

2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

Statement by Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

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United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the 'There are no right hands for wrong weapons.' The overwhelming majority of countries agree. Yet the nuclear weapons States tells us that they have the rights, the hands and the need to possess these weapons of mass destruction

We all know that human hands are fallible. Indeed, the risks and consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation are too serious for this meeting to result in failure. These risks are heightened through the new risk of cyber warfare and the growth of terrorist groups.

We all know that if some States insist on a so-called right to nuclear weapons, it is illogical to expect that others won't also expect similar 'rights.' It's a recipe for proliferation.

As for the need for nuclear weapons, we in New Zealand can understand how such a belief can arise in a dangerous world. We too used to be under the nuclear umbrella but we cast away its myth that threatening to annihilate civilians provides security – and since abolishing nuclear weapons our security has arguably improved, and our international status and influence been enhanced.

It is more than half a century since US President John F. Kennedy evocatively declared that a country using nuclear weapons would fail to protect its own people – "Even the fruits of victory would be ashes in our mouths!"

This is no less true today. At least 159 countries have signed up to an initiative on the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. These are so grave – the destruction of civilisation and humanity – that their use, possession and development should be prohibited. The only way to protect ourselves against that risk is for all nuclear weapons to be eliminated.

To protect people against a nuclear holocaust all Parties to the NPT must meet their obligations under the Treaty. Most of us have done so – we have not proliferated nuclear weapons. We have met our side of the bargain. Those who possess nuclear weapons promised as the quid pro quo 45 years ago that they too would disarm.

The P5 have not met their side of the bargain under Article VI, despite solemnly agreeing to do so. Unequivocal undertakings have been made and repeated but not implemented and honoured.

The US and Russia maintain over 1000 weapons on Cold War high alert status and under launch-on-warning policies. Rescinding this would be a straight forward and effective step towards making the world safer. Some have still not ratified the CTBT. The nuclear weapon states are spending US\$100 billion a year on their nuclear weapons, much of that to modernise them.

Their continued development of strategies based on the possession and potential use of nuclear weapons cannot be reconciled with Article VI obligations to disarm.

If they do not agree at this NPT to concrete, detailed measures to phase out nuclear deterrence and eliminate their stockpiles, then non-nuclear States will most likely look for other mechanisms outside the NPT to address this.

Parliamentarians for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament urge governments in the coming 3 weeks to make the historic breakthrough that the world has been awaiting for nearly half a century.

The Inter Parliamentary Union, which comprises the parliaments of over 160 countries including the parliaments of most of the nuclear-armed States, last year adopted a resolution by consensus calling on their governments to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, and to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements.

What this Conference must deliver is progress on the implementation of Article VI of the Non Proliferation Treaty – on the development of a comprehensive legally-binding mechanism for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. The disarmament pillar of the Treaty must be given the same focus as the non-proliferation pillar.

Let the legacy of this Conference not be continued apathy and complacency about this threat but a determined commitment that nations act upon to ensure the survival of humanity.