the two superpowers and was under its political influence. After the Sino-Soviet border clashes in 1969, the Soviets entertained the idea or made believe of making a pre-emptive strike against Chinese nuclear facilities. The US made it known to the Soviets that such an act would be the beginning of World War III. That response most probably convinced the Soviets to back down.

The main lesson drawn by Mongolia, sandwiched between the Soviet Union and China, was that alliance with a nuclear weapon state and hosting the latter's bases did not contribute to confidence and made the hosting country a legitimate military target. Mindful of this lesson as well as the agreement between Russia and China not to use territories of neighbouring third states against each other, in 1992 Mongolia declared its territory an NWFZ (meaning a single-State zone) and has since been working to have that status internationally recognized and guaranteed.[7]

Politically, the P5 welcomed Mongolia's initiative as a peace-loving gesture but in practice were reluctant to support the concept of single-State zones. So as to acquire support for its initiative, in 1997 Mongolia proposed to the UNDC to consider the issue of establishing single-State zones in parallel with elaborating the new guidelines and submitted a working paper

thereon[8]. However, the P5 was reluctant saying that doing so would set an unwelcome precedent and also undermine incentives for establishing new regional zones. The P5's negative position deprived the UNDC to properly consider the issue.

When negotiating a UNGA resolution on Mongolia's issue the P5 were still reluctant to recognize it as a single-States zone. After some talks, they agreed to recognize Mongolia's unique nuclear-weapon-free status but not name it a zone[9].

Nearly two decades of talks and negotiations of Mongolia with the P5 at expert and Ambassadorial in bilateral, trilateral formats and with the P5 as a group, and Mongolia's agreement not to insist on a multilateral treaty on the issue, in 2012 the P5 signed a joint declaration regarding Mongolia's status in which they pledged to Mongolia, and in fact to each other, to respect its status and not to contribute to any act that would violate it.[10] That was an important step in addressing Mongolia's concern but the P5 still refused to recognize it as a single-State zone.

It is pertinent to ask the P5, that are permanent members of the UN Security Council that by the UN Charter are entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, what is more important, establishing single-State zones that would contribute to international trust and security or knowingly allow for nuclear blind spots or grey areas to place weapons-related facilities and thus contributing to further distrust. The answer is obvious.

Broader implications of single-State zones

A single-State zone is not only a Mongolia-related phenomenon. It might be established in Nepal or Afghanistan, for example. Thus, when India and Pakistan became de facto nuclear-weapons states in 1998, some South Asian states have developed an interest in the issue. For example, 11-article draft legislation was submitted to the parliament of Bangladesh dealing with a related issue. In Sri Lanka, this idea raised interest as well, at least in the academic circles. In 2016 Iceland's Parliament declared the country and its exclusive economic zone an NWFZ[11]. With the entry into force of TPNW some states parties to military-political alliances, inspired by some of their peers, might decide to outlaw hosting nuclear weapons during peacetime.

The gap in international law needs to be addressed. P5 reluctance to recognize single-State zones creates a gap in developing international law. The practical legal consequence of such loopholes must be seriously looked into since however effective regional zones may be, in the end, the nuclear-weapon-free world would be as strong as its weakest links. Even in the case of territories south of the Equator which is considered to be 99% covered by NWFZs, in actual fact, it is not so.

Thus, in the Western Pacific, small island states not parties to regional zones and non-self-governing territories (NSGTs) with their vast surrounding ocean spaces should not be excluded from developing a nuclear-weapon-free world. The same can also be said of some other areas south of the Equator.

With the intensification of the arms race, one should not exclude that NWS might not be tempted to use territories of NNWS and NSGTs and place there, if not actual nuclear weapons, then nuclear weapons-related facilities, such as surveillance, tracking, homing or cyber-interference devices, part of command-and-control systems so as to acquire political-military advantages at a time when time and space are becoming important if not determining military factors. Therefore, there is a need for the P5 to make a joint statement (a softer version of assurance) on non-involvement of NNWS in nuclear-weapons support related activities.

Need for a new study on NWFZs. The circumstances mentioned above underline the importance of recognizing single-State zones as essential parts of NWFZs that would not serve as weak links but also allow un-tapping to the fullest extent the potential of NWFZs.

In September 2013 at the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, Mongolia proposed to undertake a second comprehensive study on NWFZs in all its aspects[12] by making practical use of the nearly four decades of accumulated state practice, rich experience and lessons learned that would be useful in negotiating the second-generation zones. The study should also address the issue of providing unconditional

security assurances by the P5 to the protocols to NWFZ treaties. Looking to the future, the study should examine the issues of establishing single-State zones and providing NNWSs that are not parties to regional NWFZs with some softer versions of assurances mentioned above until international legally binding negative security assurances for all NNWSs are negotiated and agreed. In short, it is time to think and act beyond the current practices of NWFZs.

The Conference of nuclear-weapon-free zones and Mongolia (NWFZM) to be held this year just prior to the NPT Review conference provides an opportunity to address these issues that would further strengthen NWFZs and expand the geographical scope of their operation for the cause of peace and greater security. That would be yet another practical contribution of NWFZs to strengthening the non-proliferation regime. [IDN-InDepthNews – 30 April 2021]

[1] Article VII: Nothing in this Treaty affects the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties in order to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons in their respective territories.
[2] UNGA, 30th Session. Official Records. Document No. 27A (A/10027/add.1)
[3] Ibid.
[4] UNGA resolution 3472 (XXX) of 11 December 1975
[5] Ibid.
[6] Report of the Disarmament Commission. General Assembly Official Records. Fifty-fourth session. Supplement No. 42 (A/54/52)
[7] UNGA document A/47/PV.13 of 6 October 1992
[8] UNGA document A/CN/10/195 of 22 April 1997
[9] UNGA document A/RES/53/77 of 12 January 1999
[10] UNGA and SC documents A/67/393 and S/2012/721 of 26 September 2012
[11] Parliamentary resolution on a national security policy for Iceland. Adopted in the 145th Legislative Session, 2015-2016. Parliamentary document 1166-327th matter. No.26/145
[12] See UNGA document A/68/PV.11

Plea for Diverting Funds from Nuclear Weapons to Combating COVID-19

By Jamshed Baruah

Photo: US Democrats—Senators Markey and Khanna—introduce ICBM Act: Invest in Cures Before Missiles. Credit: UNFOLD ZERO | PNND.

GENEVA (IDN) — The Nobel laureate International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a coalition of non-governmental organizations promoting adherence to and implementation of the United Nations nuclear weapon ban treaty, has been pleading for divestment in nuclear weapons. "The imminent entry-into-force of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) allows for a unique opportunity to hit the nuclear weapons producers where it hurts—their wallets," an ICAN campaign says.

As the risk of a nuclear detonation is reaching levels not seen since the Cold War, banks, pension funds and investment firms still invested $748 billion in the production of nuclear weapons between 2017 and 2019, putting our savings into a weapon that can unleash unprecedented humanitarian suffering across the whole world, ICAN argues.

While addressing the health and economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and other legislators around the world have been addressing budget allocations, especially those relating to nuclear weapons and other military items.

Some of these are outlined in the resource Assuring our Common Future: Parliamentary handbook on disarmament for security and sustainable development, which PNND and the Inter-Parliamentary Union launched in November 2020, in particular in the chapter on Pandemics and disarmament, public health and economic sustainability.

Two Democrats in the U.S. Congress have now launched an additional initiative—known as the ICBM Act. It aims at stopping the further

development of the Pentagon's new $93-96 billion ground-based strategic deterrent (GBSD) intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and direct those savings towards the development of a universal coronavirus vaccine. "*The United States should invest in a vaccine of mass prevention before another new land-based weapon of mass destruction*," says Democratic Senator Ed Markey.

He is Co-President of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), a non-partisan forum for parliamentarians nationally and internationally to share resources and information, develop cooperative strategies and engage in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues, initiatives and arenas.

Sen. Markey launched the initiative on March 26, 2021, jointly with the Democrat Rohit Khanna who has been serving as the U.S. Representative from California's 17th congressional district since 2017. He is Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on East Asia, and Member of the House Armed Services Committee. Khanna also served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the United States Department of Commerce under President Barack Obama from August 8, 2009, to August 2011.

"The ICBM Act makes clear that we can begin to phase out the Cold War nuclear posture that risks accidental nuclear war while still deterring adversaries and assuring allies and redirect those savings to the clear and present dangers posed by coronaviruses and other emerging and infectious diseases," said Khanna.

"The devastation sown by COVID-19 would pale in comparison to that of even a limited nuclear war**.** The ICBM Act signals that we intend to make the world safe from nuclear weapons and prioritize spending that saves lives, rather than ends them," he added.

"The GBSD program is unneeded… there is simply no logical reason to allow the program to move forward. For much cheaper, we can extend the lifespan of the Minuteman III missiles we already have and instead focus on investing in the urgent national security threat in front of us: the COVID-19 pandemic," he continued.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has continually cited affordability concerns related to the estimated $1.7 trillion dollars—which includes the GBSD, associated warhead, and plutonium pit production requirements—that is planned through fiscal year 2046 to upgrade the U.S. nuclear weapons enterprise. The *ICBM Act* demonstrates that the United States can maintain a safe, secure, effective and affordable nuclear arsenal that deters adversaries and reassures allies without making a multi-generational estimated $260 billion life-cycle investment in the GBSD. An October 2020 public opinion poll showed that only 26 per cent of registered voters preferred replacing the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile with GBSD, as compared to 60 per cent of registered voters who opposed replacing the Minuteman III missile.

Bill Perry, former Secretary of Defense, supports the legislation: *"Whatever you think ails this nation, a new generation of nuclear missiles is not the answer. The good news is that the country can save money and become more secure at the same time. Congress can and should redirect this nuclear funding to address more pressing needs like the pandemic."*

Former Congressman John Tierney, Executive Director, Council for a Livable World, said: *"When more Americans have died from the coronavirus than in combat in World War II, it is time for the United States to rethink its national security priorities…Instead of building more weapons to fight a Cold War strategy, let's invest in meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow."* Tom Collina, Policy Director, Ploughshares Fund, said: *"It is time to put masks and vaccines before new nuclear missiles. We shouldn't spend our limited resources on nuclear weapons that we don't need and that make(s) us less safe. Instead, we must redirect tax dollars to helping families and fighting the pandemic.*"

Stephen Young, Acting Co-Director, Global Security Program, Union of Concerned Scientists, said: "*Not only does the United States not need ICBMs to keep us protected, (but) their current 'prompt launch' posture makes nuclear war more likely due to the risk of mistaken or accidental launch."In that light, he added, the United States should not spend $264 billion to build and deploy hundreds of land-based missiles, but devote those resources to higher priorities like ending the pandemic, addressing the climate crisis, and building racial equity. The ICBM Acts begins that vital process.* [IDN-InDepthNews — 14 April 2021]

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

2022 JOINT MEDIA PROJECT REPORT

Publishers: The Non-Profit International Press Syndicate
(International Press Syndicate gGmbH)
Europaplatz 2, D -10557 Berlin

Global Coordinator | Editor-in-Charge: Ramesh Jaura
Layout: Radwan Jakeem.

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