

The Road to Zero Nuclear Weapons



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The abolition of nuclear weapons has been a core objective of the international community ever since the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrated that humanity had crossed a threshold of destruction – and had developed the capacity to obliterate not only whole cities, but our civilization and the ecosystems which sustain life itself.

The very first resolution of the United Nations called for a collective effort to eliminate nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The ensuing Cold War pushed politics in the opposite direction – leading to a massive build-up of nuclear arsenals. It was pure luck that this did not lead to a nuclear holocaust.

The end of the Cold War unfortunately did not bring an end to the threat. We still have over 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world's arsenals – many on high operational readiness to be used – plus an increase in the number of States possessing nuclear weapons – and an increased risk of non-State actors acquiring or producing nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, we also have an unprecedented - and possibly unique – opportunity to reverse the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear doctrine, and start building the framework for a nuclear-weapons-free world.

World leaders have embraced the vision of a nuclear weapons free world. High-level officials and former officials from across the political spectrum have supported the call, including many who believed that nuclear deterrence was necessary during the Cold War but is now a dangerous relic of the past.

Civil society is now calling more strongly than ever for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Over 2000 organisations have joined Abolition 2000, the global network to eliminate nuclear weapons, to call for a nuclear weapons convention – a global treaty to abolish nuclear weapons. Independent polls, published by Abolition 2000 on public opinion in nuclear-weapon states and their allies, show an overwhelming majority in support of such a global treaty.

The concept of such a treaty has shifted from being an ideal – to a practical path towards a more secure world. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has circulated a model treaty exploring the legal, technical, institutional and political elements of a nuclear abolition treaty, demonstrating its feasibility.

In October 2008, the UNSG released a Five-Point Proposal on the path to a nuclear-weapons-free world which called for the commencement of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention (or similar package of agreements), combined with simultaneous action on various supportive measures, such as universal ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, a global agreement to control fissile materials, the full recognition of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones and the establishment of additional zones, binding

assurances not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States, reinforcing the rule of law in peace and security, and preventing an arms race in outer space.

At its 120th Assembly in Addis Abba, the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted by consensus a resolution supporting the UN Secretary-General's Five Point Proposal and urging parliaments to instruct their governments to support the proposal.

Many parliaments took up this call and adopted resolutions supporting the UNSG's proposal including the proposal for negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention. This included some of the parliaments of NATO countries as well as non-nuclear countries. The resolutions were introduced by members of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (or PNND), a global network of parliamentarians from across the political spectrum collaborating to prevent nuclear proliferation and achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world. Most of the resolutions were adopted unanimously.

In addition, individual parliamentarians around the world, including from the Nuclear-Weapon States endorsed a Parliamentary Declaration Supporting a Nuclear Weapons Convention, circulated by PNND. I was honoured to be at a special event at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference where PNND presented these declarations and a list of the parliamentary resolutions to the UN Secretary-General and the States Parties to the NPT. These actions helped lead to a break-through at the NPT Review Conference, when the States parties agreed by consensus that:

"All States need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons" noting "the Five-Point Proposal for Nuclear Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which proposes *inter alia* the consideration of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or a framework of separate mutually reinforcing instruments backed by a strong system of verification";

Last year, UNSG Ban Ki-moon sent a letter to every parliament, the first time a UNSG has ever done so, noting the vital role of parliamentarians in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, and commending IPU and PNND for their leadership in this area. To date, approximately 50 Speakers/Presidents of Parliaments have replied, including from some of the Nuclear Weapons States, outlining some of the actions their legislatures are taking in support. I encourage IPU delegations present to check whether their Speaker of President of Parliament has responded.

Parliamentarians have taken further action by calling on their governments to support the UN General Assembly resolution calling for the commencement of negotiations leading to the conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention. This resolution is based on the nuclear disarmament obligation in the Non-Proliferation Treaty that was affirmed by the International Court of Justice in 1996 as a universal obligation – applying to all States and all peoples.

In 2010, the resolution was amended to reflect UNSG's Five-Point Proposal and the breakthrough at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. This, combined with concerted action in parliaments, led to an increase in support from 124 votes in favour the previous year to 133 in favour. This includes some of the States possessing nuclear weapons. The resolution is coming up for a vote again at the United Nations next week. I encourage IPU delegations and other parliamentarians to check whether your government is supporting the resolution, and if not to call on them to support.

Another important nuclear disarmament resolution is being introduced at the UNGA this year which focuses on the **process** to start multilateral work on nuclear disarmament without specifically mentioning the UNSG's Five-Point Plan or the proposed nuclear weapons convention. This resolution, which aims to break the 14-year long deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, calls for the establishment

of two working groups – one on nuclear disarmament and the other on prevention of an arms race in outer space, also deserves support.

The 2009 IPU resolution and the UNSG's Five Point Proposal highlight the importance of nuclear-weapon-free zones as regional security building mechanisms and as stepping stones to a nuclear-weapons-free world. Existing NWFZs include Antarctica, Latin America & the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Africa, South East Asia, Central Asia, the Sea Bed, Outer Space and Mongolia as a single-State NWFZ. Most of these areas were involved in some way in nuclear weapons testing, development or deployment prior to becoming NWFZs. The establishment of NWFZs has consolidated a shift away from nuclear weapons and towards common security mechanisms in these regions.

Parliamentarians are actively advancing proposals for additional nuclear weapons free zones including in the Middle East, North East Asia, Central Europe and the Arctic. I encourage IPU delegations and other parliamentarians to increase and enhance your activity on these proposals, possibly with the assistance of PNND.

Parliaments also have a vital role in implementing domestic measures to prevent proliferation and promote nuclear abolition. This includes adoption of non-proliferation measures required by UN Security Council resolution 1540, and more comprehensive measures to prohibit nuclear weapons entirely as has been done in Austria, Mongolia, New Zealand and the Philippines. These are measures that will be required to build the framework for a verifiable and enforceable nuclear-weapons-free world. I encourage IPU delegations and other parliamentarians to examine these domestic examples and to look at adopting similar legislation.

Although the existential threat from nuclear weapons is a key global concern, in Africa we face daily concerns of survival due to poverty, environmental destruction, civil conflict and the flow of small arms and light weapons.

The continued power struggle between nuclear weapon States is one of the factors that prevents the global collaboration needed to meet development needs including the UN Millennium Development Goals. So too is the irrational and unethical wastage on the world's militaries - \$1,6 trillion per annum – which not only sucks the human and financial resources from development, but also feeds into corrupt power structures around the world including in Africa. When weapons flow, warlords gain power and traditional forms of democracy flounder.

Thus, a reduction in military spending and a capping of the power of military corporations – some with annual income greater than the GDP of entire countries – is vital. In this respect I applaud the example of the Norwegian government which, under direction from parliamentarians and civil society, divested from corporations involved in the most unethical of practices including manufacture and sale of landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons. I encourage parliamentarians to urge their governments to follow-suit, and also to engage fully in the current negotiations on an Arms Trade Treaty to curtail the rampant flow of arms to regimes with questionable human rights practices. The Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons can assist parliamentarians in this work.

In conclusion, let me thank the IPU and PNND for their leadership in the area of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, in assisting parliaments and parliamentarians to engage in a cross-party and effective way to collaborate in the building a secure nuclear-weapons free world, and one in which militarism itself gives way to common security for the benefit of us now and for future generations.

Thank you