

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

2012 Report of the Joint Media Project

Conducted by Inter Press Service (IPS)
and Soka Gakkai International (SGI)
in cooperation with Media Network of
Global Cooperation Council



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This report is part of a project aimed to strengthen public awareness of the urgent need for abolition of nuclear weapons. It was initiated by the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist association, and the Inter Press Service (IPS) global news agency in April 2009, with a view to help shed light on the menace of atomic weapons from the perspectives of civil society through the global media network of IPS and its partners such as Global Perspectives. The journalistic articles, reproduced here, were written and published between April 2011 and March 2012 and are freely accessible online at: www.ipsnews.net/news/projects/nuclear-weapons and www.nuclearabolition.net.

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MESSAGE FROM

H.E. NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER | PRESIDENT OF THE 66TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The world we live in today continues to witness ever growing complexity and increasing interdependence. Our relations as nations continue to develop and our threat perceptions continue to change yet our key goal remains a safe and prosperous life to all peoples. It was the realization of this fact that brought the United Nations to being and made among its key purposes, the maintenance of international peace and the promotion of friendly relations among States allowing them to cooperate for their collective good. It was only in the aftermath of the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that the international community realized the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and the impossibility of sustained human co-existence with that weapon of mass destruction. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) came as a main response. Its entry into force in 1970 brought hope that if all its parties commit to their obligations, with an intention to push for the Treaty's universality, the objective of a world free from nuclear weapons appeared to be within reach.

While the United Nations General Assembly First Special Session dedicated to Disarmament decided, in 1978, that nuclear disarmament remained to represent the highest priority in the field of disarmament, the role of the United Nations in this context was further stressed. Its disarmament machinery was employed to support not only nuclear disarmament efforts but general and complete disarmament at large. The conclusion of crucial treaties such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and efforts to start negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva came as natural results.

It is important to acknowledge that there has been some progress in nuclear disarmament, most notably achieved through bilateral agreements between the United States and the Russian Federation or through unilateral efforts of other nuclear-weapon States. However, the fact that tens of thousands of nuclear weapons remain in existing nuclear arsenals, confirms that there is so much more required and expected. At the most recent NPT Review Conference in 2010, agreement was reached to convene a conference in 2012 on a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. At the same conference, not only was the universality of the NPT acknowledged as an important priority but steps were also identified to

follow-up on the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments. This too represents progress.

Furthermore, I particularly note that the 2010 Review Conference underlined the inalienable right of every state party to make its own choices regarding its national plans for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It is also very significant that, it referred, for the first time ever, to a Nuclear-Weapons Convention to ban those dreadful devices, and acknowledged that any use of nuclear weapons represents a violation of international humanitarian law. That indicates we are on the right track but much remains to be done and the time to do it is now.



In my view, nuclear weapons have no role in today's world that faces myriad patterns of conflict, and multidimensional economic and financial challenges. They have no place in a world fearful of the acquisition of terrorists of nuclear weapons or even nuclear material for dirty bombs. UN Security Council Resolution 1540 will reduce that danger but only nuclear disarmament can eliminate it. I am comforted by the voices of leaderships in some nuclear-weapon States, representing a vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world and a declared intention to pursue it. We should continue to consolidate the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, mainly through supporting the implementation of international Treaty commitments in the field of nuclear disarmament and to work hard on negotiating new ones, most importantly a Fissile Material Treaty.

The relationship between disarmament and development has long been acknowledged by the General Assembly of the United Nations. No meaningful results could be achieved in global development efforts if our commitment to disarmament is continually undermined through unacceptably high arms expenditure. The challenge is real and only with unending dedication and collective efforts, both by governments and civil society, we can make progress. ♦

MESSAGE FROM

ROBERTO SAVIO | FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF IPS-INTER PRESS SERVICE



The end of atomic weapons is one of the unfulfilled expectations at the end of the Cold War. When the Berlin Wall collapsed in 1989, many of us did rejoice because we saw dividends of Peace as the logical outcome of the new situation: But while the Warsaw Pact does not exist any longer, NATO is still there. What is more, military budgets have on the whole not been shrinking at all. The best case is the United States of America, whose military budget has kept growing. We have now an absurd situation, where

there are two bullets available for every person in the world.

Dr Ikeda from Soka Gakkai International has spent a very respectable life, calling for peace and in particular for the abolition of the atomic arsenal. He rightly supports the Weapons of Mass Destruction commission, chaired by Hans Blix in 2006, which stated that "it rejects the suggestion that nuclear weapons in the hand of some pose no threat, while in the hands of other they place the world in mortal jeopardy". There is no doubt that nuclear weapons, as instruments of mass destruction (and more exactly, instruments of planetary destruction), are part of the games of power and ideology. It is not surprising therefore that an Arab country tends to look to the "secret" Israeli nuclear arsenal in a different way than the United States does.

The only way, as Dr Ikeda suggests, is to eliminate nuclear weapons from everywhere, and do not make them a variable of politics, considering them acceptable where they serve political purposes and a danger when in the hands of those not toeing the same line. After all, drugs, alcohol and junk food are bad for everybody, and if they are used by a monk, they do not become any better.

But there is a tendency, in countries that are not strong, to see the nuclear weapon as the poor man's deterrent. The argument is: "If I remain without an atomic deterrent, I will be weak and my army much weaker than that of superpowers." This logic poses a very serious problem. While brinkmanship

can be a tool for politics, to risk the survival of earth is not brinkmanship. It is an irresponsible game.

Of course, there is a solution to this problem. Except that it is very radical, and we live in a world where few radical decisions are being taken (look at climate change!). The solution is that the five permanent members of the Security Council commit themselves to intervene militarily to disarm a country which goes nuclear, on a vote of 75% of the UN General Assembly, ratified by the majority of the Security Council. This kind of proposal would probably not go far. But if a small number of credible countries would present it, the awareness on the issue would be enormous, and it would put the Great Powers under public scrutiny.

We missed a great occasion at the end of the Cold War to create a new international order. The victors were too intent to celebrate, to look beyond the immediate. Globalization, which was based on the absolute defeat of the other system, went into a progressive disruptive path, which has exacerbated social injustice and lack of governance. Now, for an overwhelming majority of citizens in the world, the threat to their life is not military. It is the lack of a decent job, of medical security, of a proper pension, and of the other rights which make life decent. So the problem is not military security: it is global human security. It would have been enough to see human and military as the two halves of global security, to create a world with social justice and governance. Just to dedicate 10% of military expenses to human security, would have generated more than three times of the present allocations for international cooperation - enough to implement all UN plans of action on health, education and climate change.

It is time to set up new alliances, between those who fight for the elimination of atomic weapons: those who advocate disarmament as a central path to progress to a peaceful world; and those who fight for a new concept of human rights, which includes the right to decent life. If we could develop a holistic vision, we could enlarge, reorganize and strengthen the campaign for a different world, where peace, justice and no fears would make the new generations able to build the foundations for a human and civilized century. ♦

MESSAGE FROM

DAISAKU IKEDA | PRESIDENT OF SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL (SGI)

More than 40 years after the NPT entered into force in 1970, the proliferation of nuclear weapons has yet to cease. In light of this reality, I believe that, ultimately, the only viable solution is to return to the original vision stated in the preamble of the NPT: "... the liquidation of all their existing stockpiles, and the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery."

The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission led by Hans Blix stated in 2006 that it "rejects the suggestion that nuclear weapons in the hands of some pose no threat, while in the hands of others they place the world in mortal jeopardy." I completely agree. Nuclear weapons in any hands represent an absolute evil that threatens people's right to live. It is an urgent task to categorically prohibit them.

The final document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference provides an important foundation as the international community sets out to tackle this task, as it clearly states that there can be no exception with regard to compliance with international law: "The Conference expresses its deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirms the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law."

Taking this agreement as a critical opening, we must with all haste begin the work of outlawing nuclear weapons by means of a legally binding treaty.

Organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union with 162 member states, Mayors for Peace with over 5,200 member cities and the InterAction Council of former heads of state and government are now officially calling for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. A resolution calling for such a Convention has been submitted to the U.N. General Assembly every year since 1996, an initiative led by Malaysia. The momentum is growing, and last year 130 countries endorsed it.

One way to jump-start the difficult process of negotiating an NWC would be to present it as a basic treaty — one that establishes the legal framework for a world without nuclear weapons — alongside a set of associated protocols. The basic treaty would allow signatory states to clearly commit to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons in light of the imperatives of international

humanitarian law, human rights and sustainability, and to pledge to refrain from any action that would run counter to the achievement of this goal.

This would provide a road map for a structural transition from mutual threat to mutual assurance. Even if the protocols moving the treaty to the next stage of implementation are not ratified immediately, we could move away from the situation that prevails today, marked by a severe lack of transparency and the threat of virtually unrestrained proliferation. In its place would be established a nuclear weapons moratorium based on a clear overall forward vision and legal norm. It is vital to begin as soon as possible. NGOs and forward-looking governments should establish a group — an "Action Group for a Nuclear Weapons Convention" — to begin to tackle this task.

I have for some time urged that a nuclear abolition summit to mark the effective end of the nuclear era be convened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 70th anniversary of the bombings of those cities, with the participation of national leaders and representatives of global civil society. And I have stressed that the 2015 NPT Review Conference provides a good opportunity for such a summit. I am convinced that organizing such a meeting at the sites of the actual atomic bombings would spark renewal of the pledge of all participants to achieve a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons. It would help solidify and make irreversible momentum toward that goal.

We should work toward the release — or better yet, the signing — of an agreed-upon draft of the basic framework treaty for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons at that meeting. The SGI will continue to make every effort to generate a powerful momentum toward this end, collaborating with Mayors for Peace, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and other like-minded groups.

*A longer version of this article was first published in the Japan Times on April 25, 2012. Daisaku Ikeda is also founder of Soka University and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. His 2012 Peace Proposal can be found at www.sgi.org ◆



Threat of 'Nuclear Terror' Diverts Abolition Efforts

VIEWPOINT BY KEVIN P. CLEMENTS*



DUNEDIN, New Zealand - President Barack Obama indicated in Prague in 2009 that he was interested in achieving a "world without nuclear weapons." Since that bold statement (which was

one of the reasons for his Nobel peace prize) he has been persuaded by his foreign policy advisors and pressured by the Nuclear Weapons Laboratories to put nuclear abolition on hold and to focus instead on issues such as nuclear safety and nuclear security.

The first nuclear summit in Washington in 2010 therefore focused its attention on nuclear security and the prevention of nuclear terrorism. These objectives, while important, do not really address the safety of 'peaceful' nuclear reactors or the reduction or abolition of nuclear weapons.

On the contrary, nuclear security, as defined by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), refers to "the prevention and detection of, and response to, theft, sabotage, unauthorised access, illegal transfer or other malicious acts involving nuclear material, other radioactive substances or their associated facilities." In other words the focus is on making sure that nuclear

material does not get into the 'wrong hands'. This in turn gets redefined in terms of where states line up in the 'war on terror'. What is surprising about this focus is that there is little solid evidence that terrorist groups are seeking highly enriched uranium either to make dirty bombs or to fuel the nuclear ambitions of states wishing to acquire more sophisticated nuclear weapons.

The first as well as the second summit (Seoul, March 26-27, 2012) focused on nuclear terrorism and better management of nuclear and fissile materials: how to prevent, detect and respond to the "illicit" (however this is defined) seizure of any kind of nuclear material, whether raw ore, yellow cake, hexafluoride, metal oxide, ceramic pellets or fuel rod assemblies.

The first summit aimed to turn nuclear security issues into an important prerequisite for advancing nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy, thereby helping to realise "a world without nuclear weapons." Sceptics argue this diverted attention from the business of deeper cuts in arsenals, dealing more creatively with threshold and virtual nuclear states and establishing clear guidelines/roadmaps for nuclear abolition.

The first summit did, however, generate a work plan to minimise and reduce the amount of highly enriched uranium (HEU); ratify international agreements such as the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (ICSANT) and amend the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM). Some gains were made there and the Seoul Summit was intended to review progress on these measures and (in the wake of the Fukushima meltdown) to focus attention on the dangers of nuclear accidents.

What is somewhat problematic is the link between theft of nuclear materials and terrorist activities. The fact that Osama bin Laden described acquiring nuclear weapons as a "religious duty," and that the 9/11 Commission Report concluded that Al-Qaeda has tried to acquire or make nuclear weapons does not mean that Al-Qaeda or any other terrorist group is capable now or still interested in achieving this objective.

It is certainly a big leap to go from there to suggesting that such weapons in the hands of terrorists will be used to generate massive loss of life or can confer any obvious political benefits. To focus so much attention on this low probability behaviour is a distraction from moving toward a nuclear-free world – with reduced reliance on both nuclear energy and nuclear weaponry. ➡

*Professor Kevin P. Clements is Chair in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Otago, New Zealand.

The South Korean government hoped that the Seoul Summit would be a "stepping-stone to breakthroughs in broader areas of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament". While it did discuss the interface between nuclear security and safety, the summit communiqué did not really establish this stepping-stone nor did it place any real restraints on the continued expansion of nuclear power or energy in Northeast Asia and in the rest of the world.

In fact most commentators felt the communiqué was bland and rather non-committal. Signatories were "encouraged" 28 times but never "required" to undertake anything. The final communiqué had at its core an agreement among participating countries to continue decreasing their holdings of nuclear materials.

Even this agreement, however, was high on generalities and low on specific targets for eliminating or reducing such materials. It encouraged each state to voluntarily set and announce targets for minimising possession of HEU by the end of 2013. The United States and Russia have been converting HEU into low enriched uranium (LEU) but there has been little progress made on the reduction or eradication of the 500 tons of plutonium, which are enough to generate 126,000 nuclear weapons.

The communiqué was notable for its omissions rather than inclusions. For example, Japan highlighted the dangers from nuclear terrorism without referring to its rapid expansion of nuclear technology exports to countries such

as Vietnam and Jordan, which arguably might not have the regulatory frameworks for protecting and safeguarding nuclear materials.

Iran, North Korea and Uzbekistan all have significant stockpiles of weapons grade material as well but they were excluded from the conversations and no reference was made on how to deal with their nuclear materials.

Surprisingly, for a conference that took place on the Korean peninsula, there was no mention of ways in which North Korea could be restrained from advancing its nuclear programme; nor any real discussion on how Pakistan's nuclear materials could be better secured.

Most importantly, however, there was no real willingness to establish clear links between peaceful and non-peaceful uses of nuclear energy or between nuclear safety and nuclear disarmament. From a peace movement perspective, the summit failed to fuel momentum towards Obama's aspiration for a nuclear weapon-free world. At the third summit scheduled for 2014 in the Netherlands it is important that these links be established and the abolitionist objective be at the heart of all the conversations. [IPS Columnist Service | April 2012]

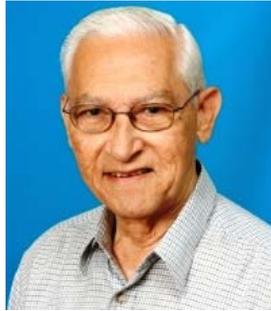


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The Paradox of the Nuclear Age

VIEWPOINT BY RONALD MCCOY*



KUALA LUMPUR - Climate change and nuclear war are the two most serious threats to human security and planetary survival. Governments are addressing the causes of climate change and the

prevention of nuclear war, but political will to reduce greenhouse gases and eradicate nuclear weapons needs to be further strengthened.

Climate change is now visible and palpable, but the threat of nuclear war remains relatively abstract and unperceived among some complacent world leaders, despite the presence of thousands of nuclear weapons in a world that still resolves conflict by going to war.

Article VI of the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) imposes a legal obligation on non-nuclear weapon states to forego nuclear weapons and on nuclear weapon states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. (The text of article VI makes no reference to non-nuclear weapon States; it simply asks that the parties to the NPT agree to "pursue negotiations in good faith to end the arms race.") The latter states rhetorically agree to do so, but in fact continue to

rely on nuclear deterrence for their security and maintain and modernise their nuclear arsenals.

These double standards have perpetuated a system of nuclear haves and have-nots, paralysed the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva for the past fifteen years, and resulted in a stalemate in the NPT process.

Twenty-one years after the end of the Cold War, both the United States and Russia, the main nuclear protagonists, still wield more than 20,000 nuclear warheads. Both states are committed to further reductions, following the 2010 New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), which will reduce the number of deployed long-range nuclear weapons to 1,550 each by 2018. But domestic politics, U.S. missile defence plans, and Iran's nuclear ambitions have raised the barriers.

As long as any state has nuclear weapons, others will seek to acquire them. As long as nuclear weapons exist, they will one day be used by decision, accident or miscalculation. The future holds three options: maintaining the status quo through counter-proliferation measures, living dangerously with nuclear proliferation, or abolishing nuclear weapons.

In 1997, activists with expertise in international law, science, medicine and disarmament confronted the fundamental underlying nuclear dilemma and explored the legal, technical and political requirements for a nuclear weapons-free world and weighed the security concerns of all states.

They asked if military security, based on militarism and nuclear deterrence, was compatible with human and planetary survival in the long term. They concluded that survival hinged on the abolition of nuclear weapons and proceeded to draft a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention, which has illuminated the feasibility of abolition, in light of treaties that have successfully been adopted for the abolition of chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction.

The United Nations has accepted the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention as an official document (UN Document A/C.1/52/7). More than 120 countries have voted in the United Nations General Assembly for negotiations towards a Nuclear Weapons Convention, which would eliminate all nuclear weapons, prohibit their production, and prevent breakout through a strong verification regime. ➡

*Ronald McCoy, a retired obstetrician and gynaecologist, is founder president of Malaysian Physicians for Social Responsibility and past co-president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985.

There are many obstacles to nuclear abolition, but the fundamental ones are the lack of political will and the militarisation of diplomacy. But there are signs of a shift in thinking among past and present leaders, which has generated guarded optimism that the world could be rid of nuclear weapons in the next two or three decades. Four American 'cold warriors' and members of the U.S. security establishment -Henry Kissinger, George Schultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn have called for a nuclear weapons-free world. President Barack Obama has also voiced similar sentiments.

There is a great opportunity for middle-power states to take the initiative by convening multilateral negotiations, leading to the conclusion of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The commencement of such negotiations would stimulate global civil society to generate a groundswell of public opinion and exert irresistible pressure on nuclear weapons states to join an abolition process, similar to the Ottawa Process, which persuaded countries with landmines to give them up and adopt the Landmine Ban Treaty. Such a global endeavour to abolish nuclear weapons will require the investment of considerable political capital by middle powers such as the New Agenda Coalition, which is composed of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden.

A Nuclear Weapons Convention would prohibit the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons. In a wider sense, it would embody the universal condemnation of nuclear weapons and the codification of the norm against all weapons of mass destruction. Such a treaty would engender a wider social and political movement away from the militarisation of diplomacy and reliance on nuclear

weapons. It would advance nuclear disarmament to the point of abolition and remove the existential threat of nuclear war.

The important difference between disarmament and abolition is that, while disarmament is primarily a technical process, abolition is a normative process that not only embraces disarmament but also prohibits the development, acquisition and use of nuclear weapons.

The conclusion of a Nuclear Weapons Convention would require comprehensive multilateral negotiations, within a time-bound framework, reinforced by strong political will. The process would comprise a series of bilateral and multilateral steps, culminating in a legally binding instrument or framework of instruments.

The process could take place in the Conference on Disarmament, the established but dysfunctional multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, or through a series of specific international conferences, similar to the successful Law of the Sea conferences.

The paradox of the Nuclear Age is that the greater the striving for power and military security through nuclear weapons, the more elusive the goal of human security. For humankind to survive in an environmentally challenged and nuclear-armed world, it must learn from the mistakes of the past and forge a common, secure future. The moral challenge of our time is the unthinkable possibility of self-destruction on a global scale in a nuclear war or from climate change. The greatest priority for the future is to ensure that there will be a future. [IPS Columnist Service | March 2012] ◆

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There is a great opportunity for middle-power states to take the initiative by convening multilateral negotiations, leading to the conclusion of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The commencement of such negotiations would stimulate global civil society to generate a groundswell of public opinion and exert irresistible pressure on nuclear weapons states to join an abolition process.

France's Fuzzy Face on Nuclear Abolition

BY JULIO GODOY



PARIS – If you ask the French ministry for foreign affairs about the country's position on a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, the spokesperson will surely refer you to the statements by the French ambassadors before the UN both in New York and Geneva, and will repeat that France supports the global application of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

On the same occasion, however, Rivasseau had simply called "desirable" that the conference "through dialogue, bring(s) India, Israel and Pakistan to come as close as possible to international standards for non-proliferation and export controls."

Indeed, France has since the mid 1990s officially supported the objectives of the resolutions adopted by the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, in particular those referring to the creation of a nuclear-weapons free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East, and openly calls for the implementation of the conference's specific resolution of 1995.

All these three countries possess a large nuclear weapons arsenal. That such dialogue never prevented Israel to pile at least 210 nuclear warheads – more than India and Pakistan together – seems to have gone unnoticed in the French government's bureaus.

But when it comes down to the facts, this apparently solid French position turns out to be a mere lip service to the cause of a NWFZ in the Middle East, in particular if the project questions Israel's nuclear weapons policy, and asks the Jewish state to subscribe to the mentioned resolution.

It is then no surprise to find no French contribution worth a mention to the present debate on the Middle East, other than repeating the condemnations of the alleged Iranian nuclear weapons programme. On November 9, 2011 foreign minister Alain Juppé said that the allegations formulated then by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "increases France's deep concern with regard to Iran's nuclear programme."

The French fuzzy face on freeing the Middle East of nuclear weapons became evident as late as May 2010, when the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu called the bid for a NWFZ in the region "hypocritical" and "deeply flawed". At the time, the Israeli government was reacting to endorsement by the 189 country members of the NPT of an agreement to free the Middle East of all nuclear weapons.

Juppé added: "We must move to the next level with regard to increasing diplomatic pressure on Iran. If Iran refuses to meet the requests of the international community, and refuses all serious cooperation, we are ready to adopt, with the support of the international community, sanctions of an unprecedented scale." ☞

Israel, which has not signed the NPT, dismissed the document as "ignore(ing) the realities of the Middle East and the real threats facing the region and the entire world. Given the distorted nature of this resolution, Israel will not be able to take part in its implementation."

France, a member of the UN Security Council and itself a nuclear power, did not react to the blunt Israeli rejection.

The double-faced French strategy had been already clear since at least 2005, when Francois Rivasseau, then French permanent representative to the UN conference on disarmament in Geneva, accused Iran of triggering "the proliferation crisis" with "its clandestine programme" during that year's review conference.

Picture: French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and the American nuclear-powered carrier USS Enterprise (left), each of which carry nuclear-capable fighter aircraft. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Juppé never criticised the Israeli nuclear weapons policy or the Israeli rejection of a global summit on the NWFZ in the Middle East.

This double standard, which is typical for most of the European Union, has led foreign relations experts to question the wisdom and the honesty of the French policy on the matter.

As Jean-Marie Collin, director of the French bureau of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) says, "contrary to what (the government in) France would like us to believe, the agenda and debates on nuclear disarmament did not stop on May 2010, with the last reunion of the (review conference of the) NPT."

Collin recalled that both the UN and the civil society organisations "continue to carry forward their duties to reach a world free of nuclear weapons." Among other developments, Collin underlined the campaign for the Middle East, and in particular "the nomination of the Finnish mediator Jaakko Laajava, deputy minister of foreign affairs."

However, Collin pointed out that, for all its government's words, "France remains an outsider in the politics of nuclear disarmament."

While the government in Paris does not stand up to its words, French civil society groups show real concern of the likely proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular of nuclear

warheads, in the Middle East. The National Federation of former Deported, Prisoners of war, Members of the Resistance, and Patriots (FNDIRP, for its French name), a pacifist group, released this January a communiqué denouncing the Israeli preparations of war against Iran.

On the one hand, the FNDIRP recalled that Iran is signatory member of the NPT, and that it has repeatedly vowed to use nuclear technology for civil purposes alone. On the other hand, the group argued that an Israeli military intervention against Iran would trigger a war of "unforeseeable consequences" in the whole region. Additionally, the group also called attention upon "the uncertain efficacy of such an attack" to stop the Iranian nuclear research programmes.

The FNDIRP also insisted on the need to fully implement the NPT in the Middle East and called the debates within the framework of the United Nations "a most useful enterprise." It urged Israel, Iran, and all other countries of the region "to implement, within the UN framework, the measures necessary . . . contributing to(ward) create(ing) a denuclearised zone in the Middle East, which would bring about peace and security for all the countries of the region."

Such appeals are likely to remain wishful thinking, prognosticate French and Swiss foreign affairs experts.

Analysts at the Centre for Security Studies (CSS) of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich are of the view that "structural factors render any prospect for (Middle East nuclear) disarmament premature."

In a paper programmatically titled "Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East: Here to stay", CSS expert Liviu Horovitz pointed out that "for Israel, the abolition of nuclear weapons appears neither necessary nor desirable." On the other hand, Horovitz said, "resolving Iran's nuclear file remains paramount, but a solution is not in sight." For these two reasons, and considering other existing dynamics in the Middle East, Horovitz foresees that "the most plausible future regional developments are unlikely to encourage disarmament steps."

"More probable," Horovitz added, "holding the existing state of affairs will prove challenging enough."

In the paper, Horovitz recalls that the concept of NWFZs goes back to a Polish plan in the 1950s focused on Central Europe. "While this initiative was never finalised, five other zones have by now been negotiated," Horovitz said. "Within the Middle East, after Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons during the 1960s, regional actors led by Egypt and Iran endeavoured to increase their diplomatic leverage by calling for a NWFZ." [IDN-InDepthNews – March 01, 2012] ♦

Latin America Seeks to Spread Nuclear Free Zones

BY EMILIO GODOY



MEXICO CITY - Latin America and the Caribbean are discussing ways to step up supervision of the use of nuclear materials in the region and contribute to the creation of more nuclear weapon free zones around the world, on the 45th anniversary of the treaty that banned nuclear arms in the region.

"Disarmament is still our priority" Vera Machado, under-secretary of political affairs in Brazil's foreign ministry, told IPS. "It is a legitimate interest of

Argentina and Brazil created the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) in 1991 to monitor the exchange and use of nuclear materials. The agency is considered a model in this field.

The issues discussed at the seminar included the need to draw broader attention to the Treaty of Tlatelolco; the elimination of stocks of fissile materials still held by several states parties; the passage of nuclear submarines and radioactive waste through the region; and the advances made towards global disarmament.

"A regulatory architecture that complies with the Treaty of Tlatelolco is still needed," Irma Argüello, president of the Nonproliferation for Global Security Foundation in Argentina, told IPS.

"It is important for third countries to stop bringing nuclear technology and weapons into our region."

Two issues that have awakened interest in Latin America are Iran's nuclear programme, staunchly opposed by a group of countries led by the U.S., and Argentina's complaint that Britain sent a nuclear-armed submarine to the Malvinas/Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic.

The idea is for the Latin American and Caribbean NWFZ to serve as a model for a similar scheme in the Middle East. ➡

nuclear weapon free countries to receive a binding guarantee that the countries that do have them will not use these weapons against them, or threaten to use them."

The official was one of the delegates of the 33 countries attending a conference in Mexico City held to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, also known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

The states party to the treaty agree to prohibit and prevent the "testing, use, manufacture, production or acquisition by any means whatsoever" and the "receipt, storage, installation, deployment and any form of possession of any nuclear weapons."

The anniversary, celebrated on Feb. 14-15 with a commemorative ceremony and international seminar, was also attended by representatives of international bodies and non-governmental organisations from different regions of the world.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco created the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) in 1967 – the first of the five such zones that currently include 114 countries around the world, in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Central Asia, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific.

Mexico was the driving force behind the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which was opened up to signature in the foreign ministry in Tlatelolco on Feb. 14, 1967, making this country the pioneer in nuclear disarmament in the region. The treaty went into force in April 1969.

Mexico, Argentina and Brazil use nuclear material for peaceful purposes, such as the generation of electricity.

"These zones create new realities in which people live and develop new ways of thinking and new possibilities; they counteract the feeling of impotence, inevitability and submission," Kimiaki Kawai, programme director of peace affairs of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), told IPS.

For that reason, "These zones have a huge potential of moderating power," he added.

The Tokyo-based SGI forms part of a coalition that launched a global campaign for a summit meeting of world leaders calling for the total elimination of the nuclear bomb.

SGI wants the summit to be held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2015, the 70th anniversary of the nuclear bombings that virtually annihilated the two Japanese cities.

Latin America's NWFZ "is a good example for the Middle East," said Tibor Toth, executive secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO). "There is a concept more than a dream, different than it was in Latin America in the 1960s."

In recent years there have been some developments, but one may ask if they have been enough," he remarked to IPS. "We have to move beyond the 'realpolitik' of non-proliferation and disarmament."

Opened to signature since 1996, the CTBTO only needs to be ratified by eight more states to enter into force.

The idea of a NWFZ in the Middle East emerged in November 2011 during a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which reports to the U.N. General Assembly and Security Council.

There are more than 22,000 nuclear warheads in the hands of Russia, the United States, France, China, Britain, Israel, India and Pakistan.

Taking the Treaty of Tlatelolco as a starting point, Latin America and the Caribbean want to prepare for the review conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which has been in effect since 1970, although there is a widespread view that international nuclear disarmament mechanisms are paralysed.

"It is important for negotiations to take place in a constructive atmosphere," said Machado. "We must go beyond the constantly repeated arguments, in order to be able to create a NWFZ in the Middle East."

Israel, India and Pakistan have not signed the NPT, while China, Israel, Egypt, Iran and the United States have not ratified the CTBTO.

"Issues like transparency, monitoring and ratification are important for the operation of these zones," Toth said.

Kawai said the global movement against nuclear weapons must be strengthened, in order to offer a promising vision for the future. "We hope that NWFZ experiences are shared among governments and citizens, especially in regions like North-Eastern Asia and the Middle East."

Another matter of interest is the signing of bilateral accords between NWFZ states parties and the IAEA to oversee the use of nuclear materials. So far, around a dozen states have signed such agreements. [IPS - February 15, 2012] ♦

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Peace Activists Push for Nuke Abolition Summit in 2015

BY THALIF DEEN



UNITED NATIONS - A coalition of anti-nuclear peace activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is launching a global campaign for a summit meeting of world leaders calling for the total elimination of one of the world's most devastating weapons of mass destruction: the nuclear bomb.

The Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI), one of the lead campaigners, wants the summit held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2015, the 70th anniversary of the nuclear bombings that virtually annihilated the two Japanese cities.

Jackie Cabasso, executive director of WSLF, told IPS Daisaku Ikeda's call for a nuclear abolition summit in 2015 is consistent with a plan by Mayors for Peace to hold a high-level meeting of disarmament ambassadors,

U.N. officials, parliamentarians and NGO representatives, to develop a clear roadmap that will lead to a nuclear-weapon-free world by 2020.

She said it will be developed in conjunction with the Mayors for Peace General Conference in Hiroshima in August 2013.

Cabasso, who also serves as North American coordinator for Mayors for Peace, said this will include preparation for the 2015 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference and planning for a second high-level summit meeting in Hiroshima later that year.

The Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign has set 2015 as the target year for conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention (NWC treaty) leading to the global abolition of nuclear weapons by 2020, and Mayors for Peace would like to see the convention signed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, she added.

A third initiative, the Hiroshima for Global Peace Plan, was launched by Hiroshima prefecture Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki in October of last year.



The year 2015 will also mark the next five-year Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In a 23-page peace proposal titled "Human Security and Sustainability: Sharing Reverence for the Dignity of Life", SGI President Daisaku Ikeda says, "In my proposal for nuclear weapons abolition issued in September 2009, I called for a movement that would manifest the will of the world's people for the outlawing of nuclear weapons."

"This, I argued, would establish and clarify by 2015 the international norm that will serve as the foundation for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), formally banning these weapons of mass destruction."

The agreement reached by the 2010 NPT Review Conference provides a critical opening for this effort, he said. "We must with all haste begin the work of making this legally binding in the form of a treaty," he declared.

The campaign has strong support from several NGOs and anti-nuclear groups, including Mayors for Peace, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) organised by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

Additionally, it is also backed by Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament and the Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF), a founding member of the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons, described as a coalition of more than 2,000 peace activists.

Image credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

The plan, formulated by the governor and a group of former government officials and academics from the United Nations, United States, Australia and Japan sets forth a central role for Hiroshima as a global peace hub to, among other things, support a roadmap for the abolition of nuclear weapons and contribute to the promotion of a concrete and sustainable process for the abolition of nuclear weapons with a view towards governmental negotiations (Track I).

In his wide ranging peace proposal, Ikeda, who is also an eminent Buddhist philosopher, expressed confidence over the proposed summit, even though some peace activists predict it may receive only lukewarm support from the five declared nuclear weapon states, namely the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia.

Since 1996, the U.N. General Assembly has adopted annual resolutions calling for the start of negotiations on an NWC.

Ikeda pointed out that support for this resolution has continued to grow; last year 130 member states supported it, including China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Iran.

In 2008, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed negotiations on an NWC or a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments. And the 2010 NPT Review Conference noted this proposal in the final outcome document it adopted with the unanimous consent of all participants.

In September 2009, the U.N. Security Council held a special summit session in which it adopted a Resolution (1887) pledging efforts to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which comprises 159 countries, including Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China, has also unanimously expressed its support for this proposal.

Cabasso told IPS that if and how these initiatives will fit together is unclear, but there is no doubt that momentum is building for 2015 to be a milestone year for advocates of nuclear weapons abolition, with Hiroshima and Nagasaki as focal points.

As Daisaku Ikeda notes, she said, the 2015 NPT Review Conference will be another make-or-break point for the nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament regimes.

The year 2015 will also mark the 70th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and underscored by the continuing Fukushima nuclear disaster, there is a palpable sense of urgency among the aging hibakusha (A-bomb survivors) that nuclear weapons must be eliminated before the last of them dies along with their first-hand memories of the unprecedented horrific events of August 1945 that opened the door to the nuclear age.

Mayors for Peace was established in 1982 by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the U.N. Second Special Summit on Disarmament in 1982.

On Sep. 21, 2011, the International Day of Peace, Mayors for Peace announced that its membership had grown to more than 5,000 cities in 151 countries and regions. [IPS - February 13, 2012] ◆

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SANE Act to Cut U.S. Nukes Budget

BY JAMSHED BARUAH



BERLIN - If you are 'sane', you are mentally sound. U.S. Congressman Edward J. Markey has lent a new dimension to that word by introducing the Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures (SANE) Act of 2012 that cuts \$100 billion over the next decade on outdated nuclear weapons programmes.

Markey, who is Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), took to the House floor on February 8, 2012 to decry the wasteful spending in America's nuclear weapons programmes. SANE has 34 co-sponsors.

"It is insane that Republicans are proposing to block the automatic defense cuts mandated by the debt deal while America's nuclear weapons budget teems with billions in wasteful spending," said Markey, senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and founder of the Bipartisan Nonproliferation Task Force.

"It is insane to spend hundreds of billions on new nuclear bombs and delivery systems to fight a long-past Cold War while ignoring our 21st century security needs and seeking to cut Medicare, Medicaid and social programs that millions of Americans depend on. The SANE Act will cut spending on outdated, wasteful nuclear weapons and related programs over the next ten years and will strengthen our long-term economic and national security," Markey said.

The Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditures (SANE) Act of 2012 will in particular:

- Cut the current fleet of nuclear submarines from 12 operational at sea to eight operational at sea, saving \$3 billion
- Delay the purchase of new nuclear submarines saving \$17 billion
- Reduce the number of ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles), typically designed for launching nukes, saving \$6 billion
- End the nuclear missions of air bombers saving up to \$17 billion
- Delay new bomber program saving \$18 billion
- Cancel new, wasteful nuclear weapons facilities saving \$15 billion

The legislation enacts a call made by Markey and 65 other US legislators in October 2011 for the U.S. Super Committee, to cut \$20 billion per annum (\$200 billion over 10 years) from the nuclear weapons budget in order to preserve funding for vital programs for social security and the economy.

"Although the SANE Act only asks for half as much to be cut, it goes into detail on which nuclear programs could be cut without impacting on current nuclear policies or doctrines.

Even greater cuts could be made if the US negotiates additional nuclear disarmament agreements during this period," says Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator of (PNND) is a global network of over 800 parliamentarians from more than 80 countries working to prevent nuclear proliferation and achieve nuclear disarmament. "It's well past time to realign our nation's nuclear arsenal to deal with today's threats," said Joseph Cirincione, President of Ploughshares Fund.

"The current Cold War nuclear weapons complex is draining resources and attention from the military programs our nation needs to meet current and future challenges. It is encouraging to see the leadership of so many members of Congress helping to move our nation toward a smarter national security strategy. Congressman Markey and the other co-sponsors of the SANE Act are doing a great service, promoting a much needed debate on how to modernize our nuclear force in a way that both saves money and makes our nation safer."

Ploughshares Fund was founded in 1981 by San Francisco philanthropist, artist and activist Sally Lilienthal (1919-2006). Under Sally's guidance, Ploughshares Fund made grants whose impact far exceeded their size.

Picture: U.S. Congressman Edward J. Markey
Credit: PNND ↻

"We are well past the time when the United States needs to stop pouring billions of additional dollars into maintaining the existing nuclear weapons arsenal that is immoral, that the U.S. doesn't need and that is not making our country safer," said David Culp, Legislative Representative, Friends Committee on National Legislation.

"POGO is enthusiastic that so many of our recommendations were included in the bill. We also hope there will be bipartisan support for aspects of the proposal, since the cuts aren't partisan and are a good start to spending smarter and ending the old Cold War strategy," said Danielle Brian, Executive Director, Project On Government Oversight (POGO). "We thank Representative Markey and the other cosponsors for their leadership on this critical issue."

POGO is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that champions good government reforms. POGO's investigations into corruption, misconduct, and conflicts of interest achieve a more effective, accountable, open, and ethical federal government. Founded in 1981, POGO (which was then known as Project on Military Procurement) originally worked to expose outrageously overpriced military spending on items such as a \$7,600 coffee maker and a \$436 hammer. In 1990, after many successes reforming military spending,

including a Pentagon spending freeze at the height of the Cold War, POGO decided to expand its mandate and investigate waste, fraud, and abuse throughout the federal government.

The SANE Act is endorsed by the Congressional Progressive Caucus and: Alliance of Baptists on the Interfaith Committee on Nuclear Disarmament, Church of the Brethren, Citizens for Global Solutions, Colorado Coalition for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Cumberland Countians for Peace & Justice, DC Statehood Green Party, Franciscan Action Network, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Georgia WAND, and Global Green USA (US affiliate of Green Cross International).

Other endorsers are: Global Security Institute and Bipartisan Security Group, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, Los Alamos Study Group, National Council of Churches of Christ, USA, Network for Environmental & Economic Responsibility of United Church of Christ, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, Nuclear Watch New Mexico, Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, Peace Action, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Ploughshares Fund, Project on Government Oversight (POGO), Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center, Tri-Valley CAREs, Women's Action for New Directions. [IDN-InDepthNews – February 10, 2012] ◆

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Israel and Iran Agreed on Nuclear Ambiguity

BY PIERRE KLOCHENDLER



JERUSALEM - Will Israel attack Iran's nuclear facilities this spring? That is a question dominating the international agenda. Meanwhile, the grand project of a nuclear weapon-free Middle East is relegated to the utopian "day after" a solution is found to the Islamic republic's atomic programme.

Strangely enough, Israeli public opinion has no clear opinion on the subject, and relies on 'those who know best'. 'Those who know best', like Defence Minister Ehud Barak, say: "Should sanctions fail to stop Iran's nuclear programme, there'll be a need to consider taking action." "Whoever says 'later', could find that it's too late," he told an international conference

in Herzliya, Israel, on Feb 2.

The concern shared by many defence analysts, including Israelis, is that an Israeli strike would not only unleash a terrible all-out war, but would only set Iran's nuclear programme back by just a few years.

"Tough sanctions and a united diplomatic front are the best chance for crippling Iran's nuclear programme," urged a New York Times op-ed on Feb. 3.

On the other hand, Israeli defence officials have expressed concern that should the Iranian nuclear issue not be tackled head-on – either financially or militarily – the region would plunge into nuclear proliferation chaos, with potential leakage to non-actor states.

Such are the parameters of the debate; either an attack – with or without U.S. endorsement – or sanctions. What about alternatives, like the radical idea of a nuclear weapon-free zone (NWFZ) as strategy to neutralise Iran's nuclear programme?

Israeli governments have conditioned a regional NWFZ with achieving comprehensive peace with all of Israel's neighbours. This is virtually impossible given the current character of the Iranian regime. And, there's no progress on the Arab peace front.

Yet, civil society activists take succour from the fact that following the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, a follow-up conference will be convened this year in Finland.

The gathering will discuss an agreement on how to transform the region into a NWFZ and free of all other weapons of mass destruction. The host country has been accepted by all governments, including both Israel and Iran. "Most Israelis aren't even aware that their country's willing to contemplate the NWFZ idea," emphasises Hillel Schenker, co-editor of the Palestine-Israel journal, a Jerusalem-based quarterly run by both Israeli and Palestinian experts.

Last October, the former spokesperson for the Israeli branch of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War coordinated a meeting between Israeli and Iranian activists. Held in London under the auspices of a civil society initiative to establish a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East, the meeting facilitated the development of areas of mutual understanding between both peoples.

Such meeting is exceptional. By and large, public discussion is stifled by pressure at the helm. When ex- Mossad spy agency chief Meir Dagan questioned the judgment of Israel's leaders that a military solution exists, Barak attacked his outspokenness, calling it "serious behaviour".

Usually open to debate, Israelis tend to consider the nuclear question taboo or too complex for expressing dissenting opinions. It's fine by most that only top acting political and military leaders assume that right, only in closed forums. Any relevant information in Hebrew is rare; information in English is abundant but arduous to analyse. ➡

Photo: Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The absence of discussion stems also from the fact that, since the inception of its own nuclear programme in the late 1950s, Israel has officially stuck to a policy of "ambiguity": it "won't be the first country to introduce nuclear weapons in the region" is the official posture.

Israel is not an NPT signatory; Iran is. But both countries reject and refrain from any linkage between their respective nuclear programmes.

The secrecy shrouding their country's programmes enables Israelis to feel that they participate in the defence of their state without having to grapple with its nuclear choices.

"If we as a society give any thought to nuclear weapons, it's to Iran's, which hasn't yet become a reality," notes Sharon Dolev, Greenpeace Mediterranean disarmament campaigner. "Like the hunchback who doesn't see his hump, we don't see our own weapons."

Ambiguity therefore means that the international community should continue to ignore Dimona, believed to be the centre of the Israeli nuclear programme, and focus solely on Natanz, said to be the nerve centre of the Iranian nuclear programme.

Likewise, Iran is ambiguous with regard to its nuclear quest. While the International Atomic Energy Agency reported in November that Iran has engaged in activities related to the development of nuclear weapons, there's

no 'smoking gun' as to a decision to actually develop a bomb.

Israeli government officials praise "ambiguity" as it enhances Israel's security almost as much as WMD. Assuming such a policy is necessary, nuclear demilitarisation activists propose a debate which would respect the constraints of not exposing Israel's nuclear capability. Such discussion would strengthen the democratic character of their society.

"It's still possible, even obligatory, to hold serious discussions about the need for nuclear weapons, the dangers they present regionally and globally, and the various possibilities for disarmament," says Dolev.

Advocates of the abolition of Israel's "nuclear opacity" believe that calling a spade a spade could gradually open the region towards arms control, if not creating a NWFZ.

"But if prevention (of Iran's nuclear capability) fails, it's unlikely that Israelis would look to arms control as a solution," predicts Avner Cohen, author of the controversial 'Israel and the Bomb' (1998). All the more so given that during the Cold war, the backdrop to arms control dialogues was the declared existence of nuclear weapons.

Besides, Israelis almost consensually consider nuclear ambiguity as a case of force majeure, the most effective deterrent to what's widely perceived here as the "existential threat" posed by Iran.

This linkage approach between WMD and extreme hostility, advocates of denuclearisation concede, takes precedence over all other considerations. Supposing Iran develops a bomb, "we don't know which nuclear weapons state will disarm first, we do know which will disarm last. That country is Israel," says Cohen.

Many civil society activists conclude that it's probably already too late for Israelis to persuade their leaders that getting out of the "ambiguity" bunker might defuse the Iranian time-bomb that's already ticking dangerously. [IPS - February 6, 2012] ♦

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Usually open to debate, Israelis tend to consider the nuclear question taboo or too complex for expressing dissenting opinions. It's fine by most that only top acting political and military leaders assume that right, only in closed forums. Any relevant information in Hebrew is rare; information in English is abundant but arduous to analyse.

Global Support Peaks For No Nukes

VIEWPOINT BY JONATHAN FRERICHS*



GENEVA - A new and compelling story about nuclear weapons is emerging around the world. The new story is having an impact because it is one that many can own.

It displaces nuclear fiction with nuclear facts. 2012 has begun with sabre-rattling in the Middle East and will end with new leadership in five nuclear-armed states. What is this new story and what can it bring?

The shortest version of the story is the one told by the new International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Ask anyone, "Can you imagine a world without nuclear weapons?" Expect the reply: "I can."

A slightly longer version emerged at a year-end seminar of international church-related advocates that met in Scotland, where many favour nuclear disarmament.

We live under a nuclear 'umbrella' that is outdated, unwieldy, extremely costly, and doesn't even work. People today see themselves as part of a global community. They want to live in ways that protect life instead of putting it at risk. Nuclear weapons are wrong and need to go. It's time to get involved. Each person can do his or her part; all can make a big difference, together.

The new story is making nuclear weapons more vulnerable. There is a new level of political and social pressure within leadership circles: 130 governments now support a Nuclear Weapons Convention at the United Nations, while 5000 mayors and thousands of parliamentarians and eminent citizens have joined nuclear abolition initiatives. Challenges to the weapons are geographic (nuclear-weapon-free zones), legal (humanitarian law), and financial (national deficits, sovereign debts and citizen divestment).

Government and military leaders are debunking nuclear strategies; climate science are indicting nukes environmentally; physicians, scientists, and lawyers are delegitimising nuclear arms; films, web-sites, and books are generating public debate; and world religions are condemning nuclear weapons morally, ethically, and spiritually. A disaster like Fukushima reminds people that even in its peaceful guise nuclear energy is lethal and causes lasting damage.

The international construct that shelters nuclear arms is coming apart. More and more people see no place for such weapons in human, ecological, and planetary affairs.

And yet those who challenge the current nuclear regime are by no means overcome with optimism. It is disturbing to watch the five percent of governments that are nuclear armed reject the common good and refuse their obligation to disarm while the 95 percent of governments that don't have nuclear weapons fail to implement the majority will to see them abolished.

The new and the old nuclear 'stories' offer different scenarios in 2012. Here are three examples:

First, Northeast Asia -a region where the umbrella of nuclear deterrence is outdated and leaky and where we can see how the shaky status-quo, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is collapsing. Though 'nuclear security' in Northeast Asia is a contradiction in terms, this year's Nuclear Security Summit will be held in Seoul.

The new nuclear story would draw regional lessons from what the Korean UN General Secretary has instructively called 'the infectious doctrine of deterrence'. Eight of the nine states that practice nuclear deterrence are invited to the summit, and the ninth state is next door. Infection needs a cure, for example, open-ended engagement around a shared regional goal such as denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. ☺

*Jonathan Frerichs is programme executive for peace-building and disarmament for the World Council of Churches.

Second, the Middle East, another region where nuclear umbrellas don't work, is so ripe for proliferation that the very future of the NPT is tied to establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone there. A UN conference on that goal is slated for 2012 after a 17-year delay.

Yet the old nuclear story looms over the conference. Irresponsible rhetoric is again pushing the myopic view that enforcing the nuclear double standard is the solution for the Middle East, not the problem. While Israel is not a member of the NPT, its neighbours who are members have been expected to live with its nuclear weapons as if it were an NPT nuclear-weapon state. This is an improbable recipe for security of any kind. It is a prescription for proliferation by others in the Middle East, and elsewhere.

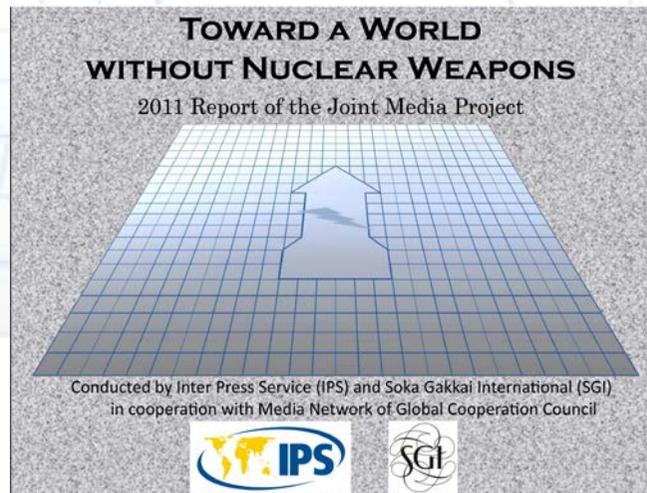
The new nuclear story is about the well-being of all states in the region, including Israel. A zone free of all WMDs including nuclear is part of the scenario from the outset. A regional process in the 1990s set a useful precedent by using incentives, reciprocity, and mutual commitments to solve delicate security issues.

Third, NATO is an alliance whose nuclear weapons are unusable and a waste of money. The organisation's 200-odd tactical nuclear weapons are emblematic of how much the aging behemoths of the Cold War still have in their nuclear arsenals and what little sense that makes. Removing these deadly relics would reduce the number of countries hosting nuclear weapons to nine from fourteen. It would also remove a major obstacle to new security arrangements between NATO and Russia.

In 2010 NATO and Russia agreed on 'contributing to the creation of a common space of peace, security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area'. Will NATO's 2012 summit in Chicago follow the new story or the old?

In the new nuclear story, nuclear archaeologists are used to understand the past and human security architects are proposing the future. Northeast Asia, the Middle East, and NATO are critical sites. The task is daunting and more hands are needed, but the precedent of progress is already set. Each New Year can now become part of our safer future rather than a vestige of the nuclear past. [IPS | January 2012] ◆

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http://www.nuclearabolition.net/documents/Toward_a_World_without_Nuclear_Weapons.pdf

The Long Slow March to Nuke Abolition

BY JAMSHED BARUAH



BERLIN - "We want a nuclear weapons free world." More than 80 percent of people around the globe have expressed this overwhelming desire to authors of a new report. But a close look shows that very little is happening rather slowly in terms of reducing nukes and putting a halt to proliferation. This is cause of profound concern also to atomic scientists.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) released a study on January 16, which says that every country in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa is in favour of a treaty banning nuclear weapons, as are most nations in Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East. But in Europe and North America, particularly among members of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) nuclear alliance, support for a ban on nukes is weakest.

ICAN's report, titled 'Towards a Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons', comes one week after the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was moved one minute closer to midnight in response to growing nuclear dangers around the world and a lack of progress towards nuclear abolition. The last time the Doomsday Clock minute hand moved was in January 2010, when the Clock's minute hand was pushed back one minute from five to six minutes before midnight.

The Clock has become a universally recognized indicator of the world's vulnerability to catastrophe from nuclear weapons, climate change, and emerging technologies in the life sciences.

The Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (BAS) moved the Clock one minute closer to midnight after reviewing the implications of recent events and trends for the future of humanity with input

from other experts on nuclear weapons, nuclear energy, climate change, and biosecurity.

In a formal statement on January 10, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists noted: "It is five minutes to midnight. Two years ago, it appeared that world leaders might address the truly global threats that we face. In many cases, that trend has not continued or been reversed. For that reason, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is moving the clock hand one minute closer to midnight, back to its time in 2007."

Commenting on the Doomsday Clock announcement, Jayantha Dhanapala, member of the BAS Board of Sponsors, former United Nations under-secretary-general for Disarmament Affairs, and ambassador of Sri Lanka to the United States, said:

"Despite the promise of a new spirit of international cooperation, and reductions in tensions between the United States and Russia, the Science and Security Board believes that the path toward a world free of nuclear weapons is not at all clear, and leadership is failing."

Dhanapala further pointed out that the ratification in December 2010 of the New START treaty between Russia and the United States had reversed the previous drift in US-Russia nuclear relations. "However, failure to act on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by leaders in the United States, China, Iran, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Israel, and North Korea and on a treaty to cut off production of nuclear weapons material continues to leave the world at risk from continued development of nuclear weapons."

The world still has over 19,000 nuclear weapons, enough power to destroy the world's inhabitants several times over, said Dhanapala. An ICAN campaigner and the author of the study, Tim Wright, said: "The vast majority of nations believe it is time to ban nuclear weapons in the same way that biological and chemical weapons have been banned." ↻

Grafic: globalzero.org

"Nuclear disarmament cannot continue at a snail's pace if we are to prevent the further spread and use of nuclear weapons. It must be accelerated, and the best way to achieve that is through a comprehensive nuclear disarmament treaty with timelines and benchmarks for eliminating nuclear stockpiles," Wright said, adding: "This must be the next big negotiating objective of the international community."

The pressing need for doing away with nukes was also stressed in a historic resolution in November 2011 by the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, which has close to 100 million members and volunteers worldwide.

The resolution highlighted the humanitarian dangers of nuclear weapons and called on governments "to pursue in good faith and conclude with urgency and determination negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement". [Read also: Red Cross Movement Wants Nukes Abolished]

ICAN study finds that support for a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons has grown considerably since 2008, when the UN Secretary-General made such a treaty the centrepiece of his nuclear disarmament action plan.

"At the May 2010 review conference of the ailing Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, two references to a nuclear weapons convention made their way into the agreed outcome document, despite strong protestations from some nuclear-armed nations," notes ICAN.

Arielle Denis, a senior campaigner at ICAN's office in Geneva, believes that governments have a clear popular mandate to ban nuclear weapons. "Right across the world, even in nations with large nuclear arsenals, opinion polls show that a majority of citizens support the elimination of these immoral, inhumane and illegal weapons. The people believe the time has come for their leaders to cast off the nuclear shadow," she said.

But, as Robert Socolow, member of the BAS Science and Security Board, says, "Obstacles to a world free of nuclear weapons remain. Among these are disagreements between the United States and Russia about the utility and purposes of missile defense, as well as insufficient transparency, planning,

and cooperation among the nine nuclear weapons states to support a continuing drawdown."

Socolow adds: "The resulting distrust leads nearly all nuclear weapons states to hedge their bets by modernizing their nuclear arsenals. While governments claim they are only ensuring the safety of their warheads through replacement of bomb components and launch systems, as the deliberate process of arms reduction proceeds, such developments appear to other states to be signs of substantial military build-ups."

The way out of this morass is to mobilise public opinion. "Whether meeting the challenges of nuclear power, or mitigating the suffering from human-caused global warming, or preventing catastrophic nuclear conflict in a volatile world, the power of people is essential," says BAS executive director, Kennette Benedict.

"For this reason, we ask other scientists and experts to join us in engaging ordinary citizens. Together, we can present the most significant questions to policymakers and industry leaders. Most importantly, we can demand answers and action," she adds.

BAS points out that some of the key recommendations for a safer world have not been taken up and require urgent attention. These include ratification by the United States and China of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and progress on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty;

There is a pressing need for implementing multinational management of the civilian nuclear energy fuel cycle with strict standards for safety, security, and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, including eliminating reprocessing for plutonium separation;

BAS also pleads for strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency's capacity to oversee nuclear materials, technology development, and its transfer.

The decision to move the minute hand of the Doomsday Clock is made by the Bulletin's Board of Directors in consultation with its Board of Sponsors, which includes 18 Nobel Laureates. [IDN-InDepthNews – January 16, 2012] ♦

Asian Leaders Campaign Against Nukes in Own Backyard

BY THALIF DEEN



UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - A group of political, diplomatic and military leaders from the Asia-Pacific region - representing an area with the largest number of nuclear weapons states - is launching a campaign to help abolish the world's most destructive weapons, beginning in their own backyard.

The convenor of the group, former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, said Monday, "The quest to eliminate nuclear weapons cannot begin to succeed without the determined engagement of policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region."

The largest number of declared and undeclared nuclear powers is in Asia: China, India, Pakistan and possibly North Korea. "While nuclear weapons cannot be uninvented, they can and must be outlawed, as chemical and biological weapons have been," said a statement released by the newly inaugurated Asia Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN).

"We believe that we have a particular responsibility to work for change in the Asia Pacific region," said a joint statement from the group, which includes five former prime ministers and 10 former foreign and defence ministers.

The signatories include James Bolger, former prime minister of New Zealand; Malcolm Fraser, ex-prime minister of Australia; Yasuo Fukuda, former prime minister of Japan; and Geoffrey Palmer, ex-prime minister of New Zealand.

Focusing primarily on Asia, the statement says as the world's economic, political and security centres of gravity shift inexorably here, "our stake in a secure world order - and obligation to contribute with ideas, policy proposals and vision to that end - have grown commensurately".

What happens in the Asian region impacts every dimension of the global nuclear agenda.

"We have shown the way forward with nuclear weapons-free zones in the Treaties of Raratonga and Bangkok, but also have - in South Asia and the Korean Peninsula - two of the world's most acute areas of nuclear tension."

John Burroughs, executive director of the New York-based Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, told IPS that Evans's initiative in forming APLN comes at a crucial time.

He said there are indeed very serious challenges to be overcome in this key region, among them the Pakistan-India nuclear arms race and North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

"The region's growing reliance on nuclear power is another," he added.

The Republic of Korea (ROK) and the United States are now discussing ROK's desire, opposed by the U.S., to acquire its own capability to produce fuel for nuclear reactors, he pointed out.

Building such a capability would exacerbate the problems of denuclearising North Korea, he added.

APLN's proposal for international or multinational control of nuclear fuel production may offer a partial solution.

But APLN shies away from the more fundamental solution of transitioning away from nuclear power, said Burroughs.

The APLN statement also said that existing nuclear arsenals amount to some 23,000 weapons, with a combined destructive capacity of 150,000 Hiroshima bombs, noting, "That nuclear peace has held since 1946 owes more to good luck than good stewardship." ↻

Image Credit: U.S. Air Force photo/2nd Lt. Raymond Geoffroy

In a today's world of multiple nuclear-armed states, significant regional tensions, command and control systems of varying sophistication, potentially destabilising new cyber technology and continuing development of more modern (including smaller and potentially more useable weapons), it cannot be assumed that such luck will continue, the statement warned.

Hirotsugu Terasaki, executive director for Peace Affairs at the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International, told IPS it is clear that Asia has a critical role to play in achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

"I support the views expressed in the APLN statement on this point," he added. Shared efforts to reduce the perception of threat and build trust are crucial.

To this end, he said, it is vital to open and maintain avenues of communication at all levels - diplomatic, academic, cultural and otherwise.

"Only patient, persistent efforts in this field can break down the walls of fear and mistrust that drive governments to seek and maintain nuclear weapons," said Terasaki, whose organisation has been leading an intense campaign for a nuclear weapons-free world.

He also said that multilayered efforts to build trust ultimately hold the key to achieving denuclearisation in South and Northeast Asia.

Besides Asia, the Middle East has been dominated by a single nuclear power: Israel, which has refused to publicly declare its status.

But that domination has been threatened by Iran, which Western powers say is on the verge of developing nuclear weapons, an assertion denied by the Iranians.

The world's five declared nuclear weapons states, under the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), are the five veto-wielding permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Burroughs told IPS the formation of ALPN also is a welcome boost to the global nuclear disarmament enterprise, which has faltered since New START, the modest U.S.-Russian nuclear arms reduction agreement of 2010.

ALPN says that the use of indiscriminately inhumane nuclear weapons is an affront to every fundamental principle of international humanitarian law.

"While the ALPN stops short of advocating commencement of negotiations on a global ban on nuclear weapons, it does call for developing the elements of the Nuclear Weapons Convention supported by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon," said Burroughs.

Terasaki told IPS that in Northeast Asia, local governments, such as of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as peace, faith-based and citizens' organisations are all engaged in activities based on their particular strengths and concerns.

The shared strength of all these actors is that they have the potential to look beyond national horizons and to represent the concerns of ordinary citizens, with varying degrees of independence from official stances and national policies, he said.

In Northeast Asia, cross-border communication and collaboration among such movements are growing, with the potential to help unlock long-standing diplomatic stalemates.

"I have to believe that similar or even greater potential exists among the civil societies movements of South Asia," he declared. [IPS - December 12, 2011] ◆

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Hirotsugu Terasaki, executive director for Peace Affairs at the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International, told IPS it is clear that Asia has a critical role to play in achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Red Cross Movement Wants Nukes Abolished

BY NEENA BHANDARI



SYDNEY - Even as Australia's ruling Labour revoked early December its long standing party policy banning uranium sales to India and Pakistan was swift to stake its claim too, the disarmament movement received a boost with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement adopting a

resolution to work towards a legally binding global convention on nuclear abolition.

The Australian Red Cross (ARC) had worked with the Japanese and Norwegian Red Cross to draft the resolution early 2011, which was passed in Geneva on November 26. The decision to support the initiative was taken by the Council of Delegates of the Movement comprising representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the 187 Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and the International Federation.

"We were overwhelmed by our colleagues in a range of countries from Iran, Jordan and Lebanon to Mozambique, Malaysia and Samoa amongst others, who co-sponsored and supported the Red Cross Movement's resolution to urge governments to never use these horrible weapons again. It shows that the resolution has traction and there is a global sense that the Red Cross Movement needs to speak out on this vital issue of nuclear abolition," ARC's Head of International Law and Principles, Dr Helen Durham, told IDN.

The historic resolution appeals to all states to "pursue in good faith and conclude with urgency and determination, negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement."

A record number of states had called for work to begin on a Nuclear Weapons Convention at the May 2010 review conference of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in New York.

The resolution is of critical importance as it challenges the legitimacy of nuclear weapons ever being used as a weapon of war because of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences, in particular on civilian populations, and the threat to the environment and world food production.

"There are real legal and humanitarian imperatives for the world to work in a more focused way on nuclear disarmament. The proliferation of these weapons in an increasing number of countries and the threat of other groups gaining capacity to use nuclear weapons should be a wake-up call to the world. The Red Cross will be carrying the message to governments and the wider community," said Dr Durham.

On August 6 (Hiroshima Day) 2011, the ARC had launched the 'Target Nuclear Weapons' campaign calling for the use of nuclear weapons to be made illegal. It asked 'Baby Boomers' to reconnect with the cause that defined a generation in the 1960s and 1970s, and called for a whole new generation to get involved. The campaign has reached over 565,000 people and counting through Facebook posts and tweets.

Today there are at least 20,000 nuclear weapons worldwide, around 3,000 of them on launch-ready alert. The potential power of these would roughly equate to 150,000 Hiroshima bombs.

"If we can achieve treaties to control the use of landmines and cluster munitions then we cannot turn our backs on the need to get agreement on a global convention to outlaw this evil weapon forever," said Australian Red Cross CEO, Robert Tickner. The ARC is working towards deriving bi-partisan support in Australia for a convention to prohibit the use of nuclear weapons.

Since 1945, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have consistently voiced deep concerns about these weapons of mass destruction and the need for the prohibition of their use. Its role in developing the International Humanitarian Law led to the creation of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions, the universal rules of war, in 1977. ➡

As many as 194 nations of the world, including Australia, have ratified the four Geneva Conventions. While Australia doesn't have any nuclear weapons, it does have arrangements in place in relation to defence with the US in which the supposed protection afforded by US nuclear weapons is seen as key to Australia's national security. It also has almost 40 per cent of the world's known uranium reserves and supplies 19 per cent of the world market.

Canberra has forecast uranium exports to rise from around 10,000 tonnes a year to 14,000 tonnes in 2014, worth around A\$1.7 billion. Australia currently exports uranium to China, Japan, Taiwan and the United States.

As Dr Tilman Ruff, Chair of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia, told IDN, "ICAN focuses on issues that are related to weapons and proliferation and there are clearly substantial connections to nuclear power as the starting fuel and basic processes are the same.

Any country that can enrich uranium to reactor grade to use for nuclear power generation also has everything it would need to enrich the uranium little bit further to weapons grade, and that is why there is so much concern about Iran's nuclear programme. And any country that has a nuclear reactor could extract plutonium from used reactor fuel and use that to build a nuclear weapon."

"From ICAN's perspective our principal role in relation to nuclear power generation is to draw attention to the fact that the starting material is the same and the effects of radiation are completely indiscriminate and identical whether it is radiation from a nuclear reactor or a nuclear bomb and to highlight that it is simply not possible to continue business as usual on the nuclear power side. It will not be possible to abolish nuclear weapons while there are no constraints on countries enriching uranium or extracting plutonium from spent reactor fuel." Dr Ruff added.

Advocates for a nuclear-free world argue that there are problems with all uranium exports, even if there are safeguards agreements in place with the countries receiving uranium, as there is always a risk that it will be used in

weapons. Even if it isn't used in weapons, it will be freeing up domestic reserves of uranium for that purpose.

New analysis by Washington-based independent research organisation, Worldwatch Institute, indicates that countries are turning to other energy sources as a result of high costs of nuclear electricity production, low demand, lower natural gas prices and concerns about health and safety since Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster. Despite reaching record levels of 375.5 gigawatts (GW) in 2010, global installed nuclear capacity – the potential power generation from all existing plants – declined to 366.5 (GW) in 2011, according to the Institute's latest *Vital Signs Online* (VSO) report.

In what was a passionate and at times heated debate on Prime Minister Julia Gillard's motion to allow uranium exports to India, nine delegates spoke against the motion, receiving standing ovation, while seven delegates spoke in favour amidst jeers from those opposed to uranium mining and exports.

Until now the ALP (Australian Labour Party) policy had allowed uranium exports only to countries that have signed the NPT. The Prime Minister's motion was endorsed by delegates with a thin margin of just 21 votes (206 voted in favour and 185 against), revealing deep dissensions even amongst ministers in the Gillard Government on the issue.

Speaking at the 46th ALP national conference in Sydney on December 4, Minister for Transport and Infrastructure Anthony Albanese said, "Until we have resolved the issues of nuclear proliferation and nuclear waste, we should not change our platform to further expand our commitment to the nuclear fuel cycle."

Although construction on 16 new reactors began in 2010, the highest number in over two decades, that number fell to just two in 2011, with India and Pakistan each starting construction on a plant. In addition to this dramatically slowed rate of construction, the first 10 months of 2011 saw the closing of 13 nuclear reactors, reducing the total number of reactors in operation around the world from 441 at the beginning of the year to 433, according to the VSO report. [IDN-InDepthNews – December 10, 2011] ♦

Grafic: The Australian Red Cross campaign reached more than 565,000 people through social media. | Australian Red Cross

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Stepping Towards Nuclear-Free Middle East

BY JILLIAN KESTLER-D'AMOURS

JERUSALEM - Representatives from over 65 organisations and countries convened in Amman, Jordan on Nov 29-Dec 1 in an effort to lay the groundwork for the United Nations' goal of creating a Middle East without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

"More than 11 specialised tracks were discussed throughout the meeting, (including) most importantly, the role of UN instruments in declaring the Middle East as a nuclear weapons free zone, the security implications of a (weapons of mass destruction free zone), prospects of establishing a nuclear fuel cycle, (and) nuclear security in the Middle East," explained Ayman Khalil, director of the Arab Institute for Security Studies (ACSIS), one of the conference organisers.

Called 'Laying the Grounds for 2012: Opportunities for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Security', the three-day conference highlighted challenges that persist in the lead-up to the UN's 2012 conference on creating a Middle East free of nuclear weapons.

The May 2010 review meeting of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – which takes place every five years – called for this UN-sponsored conference. In October, it was announced that Finland would host the conference, and that Finish under secretary of state for foreign and security policy, Jaakko Laajava, would facilitate it.

"The meeting (in Amman) provided a forum for coordination and exchanging views amongst national, regional and international parties (and) highlighted challenges, requirements and prerequisites for active participation and engagement by all states of the region in the 2012 process," Khalil told IPS.

In 1995, the final statement of the NPT Review and Extension Conference called upon all states in the Middle East to build a region free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, and urged other states to promote nuclear non-proliferation.

"All States of the Middle East that have not yet done so, without exception, (must) accede to the (NPT) as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards," the final statement read.

Signed into force in 1970, the NPT aims to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons technology, and further the goal of nuclear disarmament around the world. In all 190 parties are currently signatories to the Treaty, including the five official nuclear-weapons states: China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and the United States.

It is widely believed that Israel, which hasn't signed the NPT, is also in possession of nuclear weapons. According to Khalil, this unwillingness to sign the NPT is the biggest obstacle to creating a nuclear-free Middle East.

"Despite the willingness of all states in the region to create a (nuclear weapons free zone) in the Middle East, the establishment of such a zone remains unachievable. The biggest obstacle, of course, is the non-commitment of some states to the Non-Proliferation Treaty," Khalil said.

"There exist a number of other challenges that make this objective quite challenging, namely the existence of an Arab-Israeli conflict, and the possession and development of nuclear programmes in the region," Khalil said.

In recent months, various governments placed sanctions on Iran after reports surfaced that the country was building up its nuclear weapons arsenal and capabilities, a charge that Iranian officials have consistently denied.

The situation has raised fears of a confrontation between Jerusalem and Tehran that could ignite the entire region. Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urged the world "to stop Iran's race to arm itself with a nuclear weapon before it is too late." [IPS - December 7, 2011] ◆

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India Set to Take Lead on Abolishing Nukes

BY SHASTRI RAMACHANDARAN*

NEW DELHI - The Government of India appears to be in right earnest about taking the lead in pursuing universal disarmament. The renewed vigour – for reviving the climate and conditions wherein the basic ideas and objectives of nuclear disarmament can be advanced – is evident in a series of engagements being lined up to carry forward former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's Action Plan (RGAP) for a nuclear-weapons-free world order.

The Plan, mooted in 1988 and known as 'RGAP 88', attracted much global attention when it was launched as the logical culmination of the Six Nation-Five Continent Initiative to pre-empt the outbreak of nuclear war at a time when the confrontationist rhetoric of the two superpowers was at its peak. India's late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi could not succeed in making the United Nations General Assembly accept his idea in 1988.

Now, 23 years later, RGAP 88 has acquired new life with the Informal Group on RGAP coming out with its 284-page report in August 2011. Its nomenclature, 'Informal Group', can be misleading as there is nothing informal about it. On the contrary the IG, set up by India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in October 2010, is the Prime Minister's Advisory Group to revitalize the RGAP on Disarmament.

Headed by former Union Minister and Member of Parliament Mani Shankar Aiyar, a career foreign service officer-turned-politician who was close to Rajiv Gandhi, the Group includes distinguished diplomats, strategic affairs and nuclear experts and academics.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had set up the Informal Group in the wake of US President Barack Obama's speech in April 2009, in which he spoke about "America's commitment to seek peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons". President Obama, who deserves credit for being the first head of a

nuclear-weapon state to commit himself to a nuclear-weapon-free world, had warned of the dangers of proliferation. He spelled out that the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists was "the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War."



The report, which recommends action on how best the idea of universal disarmament can be carried forward, is premised on the realisation that possession of nuclear weapons has not resulted in a (greater) sense of security to India. The case for moving towards a nuclear weapon-free world is more compelling today than during the Cold War because more states have nuclear weapons and more could be tempted to join. Therefore, the report has called for a massive campaign within the country to spread awareness of the dangers of nuclear conflict and a terrorist nuclear attack.

Drawing attention to the fact that India faced the biggest and most tangible threats, whether by way of a nuclear attack or nuclear terrorism, the report argued that "the best security for India lies in universal nuclear disarmament". The members of the Advisory Group acknowledged explicitly that they drew confidence from the US support to nuclear abolition, which was not forthcoming in 1988.

The report, which was presented to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister S M Krishna recommends, as the first step for revival of RGAP 88, the appointment of a Special Coordinator with the mandate to work out a consensus for constituting a committee on nuclear disarmament. ➡

*The author, an independent political and international affairs commentator based in New Delhi, is a former Editor of Sunday Mail, has worked with leading newspapers in India and abroad, including China, Denmark and Sweden. He was Senior Editor & Writer with China Daily and Global Times in Beijing.

Picture above: India's Mani Shankar Aiyar with Global Security Institute's Jonathan Granoff | Credit: Global Security Institute

The report contains a seven-point roadmap with 14 recommendations, which includes India reiterating its commitment to "eliminating its own arsenal as part of a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable global process"; promoting consensus on reducing salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, No-First Use and binding negative security assurances; "keep the fires burning" in the Conference on Disarmament to press for discussions aimed at mobilising countries for total elimination of nuclear weapons; and, thereafter, moving to a Convention banning the use or threat of nuclear weapons.

These are towards clearing the decks for "negotiating a Nuclear Weapons Convention that would discuss a world without nuclear weapons in a specified time-frame."

The report recommends that India – as a State with Nuclear Weapons (SNW) which is resolved to maintain a credible minimum nuclear deterrent –should initiate bilateral dialogues on disarmament with all the countries possessing nuclear weapons. To sharpen the advocacy of disarmament, the report calls for the government's active participation in civil society initiatives, strengthening the Disarmament Division in the Ministry of External Affairs and raising the country's profile in the UNGA.

The Group wants the Government of India to take the lead in global efforts for elimination of nuclear weapons, bringing to the issue the moral force of 60 years of campaigning for the cause and its growing clout in the global arena. The report argues that the time is ripe for India to revive its traditional championing of disarmament. Besides, the prevailing global climate is viewed to be opportune because processes for reduction of nuclear arsenals are gaining.

It may be mentioned that the Advisory Group's report takes the RGAP 88 forward by including elements of a Working Paper which India had submitted to the UNGA in 2006.

There is no dearth of national and international reports, proposals, committees and groups on the issue of nuclear disarmament. Yet if this Advisory Group's

report and recommendations deserve attention it is because of new dimensions to the issue and exceptional features of the report.

To take the second aspect first, the unique feature of the report is not the underlying philosophy, intent, language, approach or even the rhetoric. But that it grasps the nettle in terms of the specific, practical steps needed for actualising the goal of nuclear abolition. The sequenced moves, spelled out in a step-by-step way, towards the goal of nuclear elimination offer a measurable yardstick of progress – or lack of it. This provides the advantage of setting specific stages for the campaign, which can serve as signposts.

The new dimensions that the report focuses upon are the altered and favourable international climate for a disarmament campaign, the US support for nuclear abolition, the Indian government's forthright commitment to take the lead and a prescription of engagements for pursuing the cause within the country and through bilateral, regional and international exercises beginning January 2012. This prescription forms part of the sequenced stages.

The fact that the Chairman of the Group, Mani Shankar Aiyar has begun acting on the proposed roadmap within the country and at the international level testifies to the earnestness of the efforts underway.

India at Conference in New York

At the international level, UN Day (October 24) this year provided an apt platform to draw attention to the report. At a conference organised in New York by the Global Security Institute, the East West Institute and the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation, speakers, including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Aiyar, made a strong pitch for eliminating nuclear weapons.

The conference is a landmark not for the perorations but as a stage for revival of the campaign to build a new awareness for nuclear abolition. The high-level conference also turned the spotlight on the Secretary General's Five Point Proposal, a comprehensive agenda for eliminating nuclear weapons, first presented three years ago. ➡

The report recommends that India – as a State with Nuclear Weapons (SNW) which is resolved to maintain a credible minimum nuclear deterrent –should initiate bilateral dialogues on disarmament with all the countries possessing nuclear weapons.

"We know that the world of tomorrow is shaped by the decisions we make today. A world free of nuclear weapons is a concrete possibility," Ban Ki-moon said, according to news reports of the event.

In his keynote address, Ban emphasised the need for increased transparency and accountability, as well as the urgent need to strengthen the rule of law in nuclear disarmament obligations, and reiterated his 2008 call for work on a nuclear weapons convention.

"No country is more threatened than India is by the growing nuclear arsenals in our neighbourhood and the prospect of terrorists accessing nuclear materials or even weapons. Unilateral nuclear disarmament is, therefore, difficult to envisage," Aiyar said at the conference. Elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to ensure that they are not used for "mass genocide" by terrorists and "mass suicide" by states, he said, adding that "there is no third way."

According to a PTI report, Aiyar pointed out that while unilateral nuclear disarmament would not be easy, India "could rid itself of these weapons"

within the framework of an international convention for the universal elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. "India must continue to pursue its vision of a non-nuclear world since a Nuclear-Weapons-Free-World would be good for the planet, good for the region and good for India's national security."

A week earlier, at the Inter-Parliamentary Union meet, the report's call for a full-scale revival of the nuclear abolition campaign evoked a lot of interest, said Dr Vidya Shankar Aiyar who serves as Advisor to the Informal Group.

Bringing IDN up to date on developments following the presentation of the report to the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Dr Vidya Shankar Aiyar said that India's National Security Advisor, Shivshankar Menon, had been most encouraging in his support to the initiatives proposed in the Report.

The Group's Chairman, Mani Shankar Aiyar, is now working to schedule a meeting with senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs in the presence of the Foreign Minister. This is in preparation for a national-level conference that the Advisory Group, together with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), plans to convene in January 2012. This national conference is expected to bring together the community of strategic affairs specialists, experts on nuclear and disarmament issues and think tanks.

Thereafter, the Advisory Group, according to Dr Vidya Shankar Aiyar, proposes to hold conferences in the neighbourhood and develop a level of regional cohesion before bringing around the Permanent Five (P-5) of the UN Security Council for developing an international platform.

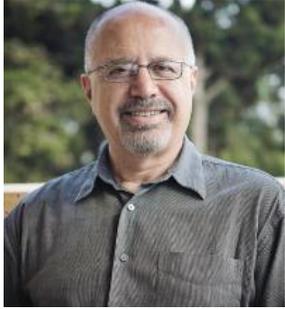
All this may be cause for optimism. However, the obstacles on the path cannot be discounted, and the report itself takes realistic note of the challenges ahead. The challenges include resistance from powerful sections of the US establishment which do not share Obama's position, the distinct lack of enthusiasm among some of the P-5 such as the US and Russia and differences even among those who agree on the larger objective but are divided on the steps to be taken. [IDN-InDepthNews – December 2, 2011] ♦

"We know that the world of tomorrow is shaped by the decisions we make today. A world free of nuclear weapons is a concrete possibility," Ban Ki-moon said.

"No country is more threatened than India is by the growing nuclear arsenals in our neighbourhood and the prospect of terrorists accessing nuclear materials or even weapons. Unilateral nuclear disarmament is, therefore, difficult to envisage," Aiyar said.

Most Israelis Favour a Nuclear-Free Middle East, Poll Shows

BY MITCHELL PLITNICK



WASHINGTON - A clear majority of Israeli Jews would support a nuclear weapons-free Middle East, even if it meant that Israel too would have to give up its stockpile of nuclear weapons.

This was the most surprising result to come out of a pair of polls conducted separately on Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel. The polls, conducted in November by Professor Shibley Telhami and presented Thursday [December 1, 2011] at the Brookings Institution, covered a range of topics, from the Arab Spring to perceptions of the United States and hopes for the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

While 90 percent of Israeli Jews believe Iran will develop a nuclear weapon, 63 percent prefer that neither country possess nuclear weaponry, while only 19 percent would prefer they both do, if those are the only two choices.

By a narrow margin of 43 to 41 percent, Israeli Jews support the idea of an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities. Sixty-eight percent of Arab Israelis oppose such an attack, with only four percent saying they support it.

The poll also revealed that most Israeli Jews believe that the Arab Spring will negatively impact their own country, largely because they do not believe it will bring democracy to the Arab world.

When asked how the Arab Spring will affect Israel, 51 percent responded "mostly for the worse", with only 15 percent saying it would change things for the better. Twenty-one percent said it would make no difference.

Yet, when asked "If the Arab Spring does, in fact, lead to more democracy in the Arab world..." 44 percent thought this would be better for Israel, with only 22 percent saying it would be worse and 28 percent saying it would make no difference.

Israeli columnist Nahum Barnea, responding to the presentation of Telhami's polls, noted that, "The Israeli people are made more fearful of the Arab Spring" by government and media warnings that it will increase hostility toward Israel.

The poll of Palestinian citizens of Israel revealed some sharp changes on key issues from only a year ago.

When asked if they would "accept the transfer of some Arab/Palestinian towns currently in Israel to a new Palestinian state", 78 percent responded that they would not accept such a transfer, with only 17 percent saying they would. That is a clear shift from 2010, when 58 percent said they would oppose such a transfer while 36 percent would accept it.

There was also a strong shift toward compromise on the question of Palestinian refugees' right to return to the lands from which they were exiled. In 2010, 57 percent of Arab Israelis said the right of return "could not be compromised away", while 28 percent said it was "important, but a compromise should be found" and 11 percent said it was "not too important".

In the current poll, the plurality shifted and now 57 percent are in favour of compromise, 34 percent say it cannot be compromised and only five percent say it is not too important.

Telhami was unsure about the reasons for the drastic shift in opinion on this issue. He did say, however that, "Those who had refugees in their families were much more inclined not to compromise than those who did not." ↻

Picture: Professor Shibley Telhami
Credit: sadat.umd.edu/people/shibley_telhami.htm

The polls also showed a stark contrast between Arab and Jewish citizens in the perceptions of the status of Arabs in Israel. While majorities in both groups (52 percent of Jews, 57 percent of Arabs) believe that, "There is legal equality but institutional and societal discrimination" against the Arab minority, 36 percent of Arabs believe that the relationship between Jews and Arab in Israel "is an apartheid relationship".

While only seven percent of Jews subscribe to that view, 33 percent of Jews believe there is "full equality between Arab and Jewish citizens" in Israel, but a mere three percent of Arabs share that view.

Jewish Israelis hold little hope for a resolution of the conflict in the near future, with only six percent saying it will be resolved in the next five years. Forty-nine percent believe it will never be resolved, while 42 percent say that it eventually will be, but it will take more than five years.

There is a widespread consensus among Israeli Jews that Israel must be recognised as a Jewish state, something the Palestinian Authority has adamantly refused to do. Thirty-nine percent insist such recognition must be a precondition of negotiations or a settlement freeze, while 40 percent are willing to accept that recognition as part of a final peace agreement. Only 17 percent

do not support the demand for recognition as a Jewish state.

But when asked if they would accept defining Israel as "the homeland of the Jewish people and all its citizens", 71 percent of Israeli Jews said they would support such a formulation, while only 25 percent oppose it.

By a 66 percent to 31 percent margin, Israeli Jews said they believe their government should be doing more to "promote comprehensive peace with the Arabs based on the 1967 borders with agreed modifications", indicating dissatisfaction with the way the Netanyahu government has handled this issue.

Yet 47 percent of Israeli Jews also believe that if the two-state solution collapses, "the status quo will continue with little change." Thirty-four percent believe it will lead to intense, long-term conflict.

Telhami pointed out that, "In the Arab world, most believe that the collapse of the two-state solution will lead to intense conflict for years to come."

The polls found that Arab citizens of Israel were generally well in line with the rest of the Arab world in their attitudes toward the Arab Spring and in seeing Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan as the model for new leadership.

The one stark difference between Arabs in Israel and in the Arab countries surveyed in an earlier poll was in the view of the United States' role in the Arab world in recent months. When asked which two outside countries played the most productive roles in the Arab world in recent months, the United States ranked third in the Arab countries, being named by 24 percent of respondents, but ranked first at 45 percent among Arabs in Israel.

As the United States' presidential election draws nearer, Barack Obama might take heart that his positive rating among Israeli Jews is up to 54 percent from 41 percent last year. But faith in his policies remains low, as only 22 percent say their attitude about them is "hopeful" while 39 percent describe their feelings as "discouraged". [IPS - December 1, 2011] ◆

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Iran: Nuclear Watchdog Details Pre-2003 Weapons Research

BY BARBARA SLAVIN



WASHINGTON (IPS) - A new report on Iran's nuclear programme provides substantial evidence that Iran carried out extensive research into how to make a nuclear weapon prior to 2003 but is shaky about how much work has continued.

Citing "a wide variety of independent sources", including material from 10 member states and from a foreign scientist who worked on the programme, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said November 8 that Iranians had conducted multiple activities "relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device" from the late 1990s until 2003.

The material, listed in great detail in a 14-page annex to a regular IAEA report on Iran, should provide ample new ammunition for the agency and the international community to press Iran for answers and for improved access to its nuclear facilities. There is no indication, however, that Iran has actually built a nuclear weapon.

There is new information that Iran experimented with producing uranium metal for a bomb, with high explosives needed to trigger a nuclear device, and studied how to produce a warhead small enough to fit on a ballistic missile. Satellite information shows Iran built a "large explosives containment vessel" at a site near Tehran in which to conduct experiments, the report said.

"It remains for Iran to explain the rationale behind these activities," which violate Iran's commitments to peaceful nuclear activities under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the agency said.

The report is much less authoritative about what went on after 2003, when Iran at least temporarily halted the programme following the revelation that it was building a uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and a heavy water plant and reactor at Arak.

"The Agency's ability to construct an equally good understanding of activities in Iran after the end of 2003 is reduced due to the more limited information available to the Agency," the report acknowledged.

Thus the findings appear to be consistent with a much maligned 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate which expressed "medium confidence" that Iran had not restarted a weaponisation programme at that time.

Conservative groups immediately pounced on the findings to demand harsh new measures against Iran, including sanctioning Iran's Central Bank and retaining "all options" – meaning a military attack.

"There can no longer be any doubt about the intent or direction of the Iran nuclear weapons effort, which is progressing rapidly," said a statement by Richard Stone and Malcolm Hoenlein, the chairman and executive vice chairman, respectively, of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. "The report leaves no room for ambiguity and demands a quick, comprehensive plan in which all options are included."

However, the main aspects of the programme have been known for several years and discussed in previous IAEA publications.

David Albright, a former nuclear inspector and president of the Institute for Science and International Security, told IPS that he was comforted by the new evidence that "pressure worked" and that Iran stopped what the IAEA called a "structured" programme in 2003. ↻

"It's important to know that they didn't succeed in building a reliable warhead that could fit on one of their missiles," he said. "We're much better off that it was stopped when it was."

He added, however, that the Iranians "know how to build a nuclear weapon and know the problems they have to solve to make them reliable."

Sourcing for allegations of Iranian work after 2003 is thin. For example, only one unnamed IAEA member provided information that Iran had tried after 2004 to manufacture elements of what is known as a neutron initiator, necessary to trigger a chain reaction leading to a nuclear explosion.

Two unnamed member states were the source of allegations that in 2008 and 2009, Iran carried out computer modeling of a nuclear device "subjected to shock compression", another step in building a reliable bomb.

"There are new details but the overall picture that the report paints we have heard before," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. "There is no new information about a new location or a new area of experimentation."

The Iranian government had no immediate reaction to the report, which was given to members of the IAEA board and swiftly leaked to the press. In the

past, Tehran has accused the IAEA of confronting it with forgeries, while admitting that some research has taken place.

The Barack Obama administration was also subdued and suggested it would use the information to press harder for a diplomatic solution, including tougher enforcement of existing sanctions against Iran.

In some respects, the most worrisome aspects of the report were in its initial pages devoted to Iran's safeguarded facilities. The report said Iran has continued its slow but steady accumulation of enriched uranium and now has nearly 5,000 kilogrammes of uranium enriched to five percent and nearly 74 kilogrammes of uranium enriched to 20 percent U-235. If converted to weapons grade uranium - which is 90 percent U-235 - that stockpile is enough for several bombs.

The findings were revealed in advance of an IAEA board meeting next week that is likely to be stormy.

"The most important thing is for Iran to come clean on weaponisation," Albright said. "If they deal with this, the enrichment programme will be much less of a problem." [IPS -November 8, 2011] ♦

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Unfreezing Disarmament

VIEWPOINT BY JOHN BURROUGHS*



NEW YORK (IPS) - Since 2008, eloquent affirmations of the desirability and necessity of achieving a world without nuclear weapons have poured out from many quarters, not least from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and US President Barack Obama.

Yet the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has displayed an impressive immunity to the marked shift in rhetoric, remaining mired in deadlock. Operating under an absolute rule of consensus, the UN-affiliated body has conducted no negotiations whatsoever since it produced the text of the agreement banning all nuclear test explosions in 1996.

Patience with this lack of productivity has run out. Throughout October, at UN headquarters in New York, UN member states meeting in the First Committee of the General Assembly engaged in a heated and substantive debate on how to get multilateral disarmament moving again. They then approved two resolutions that the General Assembly will formally adopt in early December.

The resolutions signal that if the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament continues, next year, as the body ultimately responsible for pursuing one of the United Nations' central aims, the General Assembly is prepared to act.

One course of action would be for the General Assembly to establish a process not subject to the rule of consensus outside the Conference on Disarmament until the latter can deliver results. This was proposed in the First Committee by Austria, Mexico, and Norway, and gained substantial but not majority support. Working groups would address nuclear disarmament and the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons; guarantees of non-use of nuclear weapons against countries not possessing them; negotiation of a treaty to ban production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT); and prevention of the weaponisation of space.

All of those topics are on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, but it has been disabled by the ability of just one government to stop work by the 65-member group. The majority of member states, many from the Global South, prioritise negotiations on total nuclear disarmament.

This is refused by the nuclear-armed permanent five members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States). To keep arms control in motion, in the late 1990s the majority

reluctantly accepted the position of the Western nuclear powers: negotiations on an FMCT and discussions on other items. Nonetheless, work has not begun.

To buy time to build up its nuclear stockpile, since 2009 Pakistan has blocked negotiations on an FMCT. In the mid-2000s, it was the United States stopping talks, when the Bush administration took the baseless position that an FMCT could not be verified.

And before then, China and Russia insisted on – and the United States opposed – simultaneous commencement of negotiations on the prevention of space weaponisation.

The history of successfully-negotiated multilateral nuclear treaties also demonstrates the need to avoid the trap of consensus. In the case of the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty, banning tests in the atmosphere, and the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, not all countries then possessing nuclear weapons participated in the negotiations or were initial parties.

But they later joined in. And the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was adopted by the General Assembly, not the Conference on Disarmament, over the strong opposition of India.

Beginning in 2009, the Permanent Five for the first time ever are holding occasional meetings on transparency and verification. ➡

This is a welcome development. However, it also underlines the possibility that future nuclear disarmament negotiations would be carried out by states possessing nuclear weapons, rather than in a UN setting. That would be unwise, because it would result in less stringent agreements that lack the legitimacy and effectiveness that only global buy-in could produce. To be used, though, UN-based processes need to be workable as the Conference on Disarmament, paralysed by the rule of consensus, has not been for 15 years.

In addition to flexibility regarding consensus, an approach encompassing more than one multilateral measure at a time is needed. That is another merit of the Austria, Mexico, and Norway proposal. The United States and its allies are adamant that a nuclear weapons-free world must be achieved through a step-by-step approach.

But saying that no other multilateral agreement can be pursued until negotiations on an FMCT are completed is a formula for putting off indefinitely decisive action to end the age of nuclear weapons.

An FMCT will likely take years to negotiate and even longer to enter into force. Moreover, as currently envisaged by the permanent five, it would simply end future production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. Since the older nuclear powers -the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, and France- already have huge stocks of weapons-grade materials, such a cut-off will have little or no practical effect on their military capabilities.

So the step-by-step policy must be discarded and a policy of working on disarmament measures in an integrated and parallel fashion put in its place. Governments should simultaneously negotiate, or at least prepare to negotiate, a fissile materials agreement, non-use obligations, and an agreement on the global elimination of nuclear weapons or combine them all into one negotiation.

If the Conference on Disarmament cannot find a way to resume work in the coming year, the General Assembly should take responsibility and create new pathways to disarmament.

*John Burroughs is Executive Director of the New York-based Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy and co-editor and contributor, *Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security: U.S. Weapons of Terror, the Global Proliferation Crisis, and Paths to Peace* (2007). [IPS Columnist Service | November 2011] ◆

Picture Credit: Ivon Bartholomew

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Middle East Nuke Free Bid Moves to Finland

BY **BAHER KAMAL***



CAIRO (IDN) - The four-decade-long bid to free the Middle East from all weapons of mass destruction (WMD) starting with nukes, will move next year to Helsinki as Finland surprisingly decided to host an international conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone liberated from all kinds of arms that bring about complete destruction.

The announcement of the conference venue, which was made by the UN on October 14, 2011, falls during a new high peak in the on-going Arab Spring in several countries, mainly Tunisia,

Egypt and Libya, and the continuing bitter popular uprisings against dictatorial regimes in Yemen and Syria, among others.

Map of Israeli Nuclear weapons related facilities The decision also coincides with a strong, increasing wave of popular protests in some key Arab countries against Israel – the sole country in the region to have nuclear weapons, estimated at 210 and 250 atomic warheads. This number is equivalent to more than double of the combined atomic arsenals of India and Pakistan.

These popular protests reached their zenith in Cairo in late August and early September this year, with the assault on the Israeli embassy and the burning of the Israeli flags. Other protests took place in Tunisia, Jordan and Morocco.

Meanwhile, Israel has also been witnessing a massive popular movement against the social policies, high food and services costs and unemployment rates of its current, far-right government chaired by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Palestinian Statehood Bid

Then came the Palestinian Authority's bid at the UN General Assembly in September, for a full recognition of Palestine as an independent, sovereign State as supported by the UN General Assembly umpteen times. The move led to more tensions in the region in view of the adamant and open rejection by both Israel and the U.S. which decided to veto it. "All these tensions will hardly help facilitate the Finnish task to advance on the road of freeing the Middle East from nuclear weapons," a retired Egyptian nuclear expert told this journalist on condition of anonymity.

"There is now a new scenario in the region. The emerging democratic systems in key countries like Egypt and hopefully soon also in Syria, should not be expected to listen to their 'Master's Voice' – the U.S, as the falling dictatorial regimes have been doing for long decades," added the expert who actively participated in the preparations for the 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010 conferences to review the (Nuclear) Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The turbulent, oil-rich, awakening Middle East is the sole key region that is not free from atomic weapons. Other regions, including entire continents, have already done so. Such is the case of Latin America and the Caribbean; the South Pacific; South-East Asia; Central Asia; and Africa.

Tough Mission

The task before Jaakko Laajava, under-secretary of State in Finland's foreign ministry, who has been appointed as facilitator of the conference expected to take place "broadly in 2012", appears to be anything but easy.

The launch of an international Middle East conference was decided by the May 3-28, 2010 NPT Review conference in New York, following persistent pressures by Egypt – the original author of the Middle East nuclear free zone initiative since late 60s – with the backing of Arab countries, Turkey, and the Non-Aligned Movement, as well as some European nations, mostly Scandinavians. ☺

In run-up to the NPT review meeting, Egyptian diplomats reiterated in different fora the more than 40-year old demand that the long-troubled Middle East region must be freed of atomic arsenal and all weapons of mass destruction.

The Cairo initiative, first launched in 1961, has been assuming contours over the past four decades, and as Cairo officials have reiterated, all Egyptian governments have been relentlessly sticking to their "clear and totally transparent position" towards nuclear weapons and in general all weapons of mass destruction (atomic, biological and chemicals).

Knowledgeable sources assure that Cairo policy still holds ground.

The Cairo Document

Egypt submitted to all parties involved in the New York 2010 NPT Review conference, a working paper through which it called on the meeting to express "regret that no progress has been achieved for the implementation of the 1995 (UN) resolution," which confirmed previous resolutions to free the region from nuclear weapons.

That resolution established a solid base for negotiating the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, declaring it a nuclear-free-zone.

Only days before the New York meeting, an Egyptian Foreign Affairs ministry spokesperson pointed out on April 26, 2010 that Cairo has always been working for achieving the goal of a nuclear weapon free Middle East through international fora and groups of countries that "share our thinking, in particular Arab and African countries and also some European states."

The Egyptian Foreign Affairs ministry called on "all States to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty," fully aware that Israel is the only country in the region to reject the Treaty. A spokesperson said that, through its participation in the 2010 Review conference, "Egypt wants to ensure the accession of all States to this NPT." He stressed that "the non-accession by Israel to the NPT not only jeopardises security and peace in the region, but also makes them unviable."

The Call for a UN Conference

The Cairo document urged the NPT Review meeting in New York to organise a UN conference by 2011 with the participation of all countries in the region to work out a formal accord ensuring their effective commitment to free the Middle East from nuclear arms.

Cairo called for such a conference to be organised under the UN flag, so as to ensure that its decisions would be legally binding. Instead, the 2010 Review meeting decided to hold an "international conference" with non-binding recommendations.

This is an indication that the WMD-free Middle East conference in Finland in 2012 will produce at best a "toothless baby tiger," as an Asian diplomat confided to this journalist on condition of anonymity.

The Israeli Refusal

Backed by a large number of European countries and firmly supported by the U.S., Israel sticks to its decision not to disclose its nuclear arsenal to any international body. It insists on keeping its military nuclear programme strictly confidential, while systematically refusing to join the Non Proliferation Treaty.

As a way to confirm Tel Aviv's stand not to facilitate attempts to free the Middle East from weapons of mass destruction, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refused to participate in the Nuclear Security Summit which was organised by U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington on April 13-14, 2010. Netanyahu also deserted the NPT Review conference in May last year in New York.

Egypt's perspective of the cornerstone of a WMD-free Middle East zone was spelt out by the Egypt State Information Service (SIS) in an official paper disseminated one week ahead of the NPT Review conference.

The document stated: "Egyptian vision for achieving peace and stability in the (Middle East) region is based on fundamental principles such as a fair, just solution of the Palestinian cause and the integral implementation of all resolutions based on international legitimacy." ➡

Egypt's unequivocal position is that:

- The possession of weapons of mass destruction does not guarantee security to any (Middle East) country; this will be ensured only through a just and comprehensive peace; and
- The lack of "any positive step" by Israel towards freeing the region of nukes as well as its position based on the 'military superiority doctrine', will only contribute to aggravating regional insecurity.

In calling for total elimination of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction in the region, Egypt rejects any sort of discrimination or 'partialisation' that might be imposed by one party upon another in the Middle East.

Egypt rejects any possible 'selectiveness' of any weapon or any country, and rejects any concession of any special status to any country in the region.

The process of disarming the Middle East of all kinds of weapons of mass destruction must be carried out under international and comprehensive supervision, in particular by the United Nations and its agencies.

Egypt demands the implementation of several UN resolutions calling for freeing the Middle East from nuclear weapons, in particular the UN Security Council resolution number 487 adopted in 1981.

Far ahead of the NPT review conference, Cairo had rejected the U.S. offer to guarantee defence of the region against atomic weapons as part of a comprehensive Middle East peace plan. This offer amounting to a nuclear umbrella is reported to have been made by President Barack Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush.

Nuclear umbrella is usually used for the security alliances of the U.S. with non-nuclear states such as Japan, South Korea, much of Europe, Turkey, Canada, and Australia, originating with the Cold War with the then Soviet Union. For some countries it was an alternative to acquiring nuclear weapons themselves.

In fact, on August 18, 2009, during his first visit to Washington in five years, Egypt's deposed president Hosni Mubarak insisted that "what the Middle East needs is peace, security, stability and development", not nuclear weapons.

*Baher Kamal, is an Egyptian-born, Spanish national, secular, anti-war journalist and analyst specialised in international affairs with focus on the Middle East. He is publisher and editor of Human Wrongs Watch. [IDN-InDepthNews - November 6, 2011]

Egypt reaffirmed its pledge underlying the country's commitment for the establishment of a "nuclear free Middle East".

Pre-empting discussion on the issue, Mubarak said in an exclusive interview with the leading official Egyptian daily Al Ahram on August 17, 2009: "Egypt will not be part of any American nuclear umbrella intended to protect the Gulf countries".

Peace, Not Atomic Umbrellas

Such an umbrella, he said, "would imply accepting foreign troops and experts on our land -- and we do not accept that". He also emphasised that a U.S. nuclear umbrella "would imply an implicit acceptance that there is a regional nuclear power - -we do not accept that either."

He asserted that "the Middle East does not need any nuclear powers, be they Iran or Israel -- what we need is peace, security, stability and development". In any case, "we have not received any official communication regarding such a proposal", he added.

On the same day, Ambassador Suleiman Awad, spokesperson of the Egyptian Presidency, also commented on a U.S. nuclear umbrella in the region. "This is not the first time the issue is raised; it is part of the U.S. defence policy," he said. ♦

Picture on page 48: Israel's Dimona nuclear power plant | Credit: www.panoramio.com

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Modernisation of Nukes Acquiring Priority

BY RAMESH JAURA

BERLIN (IDN) - In a situation reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick's 'Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb', none of the nuclear weapon states is actively contemplating a future without nukes. On the contrary, the potential for using dreadful atomic arsenal is growing, says a new report.

Pointing to some rather disquieting trends worldwide, the paper says: "Although the New START treaty between the United States and Russia (which entered into force on February 5, 2011) arguably represents the most significant arms control advance in two decades, the Treaty contains significant gaps that mean it will not necessarily lead to significant reductions in the number of nuclear weapons held by both parties."

"Whatever the current global rhetoric about nuclear disarmament from the nuclear armed states, in the absence of any further major disarmament or arms control breakthroughs, the evidence points to a new era of nuclear weapons modernisation and growth," cautions Ian Kearns, author of the report.

He substantiates this view with data and analysis related to current stockpiles of nuclear weapons held outside Britain, examines force modernisation trends, declaratory policy and nuclear doctrine, and the security drivers that

underpin nuclear weapons possession in each state.

The report is intended as a "discussion paper" of the UK Trident Commission, an independent, cross-party commission, to examine British nuclear weapons policy. It has been published by the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) at the onset of November.

Though there has been a major reduction in the global nukes stockpile since the mid-1980s, the number of nuclear weapon states has gone up, says the report, adding: "Nuclear weapons," totaling some 20,000, "are present today in some of the most unstable and violence prone regions of the world, and in North East Asia, the Middle East and South Asia, there are serious conflict and proliferation concerns that suggest an increased potential for nuclear weapons use."

The data analysis reveals that long-term nuclear force modernisation or upgrade programmes are underway in all the currently nuclear armed states: Hundreds of billions of dollars are earmarked for the purpose over the next decade, not only in the United States and Russia but in major development programmes in China, India, Pakistan and elsewhere.

Modernised Nukes

Almost all of the nuclear armed states are continuing to produce new or modernized nuclear weapons and some, such as Pakistan and India, appear to be seeking smaller, lighter, warheads than they possess currently, to allow these either to be delivered to greater distances or to allow them to be deployed over shorter ranges and for more tactical purposes.

As regards delivery systems, the study says: "Russia and the United States have recommitted to maintaining a triad of land, sea and air forces for the long-term. China, India and Israel are seeking to build triads of their own. In the case of China and India, major ballistic missile programmes are underway, both to increase the range and sophistication of land-based systems and to build fleets of nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines. ☺



Picture credit: ultimatepreparedness.wordpress.com

"In the case of Israel, the size of its nuclear tipped cruise missile enabled submarine fleet is being increased and the country seems to be on course, on the back of its satellite launch rocket programme, for future development of an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM).

"Pakistan is not only rapidly increasing the size of its warhead stockpile but is building new plutonium production reactors, which could add to its fissile material stocks and, like North Korea, it is seeking to rapidly enhance its missile capabilities.

"France, having recently completed the modernisation of its ballistic missile submarine fleet, is also introducing new and more capable bombers to the air component of its nuclear force, though at reduced aircraft numbers overall, and is introducing new and better nuclear warheads to both its sea-launched ballistic missiles and to its aircraft."

These findings come less than three years after President Barack Obama's historic speech in Prague (the Czech Republic) in April 2009 in which he envisioned a nuclear free world, though not his lifetime.

The shocking fact is that in all nuke armed states "nuclear weapons are currently seen as essential to national security and in several of them, nuclear weapons are assigned roles in national security strategy that go well beyond deterring a nuclear attack."

This, says Kearns, is the case in Russia, Pakistan, Israel, France and "almost certainly" in North Korea. India has left the door open to using nuclear arsenal in response to chemical or biological weapons attacks.

In fact, as the independent International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament pointed out: "Only China limits the stated role to deterrence against the threat or use by others of nuclear weapons; all others keep open the option, to a greater or lesser extent, of using their nuclear weapons in response to other kinds of threats."

The Blame Game

All nuclear power armed states justify modernisation and upgrade programmes by pointing to their strategic or potential vulnerability, in the face of nuclear and conventional force developments taking place elsewhere, says the report.

Moscow claims that the Russian nuclear programme is in response to concerns over U.S. ballistic missile defence and advanced conventional capabilities like Conventional Prompt Global Strike, as well as to concerns over conventional weakness relative to China.

China justifies its nuke modernisation and upgrade programme by referring to these same developments in the United States and by pointing out India's plans. India, on the other hand, says its nuke programme is driven partly by fear over Pakistan and China. Pakistan defends its nuclear programme by referring to Indian conventional force superiority. Far away from South Asia, France has endorsed nuclear weapons modernisation as a response to stockpiles elsewhere that "keep on growing".

Non-strategic Nukes

The study points out that in some states, non-strategic nuclear weapons are seen to have a particular value as compensation for conventional force weakness relative to perceived or potential adversaries.

"These weapons are seen, in this regard, to provide the conventionally weak state with conflict escalation options short of an all out nuclear attack on an adversary, which may not be seen as credible," says the report. This situation mirrors aspects of NATO nuclear doctrine during the Cold War.

Nuclear weapons are therefore assigned war-fighting roles in military planning in countries like Russia and Pakistan. In Russia, this takes on the form of the nuclear de-escalation doctrine. In Pakistan, it is implied, but left ambiguous to confuse risk calculations in the minds of any adversary, but principally India. [IDN-InDepthNews - November 3, 2011] ♦

Free the World from the Nuclear Chain

VIEWPOINT BY XANTHE HALL*

Nuclear Power and the Bomb are inextricably linked through an atomic chain. The nuclear era began in Germany, so we have a specific responsibility to end it sooner rather than later.

BERLIN (IDN) - We talk about abandoning nuclear energy or abolishing nuclear weapons. But this is not enough. They are only the visible products of a whole chain of production that binds us – the nuclear chain. This chain does much more damage than we are aware of.

At the front end of the chain is uranium mining – providing the same source for both nuclear energy and nuclear weapons.

Next comes enrichment. Centrifuge technology enriches uranium and it is only a question of the enrichment grade that defines whether the uranium can be used for producing electricity or weapons.

Regardless of what we believe or not, we can never be 100% sure of what it will be used for. Look at Iran, an example that shows what role mistrust and tension play in the use of such technology. The combination of enrichment and political conflict could lead to war.

A by-product of enrichment is the production of uranium weapons from depleted uranium left over from the process. These weapons have often been used – for instance, in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan – with terrible consequences for health and the environment.

Next in the chain comes the nuclear reactor. Not only can it produce electricity, it also makes plutonium, which can be separated out from the spent fuel rods through reprocessing.

Nuclear weapons are made either with highly enriched uranium or plutonium.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, they can be used. Either in war – as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki – or for nuclear tests.

At the back end of the chain is waste or fallout.

Our Chains

All of these links in the chain are dangerous for health and the environment, principally through the radiation they emit. All of the links produce either waste or fallout, that remain in the environment for hundreds of thousands of years. The nuclear chain is far from being free from CO2 emissions. The claim that nuclear energy can somehow save the climate is a patent lie.

Ionising Radiation is Bad for your Health

Hiroshima, Chernobyl, Semipalatinsk ... whether it was the dropping of the atomic bomb, a nuclear meltdown or atmospheric nuclear testing – the affected populations all show a similar clinical picture, depending on which isotopes were released.

Thyroid cancer, carcinomas, colon cancer, lung cancer, bone cancer, leukaemia (particularly in children), liver cancer, genetic anomalies and many other diseases. ➔



All of these diseases will more than likely show up as long-term effects of the Fukushima disaster.

Our Prescription

Germany is seeking a withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons but is finding it difficult to achieve due to alliance obligations in NATO. The abandonment of nuclear energy has also been decided upon, and yet remains insufficient, as radiation knows no borders.

This is why IPPNW prescribes a holistic therapy. It is time to think in global categories and to take on the whole nuclear chain, and not only parts of it. Therefore, we call for:

A global ban on uranium mining.

Indigenous peoples around the world suffer the most from the effects of uranium mining. Their human rights are being violated, their environment destroyed. Uranium should stay in the earth.

No more nuclear transports.

Whether it be yellowcake from Niger, Australia or India to Europe or nuclear waste from Germany to Russia, it should stop.

An end to the production of fissile materials.

We don't just mean a "cut-off" of production for military use, as many states demand, but also for civilian use. In Europe, we welcome the decision to close Sellafield in the UK and call for Le Hague reprocessing plant in France to be shut down.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty should finally enter into force.

Nine nations are still holding out, among them the USA and China.

A treaty banning and abolishing nuclear weapons (Nuclear Weapons Convention).

Negotiations need to begin now! Join the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear weapons ICAN.

A global energy shift.

This should aim towards regional energy autonomy. With more renewables, increased efficiency and reduced consumption, we can succeed.

Good energy policies are policies for peace – there will be no wars over the sun or the wind. [IDN-InDepthNews - October 27, 2011]

*Xanthe Hall has worked as the nuclear disarmament campaigner at IPPNW Germany for over 18 years and is based at their office in Berlin, Germany. Xanthe was born in Scotland, grew up in England and studied Drama and Theatre Arts at Birmingham University. In the early eighties, she was a member of the West Midlands CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) executive committee responsible for Non-violent Direct Action and worked as a staff member for CND before leaving for West Berlin in 1985.

Xanthe co-founded the Abolition 2000 Global Network for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in 1995. She also helped found the German Abolition national network: Traegerkreis "Atomwaffen abschaffen". Xanthe is a member of the Executive Committee of Middle Powers Initiative and the Abolition Global Council. She is European Coordinator of the Parliamentarians for Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament and German 2020 Vision Campaigner for Mayors for Peace. ♦

2011 IDN-InDepthNews | Analysis That Matters

Germany is seeking a withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons but is finding it difficult to achieve due to alliance obligations in NATO.

Finland to Host Conference for WMD-Free Middle East

BY ELIZABETH WHITMAN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - After much delay, Finland has been chosen to host a 2012 conference to establish a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in the Middle East. The meeting aims to bring together all Middle Eastern countries, some of which share a long history of disagreement, such as Iran and Israel.

Jaakko Laajava, under-secretary of state in Finland's ministry of foreign affairs, will act as the facilitator for the conference, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced Oct. 14.

The long-awaited decision, announced jointly by Ban and the governments of the Russia, the UK and the U.S., is one step forward in a painstaking process that has spanned more than two decades since Egypt first proposed the idea in 1990.

Arms control and disarmament groups welcomed the decision and the choice of Finland as host, but they also raised concerns about the implications of the delay in naming the host and facilitator, as well as remaining challenges to holding the conference and ultimately establishing a WMD-free Middle East.

Appointing someone was "positive, obviously", said Anne Penketh, programme director in Washington for the British American Security Information Council (BASIC).

"But the fact that it has taken until mid-October does raise questions... over whether logistically it's going to be possible to organise such a complex event in 2012," she told IPS.

Still, "the conference would be a major, major step particularly if Iran and Israel are at the same table for discussions on their mutual security," said Penketh.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, called the decision "a very good development". Now, he said, "the task is to make the meeting happen, to ensure that all of the key parties in the region show up and constructively engage on the topic," an achievement that "is by no means certain".

Attention should turn to "beginning a practical dialogue among these countries about nuclear, chemical and biological weapons issues... whether that's Iran or Israel or Syria," Kimball said.

One of the steps agreed upon then was to hold a conference in 2012, with Russia, the UK, the U.S. and the UN leading those efforts.

Will progress remain elusive?

Following Egypt's proposal in 1990, a WMD-free zone in the Middle East was first officially called for during the 1995 Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference, but not until 2010 NPT review conference did states agree on a process to accomplish that goal.

One of the steps agreed upon then was to hold a conference in 2012, with Russia, the UK, the U.S. and the U.N. leading those efforts.

Finally, deciding on a host and facilitator for the conference indicates progress in the effort to bring together countries over such an intractable issue, but it does not guarantee that the conference will be a success.

"It's absolutely vital that the key governments come to this meeting with constructive ideas about how the region can move along the path towards" disarmament, Kimball said. "Doing so is going to require some initial steps."

Each country has certain steps to take in terms of signing and implementing treaties, be they nuclear, biological or test ban treaties, he said.

Yet diplomatic language discussing efforts leading up to the conference is laced with doubts, caveats and preconditions. ➡

"We hope the 2012 conference will be an opportunity for productive discussion," Kurtis Cooper, deputy spokesperson for the U.S. Mission to the U.N., told IPS. He said the U.S. has urged states to take "practical and constructive steps to remove the obstacles to achieving this goal".

A WMD-free Middle East is "an achievable goal", he said, "but it will not happen overnight."

"We recognise that this goal can only be achieved in the context of a comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East, and after Iran and Syria return to full compliance with their existing international agreements."

In a similar statement, the UK said it remained committed to the establishment of a Middle East free of WMDs. "But it will not happen overnight nor without the commitment and support of all states in the region."

It called the conference "a first step in what will be a challenging process" and "a real opportunity for the region to discuss", but only with "the full commitment of all the states in the region, and the wider international community".

Other challenges

If doubts about how productive the meeting will be are not serious enough, then concerns about current conditions in the Middle East affecting the conference's prospects certainly are.

"Practical issues" such as the ongoing Arab spring or an alleged plot by Iran to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the U.S. can hinder the process, Penketh said. "This kind of conference is not operating in a vacuum", and many "political sensitivities... need to be navigated".

Laajava outlined the proposed time frame as being broadly 2012, according to Helsingin Sanomat.

That choice of words, particularly "broadly", "opens the door to a possible delay", said Penketh.

Separately, the fact that Laajava is not known for having a background in Middle Eastern affairs "could be an asset in this situation", Penketh said. As an outsider, he could be able to identify problems much more clearly than people who have been heavily involved or invested over the years.

Israel, the only state in the region with nuclear weapons, has expressed concern that – and the desire not to attend if – the conference would target it for its undeclared arsenal.

Kimball stressed that ensuring the conference is productive continues to be a challenge, even though the conference's locale has been established. Countries have to be prepared to take action both prior to and following the conference.

"This has to be the beginning of a process," he said. "It's important that this meeting is not just an exercise in getting certain diplomats from certain countries to show up and then leave." [IPS - October 19, 2011] ◆

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Israel, the only state in the region with nuclear weapons, has expressed concern that - and the desire not to attend if - the conference would target it for its undeclared arsenal.

Anti-Nuclear Exhibit Calls for Culture of Peace

BY KARINA BOECKMANN

BERLIN (IPS) - The question which is safer - the heavily armed world we live in now, or a world in which all peoples' basic needs are met - is one core issue of an antinuclear exhibition that has reached Germany after touring more than 220 cities in 27 countries.

In the wake of the nuclear disaster at Japan's Fukushima plant in March, which drew the world's attention to the limits of nuclear safety, the question seems more legitimate than ever.

At the Oct. 7 opening of the exhibition "From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit" in Berlin, Hiromasa Ikeda, vice president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), gave the German capital a prize as a city of peace.

The SGI also declared Germany's anti-nuclear movement a model for Japan, which is so far the only victim of devastating nuclear attacks. More than 160,000 people died immediately after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The SGI exhibition brought to Berlin is comprised of 18 panels that document the threat of nuclear weapons in pictures and words and offer a wide range of reasons and arguments in favour of global peace, disarmament and non-proliferation.

SGI is a lay Buddhist movement linking more than 12 million people around the world to promote peace, culture and education through personal change and social contribution. It is committed to the abolition of one of the biggest threats to mankind: nuclear weapons.

"Today humanity faces a daunting array of challenges – from poverty and environmental destruction to devastating unemployment and financial instability – which require the joint, coordinated response of all nations," SGI President Daisaku Ikeda said in a message read out during the opening of the Berlin exhibition.

"These challenges make all the more clear the folly of diverting precious human and economic resources to the maintenance of nuclear arsenals. What humanity requires is genuine security, not nuclear weapons," he added.

The exhibition, which will run through Oct 16, documents the "folly" of investing in a culture of war instead of development. Currently countries spend more than one trillion dollars a year on global military expenditures and the arms trade – an average of 173 dollars for each person on the planet, one panel reads.

"We could meet the basic human needs of every person on earth if 70 - 80 billion dollars – less than 10 percent of the world's military spending – were redirected to that purpose," it adds.

The weapons arsenals still comprise more than 20,000 nuclear heads, which could annihilate all life on earth several times over.

"Now is the time for global civil society and political leaders of conscience to come together to work for the noble goal of a world without nuclear weapons," said Daisaku Ikeda. "The realisation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) outlawing these weapons of mass destruction should be the first milestone to which we aspire."

He renewed his call for the prompt start of negotiations on such a convention. ➡

Photo credit: Seikyo Shimbun



His son Hiromasa Ikeda underlined in an address to some 100 invited participants from different walks of life the importance of challenging the rationale of nuclear deterrence. Nuclear weapons don't contribute to human security, he said, but reflect an "ossified thinking" 20 years after the end of the Cold War.

"As the Cold War faded in the final years of the 20th century, the threat of global nuclear war seemed to recede. But the world missed the opportunity to dismantle the structures and the logic of nuclear deterrence," said the vice president of SGI.

The Japanese in general have a very negative stance towards nuclear weapons – a legacy of the traumatic experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But until the atomic accident in Fukushima they had largely accepted the peaceful use of nuclear power.

"Now the Japanese public finds itself facing both the possible dangers of nuclear power generation and, at the same time, the difficulties of securing acceptable alternative sources of energy," Hirotugu Terasaki, executive director of SGI's office of peace affairs, told IPS.

"In light of this, the unconditional rejection of nuclear power does not seem to be an appropriate response. Nor can we deliberately

ignore the very real role that nuclear power presently plays in meeting the world's energy needs," he said.

"But over the short- and medium-term, the role of nuclear power should be limited to that of a transitional or bridging technology until alternative technologies mature," he added. "Its role should be limited to enabling humanity to reach the renewable, clean energy society of the future."

"The time has come to rid us of nuclear bonds," said Xanthe Hall from the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), which together with the development and peace organisation Global Cooperation Council (GCC) is organising the Berlin exhibition.

Every single link of the chain of nuclear production, she said, from excavation and enrichment of uranium to the disposal of atomic waste, poses a threat to humankind, causing illnesses like cancer, genetic defects and environmental damages.

In her view it's not enough to abandon nuclear energy, as Germany is doing after deciding to close down all atomic power plants by 2022. The reason: every link in the chain of nuclear production causes radiation and therefore threatens humankind and the environment.

The IPPNW campaigns for a worldwide ban on uranium excavation, uranium weapons, the production of fissile materials, an end to the transport of nuclear materials, the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and a NWC.

Sun and wind have never caused wars, Hall said. "So let's free ourselves from nuclear chains and the danger of nuclear terrorism. I hope that we'll reach this aim in our lifetime."

"It's regrettable but until now peace is not yet anchored in the human spirit and the new NATO strategy is a good example," said lawmaker Uta Zapf, chair of the German parliamentary subcommittee for Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation.

"We are surrounded by friends and partners – why don't we abstain from atomic deterrence? Let's get involved as you do with your exhibition, let's all work together with those who want to build a culture of peace and to ban the inhuman evil of nuclear weapons," she said. [IPS - October 11, 2011] ◆

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"As the Cold War faded in the final years of the 20th century, the threat of global nuclear war seemed to recede. But the world missed the opportunity to dismantle the structures and the logic of nuclear deterrence," said the vice president of SGI.

Pressure Builds on Iran at Nuclear Watchdog Agency

BY BARBARA SLAVIN

WASHINGTON (IPS) - As Iran continues a slow march toward potential nuclear weapons capability, diplomatic action to contain the programme is likely to shift to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), whose director general, Yukiya Amano, has taken a harder line than his predecessor about alleged military research by Iran's nuclear scientists.

Experts on the Iranian nuclear programme are looking toward the IAEA's Nov. 17-18 board meeting in Vienna for new criticism of Tehran, including a possible finding that Iran has not complied with its obligations to be honest about alleged nuclear studies with a military dimension.

Since he took office in late 2009, Amano, a non-proliferation specialist and Japan's former representative to the nuclear watchdog organisation, has spoken much more explicitly and insistently than his Egyptian predecessor, Mohamed ElBaradei, about alleged Iranian studies of warhead designs and ways to initiate nuclear explosions.

Amano told the IAEA board Sep. 12 that, "the Agency is increasingly concerned about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed nuclear related activities involving military related organizations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile, about which the Agency continues to receive new information."

Amano added, "In the near future, I hope to set out in greater detail the basis for the Agency's concerns so that all Member States are fully informed."

A Western diplomat in Vienna told IPS that that comment by Amano triggered speculation that he will provide significant new information about Iran in the next report to the board, due out around Nov. 9. The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that member states, led by Western countries, might use the material as a basis to find Iran in non-compliance with its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Such a finding was first reached in 2006 and resulted in the issue being taken up by the U.N. Security Council, which has passed six resolutions against Iran, including four that specify sanctions. Another resolution seems unlikely now, given Russian and Chinese resistance.

However, the diplomat said that a new finding would increase pressure on governments to tighten implementation of punitive measures already in place. These include an embargo on arms sales to and from Iran and tight export controls over materials that Iran could use for its nuclear programme.

"This issue has been marked by incremental escalation on all sides," the diplomat said, referring both to sanctions and Iran's slow but steady expansion of uranium enrichment and other technologies with potential weapons applications.

The U.S. intelligence community, in a 2007 estimate, said it had "high confidence" that Iran had halted weapons-related nuclear work in 2003 and "medium confidence" that the programme had not resumed through mid-2007. A 2011 intelligence estimate appears to have been less categorical but has not been made public.

Michael Adler, a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, said that the IAEA was receiving a considerable amount of new information to augment documents and other materials smuggled out of Iran several years ago by the wife of an Iranian spying for Germany and later gathered by foreign intelligence agencies on a computer nicknamed "the laptop of death".

Iran has called the material forgeries while admitting that some of the information about alleged studies is correct. Olli Heinonen, former deputy director of the IAEA, says that there have been no detailed discussions about the allegations since the summer of 2008. ↻

Adler, who covered the IAEA as a reporter for Agence France Presse and who is writing a book on the Iranian nuclear programme, told a conference at the Woodrow Wilson Center Sep. 30 that Iran appears to have dismantled some of the units doing weapons research in 2003 and reassembled elements of the programme "below the radar screen", focusing on work that also can have civilian purposes.

He added that "Amano and other officials say there is increasing evidence Iran resumed weaponisation work after 2003 and especially after 2006."

Jim Walsh, a non-proliferation expert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says there is a danger that the IAEA could lose credibility if it takes too tough a line against Iran without publicising hard evidence to back up its claims.

"They could lose access and make a diplomatic solution more difficult if they are seen as a handmaiden of the U.S.," Walsh told IPS. "They need to say what they've got."

The new focus on the IAEA comes at a time when other diplomatic efforts have waned.

Several Iranian officials, including President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have said recently that Iran would stop producing uranium enriched to 20 percent of a key isotope, U-235, if foreign countries would provide Iran with the fuel for a reactor that makes medical isotopes. Iran has amassed more than 70 kilogrammes of this moderately enriched uranium, which is perilously close to weapons grade fuel.

Ali Vaez, director of the Iran Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), and Charles Ferguson, president of FAS, wrote recently in the International Herald Tribune that the U.S. and its allies should "take Ahmadinejad at his word" and "provide Iran with 50 kilograms of fuel, without any conditions."

The two said that the move would be "a humanitarian gesture (that) would buy Washington good will with the Iranian people (while) curtailing Iran's enrichment activities and potentially cutting the Gordian knot that has stalled the West's nuclear negotiations with Iran."

However, the Barack Obama administration appears to have rejected the new proposal out of hand.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland told reporters last week that "Ahmadinejad makes a lot of empty promises." She described the latest offer as "a diversion from the real issues". [IPS - October 5, 2011] ◆

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Several Iranian officials, including President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, have said recently that Iran would stop producing uranium enriched to 20 percent of a key isotope, U-235, if foreign countries would provide Iran with the fuel for a reactor that makes medical isotopes. Iran has amassed more than 70 kilogrammes of this moderately enriched uranium, which is perilously close to weapons grade fuel.

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UN Meetings Push for Nuclear Safeguards and Test Bans

BY ELIZABETH WHITMAN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - History is strewn with proof of the destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons and power, yet science is also replete with evidence that nuclear power has many advantages.

How to protect against the dangers of nuclear power while ensuring that humans can safely reap its benefits is an ongoing dilemma that leaders gathered to address in high-level meetings at the United Nations on September 22-23, 2011.

The accidents at Fukushima in the wake of an earthquake and tsunami in March of this year and at Chernobyl in 1986 "are a wake-up call", Ban said September 22 when he opened the summit on nuclear safety.

"The effects of nuclear accidents respect no borders," he said. He called for strong international consensus and safety standards "to adequately safeguard our people".

On September 23, over 40 ministers and high-level officials met to discuss the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which 182 countries have joined to date and 155 have ratified. Nine more countries need to ratify the treaty before it can enter into force, including the United States.

Discussions centred on implications of the accident at the Fukushima nuclear plant, which have retrospectively underscored the urgent need for the international community to intensify efforts to improve nuclear safety.

Indeed, recommendations did not operate on the basis that all states will cease to pursue nuclear activities.

Sergio Duarte, high representative for disarmament affairs, said in a ministerial session that while some states have decided to phase out or not to pursue

nuclear energy, "other states remain committed to developing and acquiring nuclear power". As a result, disaster and risk analysis need to be further developed.

A system-wide study, which Ban presented September 22, on the implications of the incident, demonstrated the extent to which Fukushima remains on international radar, at least in terms of nuclear safety.

It examined both the pros and cons of nuclear energy, pointing out, "Safe and scientifically sound nuclear technologies... are valuable tools for agriculture and food production."

Nevertheless, an accident releasing radioactive material into the surrounding environment leads to serious "contamination of water, agriculture" and other areas and has "direct implications on the livelihoods of people".

"The principal lesson of the Fukushima accident is that assumptions made concerning which types of accident were possible or likely were too modest," the study said. "In order to properly address nuclear security, the international community should promote universal adherence to and implementation of relevant international legal instruments."

Entry into force: the CTBT

CTBT is one of those international legal instruments. The observational technology of its International Monitoring System is widely considered valuable and effective at detecting potential violations of the treaty. Its detection capabilities might also prove useful in the event of a nuclear emergency.

In 1996, the CTBT opened for signature. Ban set 2012 as a target year for it to enter into force, but first, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the U.S. must ratify the treaty. ➔



Entry into force of the CTBT has multiple benefits, leaders said.

It is an "indispensable stepping stone to a nuclear weapon free world", Ban said during a ministerial meeting Friday. He urged remaining states to sign and ratify the CTBT "without further delay".

The German foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, noted that not only would the entry into force help regional tensions such as in the Middle East and East Asia, but would also "strengthen global peace and security".

Until the treaty enters into force, however, ratification remains the outstanding challenge.

"These are national decisions," Tibor Tóth, the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), told IPS, in reference to whether the nine remaining countries ratify the CTBT. "Countries will have to assess for themselves whether they feel that with this treaty they have a safety net below."

Especially in the Middle East and South Asia, "it's important that... countries see this treaty as one of the important assets to achieve more security," he added.

Furthermore, "beyond the political security benefits, there is a wider benefit as well on mitigating complex disasters," he stated.

Duarte, who heads the UN Disarmament Office, agreed. "The decision about whether countries want to add nuclear sources to their energy mix or not is a sovereign decision," he said in an interview with IPS.

All the U.N. can do, he affirmed, is "promote the treaty and show to (countries) benefits that will accrue from their participation" in CTBT.

The U.N. can convene meetings, pool knowledge and resources, and share ideas. It can arm member states with the knowledge necessary to prevent or deal with nuclear accidents, and it can try to develop frameworks and treaties to the same effect. But ultimately, member states are the ones who implement practices or ratify treaties.

"It's up to them to decide what they want to do," Duarte said. [IPS - September 23, 2011]

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On September 23, over 40 ministers and high-level officials met to discuss the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which 182 countries have joined to date and 155 have ratified. Nine more countries need to ratify the treaty before it can enter into force, including the United States. Discussions centred on implications of the accident at the Fukushima nuclear plant, which have retrospectively underscored the urgent need for the international community to intensify efforts to improve nuclear safety.

Civil Society Crucial to Ban Nuke Testing

BY J. C. SURESH

TORONTO (IDN) - Foreign ministers and senior officials from 160 countries have affirmed their commitment to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) that bans all nuclear testing, and agreed to "encourage cooperation with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society".

They had gathered together at the United Nations for a Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT. Such cooperation would aim "to raise awareness of and support for the Treaty and its objectives, as well as the need for its early entry into force," the final declaration endorsed on September 23, 2011 in New York said.

The declaration appeals to holdout States to commit themselves at the highest political level to join the CTBT, urging "especially those whose signatures and ratifications are necessary for the entry into force of the Treaty, to take individual initiatives to sign and ratify the Treaty without delay in order to achieve its earliest entry into force." It refers to nine specific countries – China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States.

CTBT was opened for signature at the UN headquarters in New York on September 24, 1996. Since then, 182 States have signed and 155 States have ratified the Treaty, including 35 whose ratification is necessary for its entry into force.

Fifteen years later, the ratifying States, together with other States Signatories discussed "concrete measures to facilitate the entry into force of the CTBT at the earliest possible date, thus ridding the world once and for all of nuclear test explosions."

They declared: "The entry into force of the CTBT is of vital importance as a core element of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We reiterate that a universal and effectively verifiable Treaty constitutes a fundamental instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation."

There is little expectation, though, that selected nations that must ratify the pact before it could be formally implemented – China, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Israel and the United States – will all do so in the foreseeable future, writes Elaine M. Grossman of the Global Security Newswire. Three others – India, North Korea and Pakistan – must also sign and ratify the agreement for it to enter into force.

"This is a tough list," Michael Krepon, co-founder of the Henry L. Stimson Center, said of the nine holdout nations at an event on September 22 in Washington DC. "It will take a very long time before all of the states [required would] consent to ratify this treaty," he wrote in a blog post.

Even in Washington, which has upheld an informal moratorium on nuclear explosive tests since 1992, prospects are seen as dim that President Obama could get enough Senate Republicans on board to achieve the two-thirds majority necessary for ratification, particularly in the run-up to the 2012 elections.

Obama has championed the accord but has not indicated when he plans to submit it to the Senate for ratification, writes Grossman, and adds:

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, expressed confidence that some of the key nations would consider ratification once China and the United States acted to do so. He did not forecast that Beijing or Washington would act anytime soon on the matter, though.

"The treaty's tortured entry-into-force provision was the handiwork of China, Russia and France, whose leaders felt obligated to sign, but remained reluctant to end nuclear testing permanently," Krepon wrote in his blog. "They resolved this conundrum by giving other recalcitrant states vetoes over the treaty's entry into force."

Even though the treaty itself could remain hamstrung into the future, Krepon and Kimball said they think making the CTBT Preparatory Commission and Provisional Technical Secretariat permanent could offer the international regime against nuclear explosive tests a symbolically important boost. ➡

The CTBT Preparatory Commission – or, more formally, the 'Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Organization' – operates facilities in more than 70 countries and employs a staff numbering 260 or so. The commission's role is to promote the treaty and create a verification regime that would be ready to operate once the agreement enters into force.

The Provisional Technical Secretariat provides assistance to the commission, including managing an International Monitoring System and an International Data Center that analyzes incoming data.

With roughly \$120 million in annual international funding, the CTBT headquarters has completed roughly 80 percent of the global monitoring system's construction, including more than 250 monitoring stations and 10 laboratories. It has already succeeded in detecting seismic activity that might otherwise have gone unnoticed, including a very low-yield North Korean test in October 2006, according to Krepon and other nuclear experts, reports Grossman.

The 1996 agreement would ban all nuclear explosions, whether for military or peaceful purposes. Because it has not yet entered into force, the organizations created to promote the agreement and build its verification regime were labeled temporary from the outset.

"We propose to eliminate [the] words 'provisional' and 'preparatory' from the letterheads" of CTBT-related institutions and from international "lexicon," said Krepon.

The idea would be to help preserve the benefits offered by the Vienna, Austria-based CTBT Organization's international seismic monitoring and radiation detection services, Krepon added. The treaty organization also plays a role in detecting and warning nations about incoming tsunamis.

The September 23 final declaration reaffirmed their determination of ratifying States, together with other States Signatories, to take concrete steps towards early entry into force and universalization of the Treaty and to this end adopted the following measures, which would involve cooperation with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other representatives of the civil society:

- Encourage the organization of regional seminars in conjunction with other regional meetings in order to increase the awareness of the important role that the Treaty plays;

- Call upon the CTBTO Preparatory Commission to continue its international cooperation activities and the organizing of workshops, seminars and training programmes in the legal and technical fields;

- Call upon the Preparatory Commission "to continue promoting understanding of the Treaty, including through education and training initiatives, and demonstrating, on a provisional basis, and bearing in mind the purpose and specific mandates as foreseen in the Treaty, the benefits of the civil and scientific applications of the verification technologies, inter alia, in such areas as the environment, earth science and technology, tsunami warning systems, detection of the accidental release of radioactive particulates and gases, and possibly other disaster alert systems";

- Request that the Provisional Technical Secretariat continue to provide States with legal assistance with respect to the ratification process and implementation measures and, in order to enhance these activities and their visibility, maintain a contact point for the exchange and dissemination of relevant information and documentation;

- Request the Provisional Technical Secretariat to continue to act as a 'focal point' for collecting information on outreach activities undertaken by ratifying States and States Signatories, and to maintain an updated overview of the information based on inputs provided by ratifying States and States Signatories for this purpose on its public web site, thereby assisting in promoting the entry into force of the Treaty;

Significantly, the UN Conference was open to civil society organizations, and 12 of them indeed took part: Arms Control Association (ACA); Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament Kenya; Global Security Institute (GSI); International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALA); International Human Rights Observer (IHRO); Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); Partnership for Global Justice; Pax Christi International; The World Association of Former United Nations Interns and Fellows; United Nations Association of New York; and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). [IDN- InDepthNews - September 25, 2011] ♦

One Step Closer to Global Ban on Nuke Tests

BY EVA WEILER

BERLIN (IDN) - Despite several hurdles yet to be overcome, the world has inched one step closer to entry into force of a global treaty banning all nuclear explosions everywhere, by everyone. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) announced on September 20, 2011 that Guinea had become the 155th State to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Though a poor country, Guinea has abundant natural resources including 25 per cent or more of the world's known bauxite reserves. The West African country with a population of some 10 million also has diamonds, gold, and other metals.

The country has great potential for hydroelectric power. Bauxite and alumina are currently the only major exports. Other industries include processing plants for beer, juices, soft drinks and tobacco. Agriculture employs 80 per cent of the nation's labor force. Under French rule, and at the beginning of independence, Guinea was a major exporter of bananas, pineapples, coffee, peanuts, and palm oil.

Tibor Tóth, the CTBTO Executive Secretary, hailed the ratification as "a step that further consolidates Africa's dedication to end nuclear testing and acts as a powerful beacon for the rest of the world."

The backdrop to this remark is that the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (ANWFZ) was established with the coming into effect of the Treaty of Pelindaba on July 15, 2009. The Treaty is named after Pelindaba, South Africa's main Nuclear Research Centre, run by the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation. It was the location where South Africa's atomic bombs of the 1970s were developed, constructed and subsequently stored. It is situated approximately 33km west of Pretoria.

The Vienna-based CTBTO has launched a campaign to 'Close the Door on Nuclear Testing!' It argues: "Today it's hard to imagine that nuclear bombs exploded all the time in the 1950s, 60s, 70s and 80s. Yet more than 2,000 nuclear bombs were tested all over the world, contaminating the land and air and affecting people everywhere.

"In 1996, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty put the brakes on this madness. But until all the countries of the world support the Treaty, the threat of further testing and a renewed nuclear arms race looms over us all."

According to the CTBTO, adherence to CTBT is almost universal, with 182 States having signed the Treaty to date; and 155 of them, including the West African state of Guinea, have ratified. In Africa, only two countries have yet to sign the CTBT – Mauritius and Somalia – whereas 11 countries have yet to ratify: Angola, Chad, Comoros, Congo (Republic of), Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe, Swaziland and Zimbabwe.

"Among these, ratification by Egypt is mandatory for the Treaty to enter into force. Ratifications by eight other nuclear technology holder countries are also outstanding and necessary for entry into force: China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States," the CTBTO stated.

"It is building an International Monitoring System (IMS) to make sure that no nuclear explosion goes undetected. There are currently over 280 facilities in 85 countries including 30 in 22 African States. The data registered by the IMS can also be used for disaster mitigation such as earthquake monitoring, tsunami warning, and the tracking of the levels and dispersal of radioactivity from nuclear accidents," the CTBTO said. In 1999, there were no certified IMS stations or facilities in place. ➡



African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone

ANWFZ includes the territory of the continent of Africa, island states that are members of African Union (AU), and all islands considered by its predecessor, Organization of African Unity (OAU) in its resolutions to be part of Africa. "Territory" means the land territory, internal waters, territorial seas and archipelagic waters and the airspace above them as well as the seabed and subsoil beneath.

The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone covers the entire African continent as well as the following islands: Agalega Island, Bassas da India, Canary Islands, Cape Verde, Cargados Carajos Shoals, Chagos Archipelago - Diego Garcia, Comoros, Europa Island, Juan de Nova, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mayotte, Prince Edward & Marion Islands, São Tomé and Príncipe, Réunion, Rodrigues Island, Seychelles, Tromelin Island, and Zanzibar and Pemba Islands.

This list does not mention the mid-ocean islands of St. Helena 1,900 km west from southern Angola or its dependencies including Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha, Bouvet Island 2,500 km southwest from Cape Town, the Crozet Islands 2,350 km south of Madagascar, Kerguelen, or Île Amsterdam and Île Saint-Paul, which are the only Southern Hemisphere lands not in any of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones.

The African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty prohibits the research, development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stationing of nuclear explosive devices in the territory of parties to the Treaty and the dumping of radioactive wastes in the African zone by Treaty parties.

The Treaty also forbids any attack against nuclear installations in the zone by Treaty parties and requires them to maintain the highest standards of physical protection of nuclear material, facilities and equipment, which are to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The quest for a nuclear free Africa began when the OAU formally stated its desire for a Treaty ensuring the denuclearization of Africa at its first Summit in Cairo in July 1964. The Treaty was opened for signature on April 11, 1996 in Cairo, Egypt.

The CTBT observed on August 29, 2011 the twentieth anniversary of the closure of the nuclear weapons test site at Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan. The selection of that date in 1991 was made because this was when the now defunct Soviet Union conducted its first nuclear test at the site in 1949.

Over 2000 nuclear tests were carried out between 1945 and 1996 when the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature, most by the United States and the Soviet Union, but also by Britain, France and China. Three countries have tested nuclear weapons since 1996: India, Pakistan, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The vital importance of the Treaty's overdue entry into force was reaffirmed at the May 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and included in the agreed action plan. The Treaty's verification regime has proven to be a valuable instrument for international cooperation, said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, adding: "I am fully confident of its future ability to provide an independent, reliable and cost-effective means of verifying – and therefore, deterring – any violation of the Treaty's provisions." [IDN-InDepthNews - September 20, 2011] ♦

ANWFZ includes the territory of the continent of Africa, island states that are members of African Union (AU), and all islands considered by its predecessor, Organization of African Unity (OAU) in its resolutions to be part of Africa. "Territory" means the land territory, internal waters, territorial seas and archipelagic waters and the airspace above them as well as the seabed and subsoil beneath.

Make Nuclear Weapons the Target'

BY NEENA BHANDARI

SYDNEY (IDN) - It was 7am on a fateful day in 1953, 10-year-old Yami Lester and a group of Aboriginal children were playing with a toy truck, when they heard a loud bang intercepted with several small bangs as the ground beneath their small feet shook.

"We saw a shiny black cloud coming from the south, moving above and through the trees, which spread across 70 miles. We shut our eyes as they began to burn. In the days that followed, about 50 Yankunytjatjara people in Walatina began to complain of skin rashes, sore eyes, vomiting, diarrhoea and coughing. There was no treatment on the cattle station. The closest health clinic was hundreds of miles away and we had no transport," says Yami Lester, who was living 160 km from Emu Junction in South Australia, the site of the first nuclear test on mainland Australia.

Lester managed to open his eyes after three weeks, but couldn't see anything with his right eye. The left eye, he reckons had about 70 per cent sight. By February 1957, he was totally blind and now he is confined to a wheelchair following a stroke last year.

An advocate for nuclear abolition, Lester has thrown his weight behind the Australian Red Cross' recently launched 'Make Nuclear Weapons the Target' campaign. He says, "When the British and Australian Governments conducted the tests at Emu Junction, and later at Maralinga over half a century ago, we were unaware of the life-long damage it would cause to our people and homeland. This campaign will educate indigenous people and make Australians aware of the damage nuclear weapons can do and why there is an urgency to get rid of them."

Make Nuclear Weapons the Target campaign, which kicked off on August 6, 2011 with a major referendum on Facebook, highlights the humanitarian and environmental imperatives for nuclear disarmament. It is calling on all Australians, especially the young generation, to finish what their parents started.

"The anti-nuclear debate defined a generation in the 1960s and 1970s, but fizzled out before real change was cemented. In 2011 nuclear weapons are an

even bigger threat than ever. It's time for Baby Boomers to reconnect with the cause and a whole new generation to get involved," says Australian Red Cross CEO, Robert Tickner.



In June, the prestigious Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) stated in a report: "More than 5,000 nuclear weapons are deployed and ready for use, including nearly 2,000 that are kept in a high state of alert.". Worldwide today there are at least 20,000 nuclear weapons in existence with a destructive force estimated to be 150,000 times that of the Hiroshima bomb.

"What we are seeing is the proliferation of nuclear weapons to new countries, the risk of non-state actors getting nuclear weapons and the threat of accidental firing of these weapons giving rise to a conflict. Our campaign aims to promote public awareness on these issues within Australia. We would like to see some form of international convention that declares the use of nuclear weapons to be prohibited under the International Humanitarian Law (IHL)," adds Tickner.

The Red Cross mandate in the IHL, which prohibits use of weapons or methods of warfare that do not distinguish between civilians and combatants, makes it a leading voice in calling for the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. Australia, along with 194 nations, has ratified the four Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, the universal rules of war.

As Australian Red Cross' Head of International Law and Principles, Dr Helen Durham says, "From the legal point of view it doesn't make sense that we as humans have in our powers, across the world, the capacity to use weapons that don't distinguish between civilians and combatants and cause incredibly unacceptable suffering not just to humans, but also to the environment and a whole range of infrastructure. So there are real legal imperatives for the world to work in a more focused way on nuclear disarmament". ↻

Likening the international community to a pilot "asleep at the controls of a fast-moving aircraft", former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, had criticised the lack of a unified, global strategy for disarmament and non-proliferation as the main reason that nuclear weapons still threaten humanity.

Australia is in an interesting situation because as a country it doesn't have any nuclear weapons although it does have arrangements in place in relation to defence with the United States. The country also has nearly half of the world's commercially-recoverable uranium, and the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics forecasts that Australia's uranium exports may reach a little over 17,000 tonnes within five years.

"Australia must introduce steps to ensure that any exported uranium is used solely for peaceful purposes, such as energy generation and medical usage," says Dr Emily Crawford, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Faculty of Law, University of Sydney.

The Australian Red Cross has written to all members of the Australian Parliament seeking support for a convention to prohibit the use of

nuclear weapons. "We are very confident and optimistic that we will get that support. We believe this is an absolutely fundamental international humanitarian issue falling squarely within our mandate and that is why we are happy to take this initiative into the public domain and seek support from parliamentarians, the government and the wider community," says Tickner.

The campaign, which is designed to reignite national and international debate on the issue, has 96 per cent of the people voting online to ban the use of nuclear weapons. Use of social media has proved a vital and useful tool in getting this important message across, especially to the younger generation.

Peter Giugni, International Humanitarian Law (IHL) officer, has been organizing events and seminars on the campaign in regional New South Wales. He says, "People are disappointed that the international community still hasn't resolved to prohibit these weapons against humanity and they are very supportive of Australian Red Cross speaking out."

The campaign will build to a climax in November with more awareness events and public forums planned for the New Year. As Dr Durham says, "Countries around the world, wherever they are, need to understand that their citizens are concerned about this topic. It is really about everyone standing up and saying these weapons are unacceptable. The Australian Red Cross is taking the lead towards an international meeting in November in Geneva, where all Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from across the world will meet with the desire to create a global Red Cross Red Crescent policy on nuclear weapons."

In 1950 the International Committee of the Red Cross publicly called on States to take all steps to come to agreement on the prohibition of atomic weapons; there have been numerous efforts to make the use of nuclear weapons illegal but, 66 years on, tangible change still has not been achieved.

"The advocacy of the Australian Red Cross is very welcome. It will help to establish even more strongly that the abolition of nuclear weapons is an essential goal for humanitarian reasons. This is not about politics, but human welfare and survival," says Dr Sue Wareham, Board Member, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia. [IDN-InDepthNews - September 6, 2011] ♦

Copyright © 2011 IDN-InDepthNews | Analysis That Matters | Photo on page 67: Australian Red Cross CEO Tickner with Lester | Credit: Peter Giugni

Likening the international community to a pilot "asleep at the controls of a fast-moving aircraft", former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, had criticised the lack of a unified, global strategy for disarmament and non-proliferation as the main reason that nuclear weapons still threaten humanity.

Politics Clouds Efforts to Ban Nuclear Testing

BY ELIZABETH WHITMAN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - On Aug. 29, 1949, the Soviet Union conducted the first of 456 nuclear tests in Semipalatinsk in Eastern Kazakhstan, at the site where it ultimately held over two-thirds of all Soviet nuclear tests without warning inhabitants of the region of the impact of exposure to these tests.

On Aug. 29, 1991 the site closed, yet the devastating health and environmental effects continue to plague the region to this day.

With Aug. 29, 2011 marking the 20th anniversary closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the second International Day Against Nuclear Tests, world leaders and U.N. officials gathered to discuss the issue of nuclear testing.

They convened in a high level workshop on Sep. 1 and an informal meeting of the General Assembly on Sep. 2.

In the wide array of views and concepts presented in these gatherings, however, consensus seemed clear on only one point: the fact that efforts to ban nuclear testing and indeed, to entirely eliminate nuclear weapons around the world, are clouded with political overtones and motives.

Meanwhile, states with nuclear weapons continue to depend upon those capabilities for strength and influence in areas of international security and relations, and politics overshadow the fact that nuclear testing poses serious hazards to human and environmental health and nuclear weapons have the ability to destroy the planet.

In Semipalatinsk, for instance, the death rate is extremely high and the rate of cancerous diseases there is at critical levels. Serious birth defects are common, with incidences of mental retardation three to five times higher than average, and the average life expectancy is less than 50 years.

"No one can say what will be the results after one, or two, or three generations" of living in a region contaminated by four decades of nuclear testing, Ermek Kosherbayev, deputy governor of East Kazakhstan, which contains the Semipalatinsk region, told IPS.

The government there continues efforts to assist people with their traditional livelihood of agriculture, yet doing so is not only difficult but also dangerous when the very dirt and water can be tainted by radiation.

Perhaps because its people understand firsthand the horrors of living with the effects of nuclear testing, Kazakhstan has fully supported efforts to ban nuclear testing and nuclear weaponry, and has given up its nuclear arsenal.

The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) went into effect in 1970, during the middle of the Cold War, when concepts of security were driven by the idea of nuclear deterrence - that if a state possessed nuclear weapons, it would not be attacked.

Today, 189 states are party to the treaty, with five of them possessing nuclear weapons. Those countries are China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States. Three states - India, Israel and Pakistan - are not party to the treaty, although India and Pakistan have declared that they possess nuclear weapons and Israel has undeclared but widely acknowledged nuclear capabilities. North Korea withdrew from the treaty in 2003.

A Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was approved in 1996 but is not in force, and this week, officials stressed the importance of implementing the CTBT and its obligations.

Joseph Deiss, president of the 65th General Assembly, stated Sep. 2, "The current international moratorium on nuclear tests, respected by almost all states, is not a substitute for the full implementation" of the CTBT. ➡



In a high-level workshop on Sep. 1, participants noted that implementation of the CTBT was a long overdue and crucial step towards global nuclear disarmament, especially since most countries have agreed that nuclear testing is no longer useful. Rather, suggested Annika Thunborg, representative of the executive secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT, keeping open the option of nuclear testing is a status symbol for countries.

Committing to nuclear disarmament, or to a ban on nuclear testing, often ends up being more about power than about nuclear weapons themselves, participants of the workshop noted. Several of those who commented suggested that weapons played perhaps a symbolic role, and that those who did not want to see progress in non-proliferation could block progress.

Another issue in non-proliferation and test ban talks was the preoccupation with which states possessed nuclear weapons and whether they were categorised as good or bad states, rather than the acknowledgement that nuclear weapons are inherently dangerous, no matter who possesses them.

In addition, "the concept of deterrence does not work", said Libran Cabctulan, chair of the 2010 NPT Review Conference in Sep. 1 workshop, citing the fact that in the future, nuclear weapons users are more likely to be non-state actors rather than states. "Non-state actors have no return address," he added.

All in all, the fact that numerous preconditions and political concerns detracted from concrete progress and productive discussion was made quite clear.

At the informal GA meeting on Sep. 2, Eshagh Al Habib, Iranian ambassador to the U.N., urged Israel, without naming the country, "to place promptly all its nuclear facilities under the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] full-scope safeguards." Yet Iran itself has come under fire for not cooperating with IAEA inspectors.

The IAEA is an international body responsible for ensuring that nuclear capabilities are used for peaceful purposes.

At the same meeting, Enkhetseseg Ochir, Mongolian ambassador to the U.N., posed the question, "Are military and political considerations more important than the health and well-being of people?" They are not, she said emphatically.

For now, however, in efforts to end nuclear testing, those considerations do take priority. Whether that agenda will change remains to be seen. [IPS - September 5, 2011] ♦

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Picture: Environmental sampling during the Integrated Field Exercise IFE08 in Kazakhstan | Credit CTBT

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Concern Over Prospects for Middle East Disarmament Meeting

BY ELIZABETH WHITMAN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - Four months before 2012 - the year a conference is slated to be held on freeing the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) - no date, facilitator, or host country has been named.

At the Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference in 2010, parties to the treaty agreed to organise a conference in 2012 involving all states in the Middle East to discuss biological, chemical, and nuclear disarmament in the region - in accordance with the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. The United States, the United Kingdom, Russia and the United Nations Secretary General were to lead these efforts.

Though planning discussions are underway among high level officials from both Middle Eastern governments and the governments leading the planning effort, the fact that these countries have not yet named a host country, facilitator, or date - all of which are necessary to hold the meeting - is "disappointing," said Anne Penketh, Washington director of the British American Security Information Council, in an interview with IPS.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association also noted that intensive consultations to plan for the meeting were taking

place. But he expressed worry that, provided the conference does happen, states will have been too focused on logistics in the lead up to the meeting rather than its substance to make it productive.

Though many issues have contributed to the delay in settling on the essential logistics of the conference, a significant one is the fact that states cannot agree over who should host the conference or serve as facilitator.

The very act of bringing together states in the Middle East is a challenge, Kimball emphasised, and agreeing simply to hold a conference was a "breakthrough," he told IPS. "This is a very challenging proposition - to get Israel and Egypt and Iran and Syria and Saudi Arabia in the same meeting room and to do so in a way that produces a constructive conversation."

Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal remains an obstacle in many areas of political discussion, but is especially sensitive when the discussion revolves around disarmament. Israel took offence at the final document of the 2010 NPT review conference, which singled out the country for not being a signatory to the agreement.

As a result, according to Penketh and Kimball, the Israeli government is concerned that the 2012 conference could evolve into a meeting focusing singularly on Israel and its nuclear weapons programme.

Yet such a possibility only enhances the benefits to Israel if it participates in the conference. Attending would improve Israel's credentials in the region, Kimball pointed out. "It would give Israel the opportunity to point out the ways in which other countries in the region need to meet their own chemical, biological, and nuclear non-proliferation obligations," he added.

Israel is the only country in the Middle East that is not party to the NPT and the fact that it possesses an undeclared nuclear arsenal is widely accepted. Syria and Iran are party to the treaty but are widely believed to be developing chemical and nuclear arsenals, respectively. ➡



Israel's level of commitment to the 2012 conference is uncertain. It has said in the past that it would participate on the condition that Israel would not be singled out for criticism, and Kimball said that Israel has been "cagey" about whether or not it would participate in the conference.

Yet Penketh said she had spoken with Israeli officials who were "open" to discussions on a WMD free zone, and she said the Israelis remained engaged in the discussion process.

The Israeli Mission to the U.N. did not respond to a request for comment.

Peace in the Middle East

The current political upheaval and uncertainty sweeping through many countries in the Middle East does not simplify discussion over what is already an extremely complicated and sensitive topic.

Recently, disarmament "has not been the top issue on the diplomatic agenda for these countries," Kimball noted. As a result, the planning process has been delayed. Yet even if governments are preoccupied, the unrest makes the case for a disarmament conference, especially one where Israel sits down with all of its neighbours, all the more compelling, said Penketh.

She said that some countries might seize on the unrest as an excuse not to attend the 2012 conference but that she hadn't seen concrete evidence that any countries actually intended to do so.

Disarmament has always been closely connected to the Middle East peace process, especially because for one of the key players in the peace process, Israel, security is a top priority.

In an email to IPS, Richard Butler, former U.N. weapons inspector, called disarmament "intrinsically important" to the peace process.

But Penketh suggests there is a "strong argument" for separating the peace and disarmament processes.

Regardless of the connection between disarmament in the Middle East and the peace process in the region or what form it takes, however, both are long and complicated efforts requiring time and consistent commitment. Disarmament in the Middle East cannot be accomplished over the course of a single conference, but without such an initiative, progress is even more unlikely.

"Things are moving too slowly," Penketh concluded. "But they are moving." [IPS - August 25, 2011] ◆

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U.S. Nuclear Arsenal Holds Fast to Status Quo

BY HAIDER RIZVI

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The United States is likely to maintain and sustain its huge arsenal of nuclear weapons for many years to come, even though President Barack Obama has repeatedly stressed that he stands for nuclear disarmament and global peace, non-proliferation experts believe.

"President Obama is very assertive. But it's not clear how much [more] assertive he chooses to be," said Hans Kristensen (left in picture), director of the Nuclear Information Project with the Federation of American Scientists (FAS), a policy think tank based in Washington that monitors U.S. nuclear policy on ethical grounds.

In an analytical report for FAS web posted on August 10, Kristensen and his colleague, Robert Norris, warned that President Obama might fail to implement his agenda on nuclear disarmament due to lack of cooperation by the civil and military bureaucracy in Washington.

"There is concern over whether Obama's goals can be realised within the enduring bureaucracies that have a stake in the status quo," Kristensen wrote in the FAS report.

Both Kristensen and Norris think that a "radical break" is needed to set the United States on a new path capable of realising deep cuts in and the possible elimination of nuclear weapons. That break, they argue, must include abandonment of the concept of "counterforce", the ruling paradigm that focuses on eliminating an enemy's nuclear weapons, infrastructure and war-making abilities.

Currently, the United States and Russia are the world's largest nuclear weapons states. They possess 93 percent of the total number of nuclear weapons in the world, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, a Swedish think tank that tracks weapon production and exports worldwide.

In addition, China has 400 warheads, France 348, and Israel and Britain 200 each. India is believed to have more than 80 and Pakistan about 40 nuclear weapons. The newest member of the nuclear club, North Korea, has no more than 10 "small" nuclear weapons, according to the institute's estimates.

Many critics see the United States as the most irresponsible member of the nuclear club, for not only failing in its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but also going to great lengths to derail the international discourse on nuclear disarmament in the past.

The Ronald Reagan administration (1981-89), for example, looked the other way when Pakistan was developing its illegal nuclear programme in the 1980s. Similarly, the George W. Bush administration (2001- 2009) decided to make a nuclear trade deal with India that remains outside the fold of the NPT.

The Obama administration has signed a new strategic arms treaty with Russia, but it allows the United States to keep at least 3,500 nuclear weapons in its arsenal even after 2020. That, as proponents of disarmament noted at the time, was a step in the right direction, but not enough.

According to FAS researchers, the more general policy concepts are currently travelling through the various departments, offices and bureaucracies in Washington, and will then be translated into highly detailed and "carefully orchestrated strike plans that instruct the war fighter how and when to attack a specific target".

The result, according to Kristensen and Norris, is "a fully articulated war plan".

The FAS report points out that the implementation of Obama's Nuclear Posture Review is now taking place at various levels, but that remains out of public view. "It has potentially enormous implementations, depending on the outcome," the report says. ↻

Obama's agenda on disarmament has five key objectives, which include prevention of nuclear proliferation and terrorism; reduction of the role of nuclear weapons; maintenance of strategic deterrence; strengthening of regional alliances; and sustaining a safe, secure and effective nuclear arsenal.

To advance his goals, Obama should issue a Presidential Policy Directive that explains a new nuclear deterrence plan focused on destroying essential enemy infrastructure, Kristensen said.

"The president's guidance is very generic. It has some basic principles," Kristensen told IPS. "It's up to the military to interpret it. Also, there are [several] other actors whose mind-set [is shaped] by the days of the Cold War. It's very hard to change their mind-set."

Reflecting on the FAS analysis, David Krieger, a long-time peace activist and executive director of the Nuclear Age peace Foundation, told IPS that "minimum deterrence would be a significant step forward, if it meant reducing the number of nuclear weapons in our arsenal to 20 to 30 weapons."

On maintaining minimal deterrence, he thinks that moving away from counterforce targeting could be useful, but it is far from sufficient. In his view, it may somewhat reduce the magnitude of the disaster of using nuclear weapons, but it still maintains reliance on nuclear deterrence, a theory that could fail.

"It is deeply immoral and cannot be relied upon for security," said Krieger. "Such a move away from counterforce targeting should be accompanied by a firm commitment to a policy of 'No First Use' of nuclear weapons, to de-alerting the U.S. nuclear arsenal and to the initiation of good faith negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention."

The draft memo the FAS authors prepared for Obama refers to Article VI of the NPT, which calls for "the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons".

"Actually, Article VI calls for pursuing good faith negotiations to end the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament," Krieger said. "The U.S. has viewed it as 'eventual', which may be code for 'never'."

"President Obama's commitment to nuclear modernisation continues the nuclear arms race, albeit at a lower level, and his commitment to nuclear weapons elimination appears to be only in the distant future, not in my lifetime," he said.

For his part, Kristensen stresses that the total abolition of nuclear weapons demands a collaborative international effort. "The word 'deterrence' means different things to different people. None of the nuclear powers are expected to go to zero alone."

"While we talk about disarmament, other nuclear countries have to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security," he added, "otherwise, we are not going to get anywhere. It's probably the only and last chance to really influence the U.S. nuclear policy." (IPS | August 17, 2011) ◆

Original: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=56887>

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Atomic Test Ban Crucial to Nuke Free World

BY TARO ICHIKAWA

TOKYO (IDN) - When the world commemorates the International Day against Nuclear Tests for the second time on August 29, it would have reasons to rejoice at the progress made toward a nuclear-weapon-free world, and at the same time take note of roadblocks ahead before that goal is achieved.

A significant reason to be delighted, as the UN points out, is that in the meantime, the Southern hemisphere of the planet has already become almost entirely one nuclear-weapon-free zone by virtue of regional treaties.

These are: the Treaty of Rarotonga, covering the South Pacific, the Treaty of Pelindaba, spanning Africa, the Treaty of Bangkok covering Southeast Asia, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, straddling Latin America and the Caribbean and the Antarctic Treaty. Since March 2009, the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia has entered into force – the first such instrument situated entirely north of the Equator.

The significance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests is underlined in the UN General Assembly unanimously adopting resolution 64/35 on December 2, 2009, its preamble stating that "every effort should be made to end nuclear tests in order to avert devastating and harmful effects on the lives and health of people" and that "the end of nuclear tests is one of the key means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world."

Since the International Day against Nuclear Tests was first declared, there have been a number of significant developments, discussions and initiatives relevant to its goals and objectives. For this reason, the situation is rather complicated, as aptly explained by Akio Suda, Japan's Ambassador to the stalemated Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva on July 28 at a UN conference in Matsumoto.

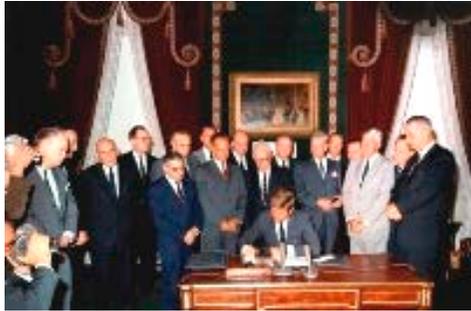
The Matsumoto gathering from July 27 to 29 was organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. Some 90 participants from Governments, academia and think tanks, international and non-governmental organizations, as well as the media attended the Conference. Unlike other UN conferences, it was open to the public "as a way to raise general awareness of and support for disarmament and non-proliferation".

The overarching theme of the Conference, which has been hosted by Japan since 1989, was: 'Urgent and United Action towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World'. Issues to be addressed included the implementation of the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference; nuclear disarmament measures by nuclear-weapon States; the prospects of negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty; taking concrete steps towards the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention; as well as the role of civil society in peace and disarmament.

Enhancing nuclear safety and security was also high on the Conference's agenda, especially in the wake of the recent accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. A special session was devoted to peace and disarmament education, including discussions with high school students on the importance of promoting peace and security through disarmament efforts.

Explaining Japan's official view on central themes of the conference, Ambassador Suda said: "When we talk about where we now stand concerning nuclear disarmament, we can list several important and positive movements over the past two or three years. The momentum seems to be high towards a world free of nuclear weapons. With this momentum, we should certainly intensify our discussions on the process of nuclear disarmament towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons."

At the same time, he warned: "We have to look at the reality. Besides some progress in nuclear weapons free zones and CTBT (Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty) ratifications, there has been very little movement in multilateral nuclear disarmament since, say, the Prague speech more than two years ago or the NPT Review Conference last May." ➡



Suda told the Conference that "in the process of reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, to ban the production of the basic materials for nuclear weapon purposes, a cut-off provides a firm and indispensable basis for further disarmament."

But the CD in Geneva is deadlocked precisely on the issue of Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) as Pakistan maintains that it is discriminatory and goes as far as to benefit its neighbour India. And yet, Suda said, FMCT will have significant impact:

There will be no further nuclear proliferation among states outside the NPT. "It will reduce structural discrimination under the NPT, by obliging nuclear-weapon states of, at least, banning the production and receiving verification thereof."

Further, FMCT "will lay a firm legal basis for the continuous reduction of the total number of nuclear weapons in the world by making the disarmament process irreversible. Once nuclear possessing states reduce their stockpiles of fissile materials voluntarily or by any reason, they cannot go back to the prior level."

U.S. Perspective

Pointing to reasons for rejoicing, Ambassador Susan F. Burk, Special Representative of the U.S. President for Nuclear Non-Proliferation said the May 2010 "NPT Action Plan's 64 actions and its decision on the Middle East represent a set of follow-on actions whose implementation promises to strengthen the Treaty."

On disarmament, she pointed out, the New START Treaty has entered into force and implementation is well underway. "The U.S. is committed to continuing a step-by-step process to reduce the overall numbers of nuclear weapons, which would include the pursuit of a future agreement with Russia for broad reductions in all nuclear weapons – strategic, non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed."

Another positive development was meeting of the P5 (UN Security Council's permanent members U.S., Russia, China, France and Britain) in Paris on June 30-July 1 to work together in pursuit of their shared goal of nuclear disarmament, including engagement on the steps outlined in Action 5, as well as reporting and other efforts called for in the Action Plan. This was a continuation of discussions begun in London in

2009. "In order to ensure that these conferences evolve into a regular process of P5 dialogue, we agreed to hold a third conference in 2012," Burk said.

She assured that the U.S. remains committed to securing ratification of the CTBT, and is engaging the U.S. Senate and the American public on the merits of that treaty. Washington is also continuing to work with partners to move forward on FMCT negotiations.

In support of the peaceful uses agenda, in December 2010 the IAEA Board of Governors approved a proposal authorizing the Agency's Director General to establish an IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) administered and controlled low-enriched uranium bank as a fuel assurance for Member States in the event of disruption of the fuel supply to their peaceful programs.

According to Burk, the United States also has been working closely with the IAEA to implement the Peaceful Uses Initiative, towards which Washington will contribute \$50 million before the 2015 NPT Review Conference. It has already funded more than \$9 million in projects with involvement from more than 80 countries. While Japan and South Korea have agreed to contribute to the Initiative, the U.S. is actively seeking other partners. ↻

Image: President Kennedy signing Nuke Test Ban Treaty in 1963 | Wikimedia Commons

President Barack Obama's Special Representative for Nuclear Non-Proliferation said the U.S. was committed to a successful Middle East conference as envisaged in the NPT Review Conference's Action Plan: "A first step is naming a conference host state and facilitator, which we aim to do in the very near future. Together with the United Kingdom and Russia, the United States has held extensive consultations with states in the region on how we can ensure a successful conference in 2012."

In an obvious attempt to avoid possible disappointments, Burk said: "The success of the conference and similar efforts cannot be imposed from outside. It will depend on the willingness of the regional states to help build an atmosphere conducive to constructive dialogue on all relevant issues."

Youth Forum

Following on the footsteps of the UN Conference, 900 youth from Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa held a forum at the Peace Hall of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. The youth of the Soka Gakkai availed of the opportunity to officially launch a peace declaration on July 31, calling for increased efforts by civil society toward the goal of the abolition of nuclear weapons. The declaration advocates that the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference be held in Hiroshima and

Nagasaki so that world leaders will see for themselves the reality of the effects of nuclear weapons.

The declaration states: "Nuclear weapons are an 'absolute evil' which fundamentally threaten humanity's right to exist, and their abolition is an indispensable element for building a culture of peace." It affirms that nuclear weapons are against international humanitarian law, and calls for a conference to be convened toward the preparation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention which would ban them comprehensively, at the earliest opportunity. The declaration builds on ideas expressed by Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda in his annual peace proposal for 2011.

At the forum, Nobuyuki Asai, chair of the Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference, also presented to Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki, more than 57,000 paper cranes made by Thai people who viewed SGI's antinuclear exhibition 'Transforming the Human Spirit: From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace,' shown in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of Thailand in 20 venues throughout the country up to February 2011.

Mayor Taue welcomed the Soka Gakkai's initiatives, saying, "It is not sufficient for the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to speak out against nuclear weapons. We need the voices of many like-minded people from around the world. To receive these cranes from the people of Thailand is truly encouraging."

Other guests attending the forum included Masato Oya, president of the Nagasaki Institute for Peace Culture, and Masahito Hirose, official of the Nagasaki Testimonial Society, as well as representatives of other civil society groups active in advocacy toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Representatives of the Soka Gakkai youth peace committees and young women's peace committees from Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa have been meeting in August almost every year since 1989 to hold commemorative and awareness-raising events. They have also conducted numerous surveys over the years, tracking attitudes toward the threat of nuclear weapons.

Soka Gakkai, a lay Buddhist association with over 8 million member households in Japan, has a 50-year track record of efforts toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. In 2007, it launched the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition initiative in order to help galvanize global grassroots support toward this goal. (IDN-InDepthNews/August 15, 2011) ◆

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Image: President Kennedy signing Nuke Test Ban Treaty in 1963 | Wikimedia Commons

Pakistan Rock Firm Against New Nuclear Treaty

BY J. C. SURESH*



TORONTO (IDN) - Pakistan is standing like a rock in the surf resisting growing international pressure to endorse a global treaty that would ban production of fissile material used as fuel for nuclear weapons. Reiterating its adamant opposition, Pakistan has warned that it would boycott any process to negotiate a U.S.-backed treaty outside the deadlocked UN Conference on Disarmament (CD), the sole negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament.

He stressed that the international community must never abandon multilateralism, saying that in addressing disarmament, the goal is not to advance the preferences of the few, but the common interests of all.

"If the CD remains deadlocked, the General Assembly has a responsibility to step in. [. . .] The CD should not be held perpetually hostage by one or two members. Concerns should be addressed through negotiations. The world expects progress. Let us defer no longer. Let us put an end to this long cycle of stagnation," he added.

Ban is backed by the United States. Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller said in a U.S. State Department release on July 27: "At a time when significant progress has been registered in other areas of arms control and disarmament, it is all the more disappointing that a single state has prevented the CD from again taking its place on the disarmament stage and undertaking negotiations to reach that long overdue objective."

Gottemoeller added: "The preference of the United States is to negotiate the FMCT within the Conference on Disarmament. We welcomed the initiative of Australia and Japan to organize serious technical FMCT discussions on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament this year. The activity proved to be productive, substantive and collegial. But this does not obscure the central fact that the CD remains blocked and we are no closer to FMCT negotiations today than we were two years ago." ➡

Stung by U.S. refusal to enter into similar nuclear deals as signed with neighbouring rival India, Pakistan is accusing Western nuclear powers of practising discrimination, and appears far from inclined towards lending an attentive ear to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon either, who is keen to break the persistent stalemate in the CD.

Ban has suggested at a General Assembly meeting in New York the appointment of a panel of eminent persons, the creation of an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly or a United Nations conference to help break the deadlock.

Addressing the UN General Assembly meeting in New York on July 27, 2011 which coincided with the 23rd UN Conference on Disarmament Issues in Matsumoto, central Japan, Ban said: "We meet in the midst of a growing crisis of confidence."

The General Assembly followed up on a high-level meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations in 2010. "For too long the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, has failed us," Ban said.

Set up in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, the CD predominantly focuses on ending the nuclear arms race and promoting nuclear disarmament, prevention of nuclear war, and prevention of an arms race in outer space, among other things.

"If differences persist, we could consider the appointment of a high-level panel of eminent persons, as I have suggested. Alternatively, States could conduct negotiations in an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly or a UN conference," the UN Secretary-General said.

Image: Acting Pakistani Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar | Credit: unmultimedia.org

Gottemoeller added: "The preference of the United States is to negotiate the FMCT within the Conference on Disarmament. We welcomed the initiative of Australia and Japan to organize serious technical FMCT discussions on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament this year. The activity proved to be productive, substantive and collegial. But this does not obscure the central fact that the CD remains blocked and we are no closer to FMCT negotiations today than we were two years ago."

Planning is under way for the five permanent UN Security Council member nations and "other relevant partners" to further discuss the matter before the UN General Assembly convenes in September, she pointed out.

Gottemoeller said "a panel of 'eminent persons,' the CD itself, or some others" might further assess potential reforms to the Conference on Disarmament, as well as suggest possible changes to the UN Disarmament Commission in New York.

Potential considerations, she said, could include "how to provide for continuity on an agreed CD work from year to year, such as automatic rollover of an agreed program of work"; "how to protect national security interests while preventing abuse of the consensus rule"; and "whether expansion of the CD would improve CD efficiency, and how to reflect universal disarmament goals in deliberative and negotiating bodies, while maintaining their efficacy and assuring that states' security concerns are respected and protected".

Responding to the UN Secretary-General and the U.S., Acting Pakistani Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar struck a "note of caution" against taking negotiations for the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) outside the 65-member Conference, asserting that "Pakistan will not join any such process nor would it consider accession to the outcome of any such process".

In a statement consistent with the view Pakistan has maintained over the previous two years, Tarar argued: "These policies, by sacrificing international non-proliferation goals at the altar of power and profit, have accentuated the asymmetry in fissile material stocks in our region."

Regrettably, those policies continued and had found no opposition amongst the members of Nuclear Supplier Group, which, he said, comprised of some of the most ardent supporters of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and strongest critics of "lack of progress in the CD".

Tarar said while major powers debated options for reforming the CD or even abandoning what they regarded as a dysfunctional body and blamed the rules of procedure, which, by requiring consensus on all decisions, effectively gave all states a veto power that allowed any of them to halt progress, the real reason for the conference's dysfunction was the lack of political will by some nuclear states to negotiate in a fair and balanced way.

"The problems faced by the Conference on Disarmament are not of an organisational or procedural nature," he said, adding that there was a clear pattern of negotiating only in the interests of the most powerful states.

The conference, he said, "cannot negotiate through cherry-picking issues that some states consider ripe," pointing to what he described as "a clear pattern of negotiating only those agreements that do not undermine or compromise the security interest of powerful states". He cited as examples, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The same could be said of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), Tarar said. Now, after having developed "huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, as well as stocks of fissile material", which could be converted quickly into nuclear warheads, those major powers are ready to conclude a treaty that will only ban future production of fissile material, since they no longer need more of it. "This approach," the Pakistani diplomat stressed, was "cost free" for them as it would not undermine or compromise their security.

For those reasons, Pakistan was compelled to "take a stand" against nuclear selectivity and discrimination. "No country can be expected to compromise on its fundamental security interests for an instrument that is cost-free for all other concerned countries," he said, recommending several steps that must be taken in order to create an "honest and objective approach" to revitalising the disarmament machinery. (IDN-InDepthNews / August.2, 2011) ◆

UN Agency Slams Nuclear Rogue Nations

BY THALIF DEEN



UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on July 27 identified three U.N. member states - Iran, North Korea and Syria - as virtual nuclear rogue nations for their continued refusal to comply with international obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Singling out the countries by name, IAEA Director-General Yukiya Amano said his approach to nuclear verification has been "very straightforward" ever since he took office in December 2009.

"All safeguards agreements between member states and the agency, and other relevant obligations such as U.N. Security Council resolutions, should be implemented fully," he told a three-day U.N. Conference on Disarmament Issues in Matsumoto, Japan.

Currently, there are five declared nuclear weapon states, namely the United States, Britain, Russia, France and China, along with three undeclared nuclear weapon states, India, Pakistan and Israel.

The three undeclared nuclear powers have all refused to sign the NPT and remain outside the IAEA radar, as against the five declared nuclear powers who are states parties to the treaty.

North Korea is strongly rumoured to possess nuclear weapons; Iran is suspected of having an active nuclear weapons programme although it vehemently denies the charge; and Syria is accused of making a failed attempt to develop nuclear weapons.

Both Iran and Syria are states parties to the NPT. North Korea, on the other hand, withdrew from the treaty in January 2003, and claims it has no obligations under the NPT. But, as a U.N. member state, it has to comply with IAEA and Security Council resolutions.

Amano said the North Korean nuclear programme "remains a matter of serious concern".

"As you may know, since April 2009, the agency has not been able to implement any safeguards measures in that country," he said.

Last year (2010), there were reports that North Korea was in the process of building a new uranium enrichment facility and a light water reactor. If these reports are true, the IAEA head said, "they are deeply troubling."

Amano urged North Korea to fully implement all of the relevant resolutions of the IAEA General Conference and the Security Council which have imposed strictures and/or sanctions on Pyongyang for non-compliance.

Iran, which also came under fire, has unequivocally stated that its nuclear programme is only for "peaceful purposes". But both the Security Council and the IAEA have refused to buy this argument.

"Iran is not providing the necessary cooperation to enable the agency to provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities," Amano declared.

He called upon Iran "to move towards the full implementation of all relevant obligations to build international confidence in the exclusively peaceful nature of its nuclear programme" ➡

On Syria, the IAEA has concluded it is very likely that a building destroyed at the Dair Alzour site in 2007 - possibly from an air attack by Israel - was a nuclear reactor which should have been declared to the agency. But it was not.

Last month, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution accusing Syria of "non-compliance with its safeguards obligations".

Meanwhile, the IAEA has been consulting with its member states on the possibility of convening a forum on the relevance of existing nuclear weapon-free zones and to consider establishing such a zone in the Middle East.

But the proposed international conference, tentatively scheduled for 2012, may be in jeopardy amid the growing political turmoil sweeping across the Arab world - and Israel's fears of negative fallout on its own security.

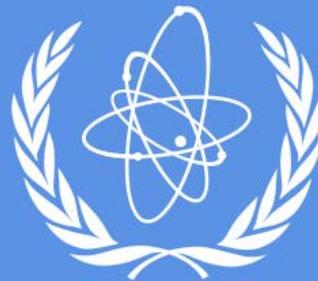
The proposal for the long-outstanding meeting was endorsed by 189 member states at the Review Conference on the NPT held at the United Nations in May 2010.

The Israeli government, while criticising the outcome document of that Review Conference, left the door open for participation in the 2012 conference.

But the political uprisings in the Arab world, including the ouster of the Israeli-friendly Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, have triggered expressions of Israeli concerns - specifically its own security in an increasingly hostile environment.

Israel has privately expressed the view that its undeclared nuclear weapons are the best guarantee of its security. (IPS | July 27, 2011) ◆

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Nukes Are Illegal - But Still Around

BY NEENA BHANDARI



SYDNEY (IDN) - Junko Morimoto was 13 years old when the United States of America dropped the first atomic bomb on her hometown of Hiroshima. She was only 1,700 metres away from the hypocentre and if it weren't for a stomach bug that confined her to home, she would have been amongst the 360 students who died at her city centre school on August 6, 1945.

Morimoto has an inoperable brain tumour affecting her balance. Nearly seven decades after the nuclear bombs exploded, Japanese people are still living each day with the terrible aftermath of the radiation on the environment and their health, with genetic damage

passing to future generations.

"Hiroshima and Nagasaki taught us two things. One is that we human beings have acquired the ability to create hell. The other is that we are so foolish, untrustworthy and pathetic that we would actually put this frightening ability to use," says Morimoto, an accomplished author and artist who migrated to Australia in 1981.

July 8 marked the 15th anniversary of the International Court of Justice's landmark advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. The court unanimously held that nations have a legal obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons under strict and effective international control.

Advocates for a nuclear-free world addressed a packed public forum at the Melbourne Town Hall on July 5, hosted by The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Australian Red Cross.

Not Just an Option

Speaking on the occasion, former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser said, "Disarmament is not just an option; it is mandated by international law. This is best fulfilled through a nuclear weapons convention – a comprehensive treaty prohibiting the possession of nuclear weapons by any state, and establishing the legal mechanisms necessary to accomplish the elimination of all warheads within a defined period."

Today there are more than 20,000 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of eight or nine countries, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2011.

The U.S., Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan and Israel possess more than 20,500 nuclear weapons. Over 5000 of these weapons are deployed and ready for use, including nearly 2000 that are kept in a state of high operational alert.

An international Global Zero movement for a world without nuclear weapons forecasts that global spending on nuclear weapons would surpass US\$1 Trillion over the next decade. The nuclear weapons countries are collectively spending approximately US\$ 100 billion on their nuclear programs this year.

"Political leaders should understand that nuclear weapons do not contribute to anyone's safety. They make the whole world a much more dangerous place. More and more countries have the knowledge to make a nuclear weapon. If positive moves towards nuclear disarmament are not pushed much harder, more countries will seek nuclear weapons and the danger of nuclear war, by deliberation or by accident, will become greater," Fraser told IDN.

In April 2010 the U.S and Russia, which possess 95 per cent of the world's nuclear stockpiles, agreed to a modest reduction under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), but both countries currently are either deploying new nuclear weapon delivery systems or have announced programs to do so. Meanwhile, India and Pakistan continue to develop new ballistic and cruise missile systems capable of delivering nuclear weapons. ➡

Emphasising the urgency to eliminate these weapons, Fraser said, "It is a cause for great concern that there is no genuine multilateral process presently under way to eliminate nuclear weapons. A convention banning the nuclear bomb is long overdue, and Australia should drive the international push for negotiations."

The Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard has signalled her intention to move a motion on the floor of parliament, calling for a parliamentary resolution on the abolition of nuclear weapons. She has invited Opposition leader Tony Abbott to make this a bi-partisan initiative.

Less Partisan

"This is a perfect opportunity for the government to lift nuclear and disarmament issue into a less partisan and political space to a more humanitarian issue", Dr. Tilman Ruff, Chair of ICAN Australia, told IDN.

Australia is in an interesting situation because as a country it doesn't have any nuclear weapons, but subscribes to the doctrine of extended nuclear deterrence under the U.S alliance.

"So long as Australia relies on U.S. nuclear weapons for its security, its credibility as disarmament advocate will be greatly diminished. With a U.S president sympathetic to the cause of disarmament, the time would appear ideal for Australia to adopt a nuclear-weapon-free defence posture, and begin contributing meaningfully towards nuclear disarmament," Fraser said.

Australia has 40 per cent of the world's uranium reserves and it is a significant uranium exporter. "Our uranium exports do pose a problem for disarmament. Even if there are safeguards agreements in place with countries receiving uranium, there is always a risk that it will be used in weapons or it will be freeing up domestic uranium reserves for that purpose. We need to be looking at ways to wind up the uranium industry in Australia, if we are serious about non-proliferation of nuclear weapons," ICAN Australia's Campaign Director, Tim Wright, told IDN.

The recent nuclear power crisis in Fukushima has alerted governments and public across the world to the inherent dangers of nuclear technology for electricity production. ICAN points out that the starting material is the same and the effects of radiation are completely indiscriminate and identical whether it is radiation from a nuclear reactor or a nuclear bomb.

"Any country that can enrich uranium to reactor grade for nuclear power generation also has everything it would need to enrich uranium to weapons grade. The two are non-separable. There is no restriction on either the enrichment of uranium or reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel to extract plutonium. Those are the two sources for fissile materials for weapons and there are currently no international restrictions that restrict countries access to those. That is simply not compatible with either achieving or sustaining a world free of nuclear weapons," Dr. Ruff told IDN.

From Non-Proliferation to Abolition

Advocates for zero nuclear want to shift the focus from non-proliferation to abolition. As former United Nations Assistant Secretary General, Ramesh Thakur said, "We need a multi-phased roadmap to abolition that prioritises concrete steps like introducing more robust firewalls to separate possession from use of nuclear weapons; further significant cuts in existing nuclear arsenals and a freeze on production of fissile materials in the medium term; a verifiable and enforceable new international nuclear weapons convention that requires total and verified destruction of all nuclear stockpiles within our lifetime."

In his view, it is unrealistic to believe that the non-NPT (the 1968 Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty) nuclear-armed states (India, Pakistan and Israel) can be forced to sign the NPT as non-nuclear states. ➡



Picture: Dr. Tilman Ruff, Chair of ICAN Australia



The combined destructive force of all nuclear weapons in the world today is equivalent to 150,000 Hiroshima bombs, according to the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

As Dr Ruff said, "There are profound, severe and unprecedented global consequences from even a relatively small regional use of a tiny fraction of the world's nuclear arsenal. The U.S. National Academy of Sciences concluded unequivocally that there was no way to reliably contain the effects of a nuclear explosion. Nuclear weapons and climate change pose unprecedented threats not only to the living but to the future of humans and the capacity of Earth to support complex life forms. Hence, there is an urgency to get to zero as quickly as possible."

Australian Red Cross is taking a leading role internationally in voicing the need for further laws which confirm the illegality of using nuclear weapons.

As Dr Helen Durham, Red Cross Strategic Adviser, International Law, told IDN, "International law is a very fragmented system of law so it won't be one overarching way to go forward, but I think that countries around the world need to understand that their citizens are concerned about this topic."

Australian Red Cross will be engaging in a public education campaign to ensure people really understand the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. "We will conduct different events and in early November begin a web-based education program to harness young people's interest. It is really about everyone standing up and saying these weapons are unacceptable," Dr Durham said. (IDN-InDepthNews/ July 15, 2011) ◆

Picture: Dr Helen Durham | Credit: Melbourne Law School

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India Unfazed by Nuclear Suppliers' New Rules

BY RANJIT DEVRAJ

NEW DELHI (IPS) - Confident in the large market it offers to the world's nuclear suppliers, India has decided to shrug off new restrictions by a 46-nation cartel on the transfer of uranium enrichment and reprocessing technologies that potentially have military applications.

India, which has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) on the grounds that it is discriminatory, pulled off a diplomatic coup in 2008 by securing a special waiver from the 46-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

Except for the five officially recognised atomic weapons states, all countries are required to place their nuclear sites under the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Following a plenary in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, the NSG announced on Jun. 24 that it would "strengthen its guidelines on the transfer of sensitive enrichment and reprocessing (ENR) technologies," diluting the clean waiver granted to India and exempting it from full-scope international safeguards.

Nuclear energy experts in India told IPS that the NSG's move may be prompted by commercial concerns and an attempt to squeeze India into buying nuclear equipment in a market rapidly narrowing down in the wake of the Fukushima disaster.

"Even before Fukushima, India and China were the only countries with major plans to expand nuclear power generation. And now, with China switching to renewable energy, India is the only major buyer left," says Praful Bidwai, a member of the International Network of Engineers and Scientists Against Proliferation.

"In spite of the many failures of the French supplier Areva, which have resulted in the recent sacking of its CEO, Anne Lauvergeon, India is going ahead with a deal to buy six of its European Pressurised Reactors for the world's biggest ever nuclear power plant at Jaitapur in Maharashtra," Bidwai said. "But for the India deal Areva may have to shut shop."

According to Rajiv Nayan, international partner at the Fissile Materials Working Group and senior research associate at the state-funded Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi, the NSG's strictures could jeopardise the Areva deal.

"It is for the NSG to carry India along in the interest of better international nuclear governance and management," Nayan told IPS.

Given the present climate for nuclear energy, countries like France, Russia and the United States, which have already signed major nuclear commerce deals with India, are unlikely to back off, Nayan said.

India has ambitious plans to raise its nuclear power generation from the current 4.7 gigawatts to over 20 Gw by 2020. Besides Areva, Russia's Rosatom and General Electric from the U.S. are among corporations negotiating for deals worth more than 100 billion dollars.

In an apparent warning to the NSG, India's foreign secretary Nirupama Rao told television interviewers on Sunday that there are "leverages" that could be applied to countries unwilling to enter into nuclear commerce with India.

Rao said the U.S., Russia and France had, since the NSG announced its new policy, made known that they would stand by their commitments to India.

French ambassador to India Jerome Bonnafont confirmed in a Jul. 1 press statement that "this NSG decision in no way undermines the parameters of our bilateral cooperation," and that France remained "committed to the full implementation of our cooperation agreement on the development of peaceful uses of nuclear energy signed on Sep. 30, 2008.

"Coming after the decision of exemption from the full-scope safeguards clause, adopted in favour of India in September 2008, it (NSG decision) does not undermine the principles of this exemption," the statement said. ↻

After three decades of isolation, India resumed nuclear commerce with the rest of the world after concluding a civilian nuclear deal with the U.S. in 2008 that allowed it to continue with an indigenously developed nuclear weapons programme.

Nayan said the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear cooperation deal and the NSG waiver came in spite of strong domestic pressure both in India and the U.S. from peace groups and those supporting nuclear disarmament.

Within the NSG, countries such as Austria, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway

and Switzerland had unsuccessfully argued that India be excluded from trade in ENR technologies.

Nayan said, however, that the NSG never actually gave India any explicit assurance on transfer of ENR technologies.

Also, he said, Indian parliament had passed a stiff nuclear liability bill in August 2010 that discouraged international nuclear equipment suppliers – though several bilateral nuclear cooperation agreements have been signed.

As a self-declared nuclear weapons state that is not signatory to the NPT, it would have been difficult, in any case, for India to source nuclear technology or equipment from any country that is a signatory to the treaty.

India provides no guarantees that it will not replicate facilities and technologies for its strategic programme and, in fact, the Indo-U.S. nuclear cooperation agreement allows facilities that are declared to be military in nature to avoid international scrutiny and safeguards. (IPS | July 6, 2011) ◆

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India has ambitious plans to raise its nuclear power generation from the current 4.7 gigawatts to over 20 Gw by 2020. Besides Areva, Russia's Rosatom and General Electric from the U.S. are among corporations negotiating for deals worth more than 100 billion dollars.

In an apparent warning to the NSG, India's foreign secretary Nirupama Rao told television interviewers on Sunday that there are "leverages" that could be applied to countries unwilling to enter into nuclear commerce with India.

Pugwash and Germany Strive for Nuke-Free World

BY JAMSHED BARUAH

BERLIN (IDN) - Nuclear disarmament has drawn the focus of an international conference in Berlin for the second time in 2011, which might prove to be a stepping stone towards a world free of thousands of nuclear weapons that are a huge menace to global security.

On the same day as Germany assumed the presidency of the UN Security Council on July 1, some 300 current and former policy makers and experts from 43 countries launched the 59th Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs on 'European Contributions to Nuclear Disarmament and Conflict Resolution' with a special day-long symposium focusing on NATO-Russia relationship.

The first conference with foreign ministers of 10 non-nuclear nations stretching across continents was held at the initiative of German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle in April in Berlin.

In their 'Berlin Statement', the foreign ministers of Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates stressed "the crucial need to promote the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in line with pending requirements for the organization in 2012 of the special conference agreed at the (May) 2010 NPT Review Conference" in New York.

This, Westerwelle told Pugwash conference participants, was a clear indication that the German Government was pursuing a world free of nuclear weapons. The participants included key arms negotiators Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and U.S. Under Secretary Rose Gottemoeller, who addressed further steps in nuclear reductions.

Other participants from around the world included eight current ministers, four former intelligence chiefs, several sitting parliamentarians, among other leading voices from key regions.

The German foreign minister told them: "Within NATO, we want to include sub-strategic nuclear weapons in the next disarmament talks with Russia. Global Zero, a world freed from the nuclear threat, is our long-term goal. And we will always place these efforts in the larger context that includes conventional arms reductions."

Even before he was appointed Foreign Minister in Germany's conservative-liberal coalition in October 2009, Westerwelle embraced nuclear disarmament as an eminent goal – at home and abroad.

At home it would mean doing away with some 20 nukes on German territory, which the United States continues to maintain despite the fall of the Berlin Wall, end of the cold war and re-unification twenty years

ago. Abroad it meant progressing towards a nuclear-weapon free world President Barack Obama pledged to work for in his famous speech in Prague in April 2009.

Westerwelle pointed out that nuclear weapons pose a threat to humankind not only when these are in the hands of authoritarian regimes. "Even in the hands of democracies nuclear weapons are not guaranteed to be safe from abuse or negligence," he warned.

Explaining the potential threat of nukes under the control of dictators, the German foreign minister said: "Authoritarian regimes become most troubling when they seek to control nuclear weapons. Iran and North Korea are the most prominent examples. But they need to be put in a larger context."

Referring to an agreement achieved at the 2010 conference on nuclear non-proliferation in New York, he said: "After ten years of stagnation, disarmament process has got off to a solid start in this new decade. The Convention on Cluster Munitions has come into force last summer. NATO made the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons part of its new strategy. The United States and Russia ratified a new START Treaty on reducing strategic nuclear weapons."

"This is not only good news for you as experts. This is excellent news for mankind. Disarmament is as important a task for humanity as combating climate change," he added. ☺



Westerwelle assured: "Our policy towards peace and security is deeply rooted in the United Nations. The answer to global challenges is a strong Europe within a strong United Nations based on strong international law. To retain its credibility as the cornerstone of international security and legitimacy, the United Nations needs to adapt to the realities of the 21st century."

Africa, South America and Asia are not adequately represented in the Security Council, he said, in an oblique reference to the 'G4' – Japan, Germany, India and Brazil – nations' initiative to enlarge the Security Council, with South Africa often mentioned as the fifth in the league.

Addressing the symposium, 'Reducing the Role of Nuclear Weapons in the NATO-Russia Relationship,' on June 30, Westerwelle's deputy, Werner Hoyer said: "Our joint political goal – further reductions in nuclear arms – can only come about by using the cooperative instrument of fostering dialogue and mutual confidence."

2010 was a good year for arms control, he said, referring to the consensus reached at the NPT Review Conference after 10 years of deadlock, the signing of New START and the adoption of NATO's new strategic concept.

"Nevertheless, we cannot rest on our laurels. We have to focus now on the open issues. Concrete problems in the NATO-Russia relationship cannot be argued away. It is therefore important to clearly indicate what the problems are, and to try and find adequate solutions," Hoyer said.

NATO-Russia Problems

The "problems" needing solutions related to nuclear weapons reductions, invigorating conventional arms control, and how to establish a missile defence system that NATO and Russia can both benefit from.

Hoyer said, the new Strategic Concept adopted at the Lisbon summit expressed NATO's readiness to create the conditions for further reductions of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe. At the same time it also pointed at the need to address the disparity with the much greater Russian stockpile.

"Unfortunately, in the last months official Russian voices have made it quite clear that Moscow is not very interested in discussing the topic of its sub-strategic nuclear arsenal," regretted, adding: "This rejection should not prevent us from discussing concrete proposals, at least for initiating a possible future reduction process."

One idea, he suggested, could be to revive the so-called U.S.-Russian Presidential Initiatives of 1991/92. Since those days, non-strategic weapons have not been the object of arms control efforts. We are aware that addressing them in a New START follow-on process will be a complex and challenging issue – both with regard to the political and the technical aspects.

"As a starting point we could aim at improving transparency and confidence-building. Implementation of the 1991/92 commitments has never been subject to any accountability or verification, which adds an additional hurdle to re-engaging on these weapons. But this should not prevent us from getting started," said Hoyer.

Pugwash

Stressing the significance of the conference, Pugwash president and former UN Under Secretary General for disarmament, Jayantha Dhanapala; said: "Pugwash focuses on decreasing the salience of nuclear weapons, and promotes nuclear disarmament."

Ahead of the conference, he said. "The Simons (Foundation) Symposium will demonstrate the urgency of addressing broader security issues that will open the door for deeper nuclear cuts, and will seek to regain lost momentum following the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The European example is significant, and can have tremendous positive effects on decreasing nuclear threats in other parts of the world."

Pugwash Secretary General Paolo Cotta-Ramusino said: "This world-class gathering, devoted to the idea of seeking diplomatic solutions to conflict, will gather inspiration from the city of Berlin. If walls could come down in Berlin, then we also have the possibility to solve challenging issues in other parts of the world: South Asia, the Middle East, the Korean peninsula." (IDN-DepthNews/July 5, 2011) ◆

The Five Big Again Talk Nuclear Disarmament

BY TONY ROBINSON*

LONDON (IDN) - The five veto-wielding permanent (P5) members of the UN Security Council – China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States – met in Paris on June 30 and July 1, 2011 to deal with an issue that carries with it the survival of the planet: nuclear disarmament.

The conference was a follow up to the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in New York in May 2010, and the conference on Confidence Building Measures towards disarmament and non-proliferation issues in September 2009 in London.

The five governments expectedly reaffirmed their unconditional support for the NPT and the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. A tangible result of the Paris gathering was agreement on a meeting of technical experts in London later in 2011 to continue discussing issues of verification and to meet again in Vienna as the next NPT review cycle gets underway in May 2012.

The major issues that the conference studied were those of transparency and mutual confidence; everyone being fully aware that you can sign all the treaties you like but unless disarmament can be unequivocally verified the reality is that given the belligerent attitude of the West in their wars of "human rights/control of resources" China and Russia would do well to keep their nuclear deterrent because it would appear to be the only negotiating tool that the USA respects – just look at North Korea.

It is hard to imagine, even with satellites in space taking photos of every square metre of the planet, how verification can be assured. All five countries have access to sufficient conventional weapon technology which is currently legal. China, Russia, and the USA have space programmes which allow them to build rockets that can drop bombs anywhere on the planet and the Europeans have their own space programme launching rockets from South America.

The U.S. drone technology being so well developed for use in Afghanistan also shows that delivery technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated. And of course all P5 have access to the nuclear material necessary for making bombs

which can be found in the nuclear power stations that each of them have developed precisely for this purpose.

Even with 100 percent compliance with the NPT by all countries of the world, with all these components readily available, any country with them would be no more than a few months from constructing another bomb and already over 40 countries either have nuclear reactors or plan to have them in coming years.

Another area of P5 discussion was the subject of withdrawal from the treaty. Article X allows states to withdraw from the NPT if they give three months notice to the UN on the condition that the withdrawing state, "decides that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of the Treaty have jeopardized its supreme interests."

This article has only been invoked by North Korea so far and the P5 are keen to ensure that no others follow suit. Here the message to Iran is clear. With Iranian development of nuclear reactors, and technology to enrich uranium to the extent where a bomb could be made, regardless of Tehran's expression of benign intent of her energy programme, no one is fooled for a minute that this is another attempt by a country to safeguard its security in the same way as North Korea.

Iran's moves are putting enormous strain on the NPT as Saudi Arabian Prince Turki al-Faisal recently informed NATO at a meeting in the UK that if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, Saudi Arabia will follow suit.

The significance of the NPT lies in the fact that it is a delicate balancing act between peaceful and military purposes of nuclear science. Sensitive to the limitations of oil, coal and gas supplies, the potential for releasing huge amounts of energy in controlled nuclear reactors has been something that the whole world was keen to embrace ever since Einstein realised the potential behind his equation $E=mc^2$.

The only problem is that the by-product of nuclear energy as generated by uranium is plutonium which is an essential component of nuclear bombs. ☹



The problem that the NPT tried to grapple with when it was negotiated was how to allow nations to pursue their “right” to nuclear energy with the problem of not allowing these same nations to gather enough plutonium to make a bomb with it.

Out of this paradox came the NPT which has ever since been identified as having three pillars: 1) non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to countries outside the P-5 (articles I and II), 2)

disarmament of existing nuclear weapons states (article VI) and 3) the “right” to pursue nuclear energy (article IV).

The NPT was negotiated back in the 1960's, long before incidents such as the Three-Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima scarred the consciousness of the world with the horror of what goes wrong when radioactive material escapes the containment of nuclear reactors and the control of human beings – and long before the nuclear energy industry emerged into a huge lobbying force in the politics of the U.S. and elsewhere.

190 countries are parties to the NPT: sadly all four Nuclear Weapons States – India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea – that joined the club after the P5 are not among them. This makes talks about global disarmament somewhat difficult.

Three Pillars

Where does the world stand in terms of the three pillars of NPT?

Non-proliferation: From a starting point of five nations with nuclear weapons capability in 1970, a situation has been reached where nine nations have nuclear weapons: India (1974), Pakistan (1998) and North Korea (2006) joining Israel who have neither confirmed or denied having them but who are widely recognised to have them.

In addition, five NATO countries host U.S. weapons (Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey) in contravention of article I and II of the NPT. Although doubts remain over Iran's intentions, certainly at the time of writing no one believes Iran is close to a bomb.

Nuclear energy: According to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 29 countries generate a portion of their energy from nuclear power stations, with a further 18 countries in the stages of planning, construction or investigating the possibility.

Disarmament: From the height of the Cold War doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) where there were about 65,000 nuclear warheads – each one vastly more destructive than the two dropped on Japan – since the fall of the Soviet Union these numbers have dropped and today there remain around 22,000 with the USA and Russia accounting for roughly 90 percent of the total between them.

What stands in the way of sizeable disarmament is that nuclear weaponry is a big industry. According to Global Zero, one trillion US dollars will be spent on nuclear weapons alone in the next decade. This is an absolutely enormous sum, and any businessman or woman in the industry is going to be keen to ensure that this situation stays the same.

CTBT

The P5 Paris conference also had the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to ban nuclear explosion testing on its agenda. Two of the P5, the USA and China, have not yet ratified it, and whereas Iran and Israel have at least signed it, India, Pakistan and North Korea have yet to do so.

President Barack Obama made the ratification of the CTBT a campaign promise in the 2008 U.S. presidential election. Given that the ratification of the new START treaty – to reduce the number of deployed nuclear warheads – cost him \$185 billion dollars as the price tag for the nuclear weapons modernisation programme that was a condition of ratification by a Republican-majority Senate, one can rightly wonder how much it will cost the President to get the CTBT ratified if he tries, as expected, in a second term as President. ☺

FMCT

Another treaty under the spotlight in Paris was the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), a treaty proposed to prohibit the further production of nuclear weapons material. This is currently a subject of the Conference on Disarmament (CD), an International body to negotiate arms control and disarmament agreements.

In the past the CD has been responsible for the establishment of conventions to ban biological and chemical weapons. Now it has been tasked with negotiating the FMCT but Pakistan currently refuses all attempts to move forward on a programme of work.

Nuke Free Middle East

Finally the conference welcomed the steps taken towards the holding of a conference in 2012 to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. The vast majority of the planet is already covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones and ever since the NPT review conference in 1995 the subject of a nuke free zone in the Middle East has been on the agenda. Iran has frequently called for moves to be made in this direction and it was a great surprise for many observers of the NPT review conference in May 2010 to see this action point and the specific call for Israel to ratify the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state.

This is an intriguing prospect: Israel, although widely recognised as having nuclear weapons, has always maintained a policy of ambiguity. In 2010 the final NPT review conference singled out Israel for not signing the NPT, much to Israel's consternation, leading Jerusalem to issue a statement saying the resolution was "deeply flawed and hypocritical," and "ignores the realities of the Middle East and the real threats facing the region and the entire world."

It concluded: "As a non-signatory state of the NPT, Israel is not obligated by the decisions of this conference, which has no authority over Israel. Given the distorted nature of this resolution, Israel will not be able to take part in its implementation."

That was in 2010: though since then the world has changed considerably around Israel: an Arab Spring has swept aside governments in Tunisia and

Egypt, war is raging in Libya and Syria, Bahrain and the Yemen among many other places have suffered continual protests ever since. Though the P-5 welcomed the steps taken by the U.S., Russia and the UK towards holding a Conference on a Middle East WMD Free Zone (MEWMDFZ) in 2012, it remains to be seen whether such a conference will take place.

Civil Society

But, disappointed by the continual refusal of their governments to start negotiations to disarm, civil society continues to organise itself to keep up the pressure. To mark the Paris meeting, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons (ICAN) – a network of some 200 anti-nuclear organisations – declared June 25, 2011 Nuclear Abolition Day, and organised events in 25 countries to raise awareness and try to direct the world's attention to the conference in France.

1984 Nobel Peace Laureate in Desmond Tutu called on civil society to keep up the pressure. In a Project Syndicate column, he wrote: "We must not tolerate a system of nuclear apartheid, in which it is considered legitimate for some states to possess nuclear arms but patently unacceptable for others to seek to acquire them. Such a double standard is no basis for peace and security in the world. The NPT is not a license for the five original nuclear powers to cling to these weapons indefinitely. The International Court of Justice has affirmed that they are legally obliged to negotiate in good faith for the complete elimination of their nuclear forces."

He added: "In time, every government will come to accept the basic inhumanity of threatening to obliterate entire cities with nuclear weapons. They will work to achieve a world in which such weapons are no more – where the rule of law, not the rule of force, reigns supreme, and cooperation is seen as the best guarantor of international peace. But such a world will be possible only if people everywhere rise up and challenge the nuclear madness."

This is a call to an 'Anti-Nuclear Spring'. Will the people listen? Sadly until the media pay attention to the global threat of nuclear devastation, the answer is probably not.

*Tony Robinson is the International Spokesperson for the Organisation World without Wars and Violence. (IDN-InDepthNews/July 4, 2011) ♦

Nukes Decline, But Disarmament Still a Distant Horizon

BY THALIF DEEN



NEW YORK (IPS) - The world's eight nuclear states - the United States, Britain, Russia, France, China, India, Pakistan and Israel - collectively possess more than 20,500 nuclear weapons - a decline of over 2,000 since 2009.

But more than 5,000 of these devastating weapons are deployed and ready for use, including nearly 2,000 that are kept in "a state of high operational alert".

The updated figures were released June 7 by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in its Yearbook 2011.

Currently, the two biggest nuclear arsenals are in Russia (11,000 nuclear weapons) and the United States (8,500), followed by France (300), China (240), Britain (225), Pakistan (90-110), India (80-110) and Israel (80).

The SIPRI Yearbook says that modest cuts in U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear forces were agreed in April 2010 under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START).

"But both countries currently are either deploying new nuclear weapon delivery systems, or have announced programmes to do so, and appear determined to retain their nuclear arsenals for the indefinite future," it says.

Meanwhile, India and Pakistan, two neighbouring nuclear rivals, continue to develop new ballistic and cruise missile systems capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

"They are also expanding their capacities to produce fissile material for military purposes," says SIPRI, an independent international research institute focusing on arms control and disarmament.

Still, there has been little progress towards nuclear disarmament, despite the reduction in the number of weapons.

Asked about the disparity, Jonathan Granoff, president of the Global Security Institute, told IPS that "quantitative reductions are of course to be praised, despite the qualitative offsets of modernisation and robust funding of the nuclear weapons enterprise."

However, overall progress will only be achieved when the compass point of elimination is clearly set as the collective goal of nuclear haves and have-nots together, he pointed out.

Such clarity depends upon commencing the preparatory process to move unambiguously toward a universal legally enforceable non-discriminatory ban on nuclear weapons achieved by a convention or by a framework of instruments.

"With such a clear commitment, the step-by-step incremental quantitative reductions will have enhanced meaning toward downgrading the political and military significance of the weapons," he added.

The essential element, he said, is the collective commitment to universal abolition.

"Rhetoric in this regard is credible only when backed by action," Granoff declared. ☞

Image of SIPRI headquarters left top.

SIPRI senior researcher Shannon Kile said it is a stretch to say that the New START cuts agreed by the United States and Russia are a genuine step towards nuclear disarmament when their planning for nuclear forces is done on a time scale that encompasses decades, and when nuclear modernisation is a major priority of their defence policies.

Jackie Cabasso, executive director of the Western States Legal Foundation (WSLF), which monitors and analyses U.S. nuclear weapons programmes, told IPS the SIPRI report validates what she has been saying for years - at least since the mid-1990s in connection with the failed deal for U.S. Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) - essentially that U.S. nuclear weapons planning is based on the concept of "fewer but newer; nuclear weapons forever".



The fact that the numbers of nuclear weapons have been drastically reduced since their mind-boggling peak has been generally confused with disarmament, when in fact, more than 20,000 nuclear weapons in the hands of eight or nine states continues to represent an intolerable threat to humanity and the earth, she noted.

Despite the end of the Cold War, and despite U.S. President Barack Obama's lofty disarmament rhetoric, the threatened first use of nuclear weapons remains at the core of the national security policy of the only country that has thus far used nuclear weapons in war - the United States, she pointed out.

And this is mirrored in the national security policies of most of the other nuclear armed states.

The failed U.S. Senate CTBT ratification deal, which cemented ever-increasing funding for the Stockpile Stewardship nuclear weapons modernisation programme was replicated on steroids in the START ratification package.

This package essentially renders START as an anti-disarmament measure, projecting modernisation of nuclear warheads and their delivery system decades into the future, said Cabasso, winner of the 2008 Sean MacBride Peace Prize awarded by the International Peace Bureau. (IPS | June 7, 2011) ◆

Image top right: Shannon Kile | Credit: SIPRI

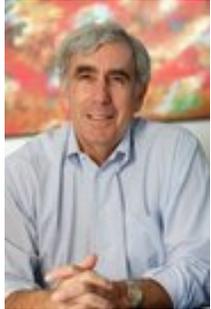
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"But both countries currently are either deploying new nuclear weapon delivery systems, or have announced programmes to do so, and appear determined to retain their nuclear arsenals for the indefinite future," it says.

'U.S. Plan to Boost Nuke Spending Undercuts Nonproliferation'

BY HAIDER RIZVI



UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - A Pentagon plan to step up spending on nuclear weaponry would severely undermine global efforts geared towards disarmament, warn independent analysts on U.S. nuclear policy.

"This is in direct conflict with the commitment to nuclear disarmament," said David Krieger, president of the U.S.-based Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, regarding the U.S. military's request for increased funding for nuclear weapons maintenance.

The U.S. military reportedly wants Congress to approve 213 billion dollars for the "modernisation" of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems over the next 10 years. That is in addition to average annual spending of 54 billion dollars on nuclear maintenance.

Analysts say much of the increased funding is likely to be spent on new drones, submarines, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and facilities to build a new generation of nuclear weapons.

Congress is currently debating cuts in the forthcoming budget. At the moment, there is no indication that the majority of lawmakers and the Barack Obama administration intend to question the rationale behind the development of new nuclear weapon systems.

Since taking charge of the White House in January 2009, Obama has given speeches championing the cause of global nuclear disarmament, but like his predecessors, has shied away from setting a deadline for complete abolition of nuclear weapons in his country and abroad.

"He has said nice things about nuclear disarmament," Krieger told IPS. "But, apparently, he has agreed to spend over 200 billion dollars on nuclear weapons modernisation."

Krieger noted that the so-called "new" nuclear weapons programme also includes nuke-carrying drones.

"It's a long-distance killing," said Krieger. "Drones with nuclear weapons are inappropriate. That's an invitation to nuclear chaos," he added, expressing concerns that other states suspected of having or developing nuclear weapons programmes would be more defiant in the coming years.

For more than a decade, the U.S. nuclear policy establishment has cracked down on Iran and North Korea, the first for allegedly trying to develop nuclear weapons and the second for its avowed nuclear programme, but has not given a clear signal about when it would be ready to destroy its own huge nuclear arsenal.

Krieger's foundation, which is part of the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI), an umbrella group of eight major international disarmament organisations, is currently involved in lobbying efforts to speed up the U.N.-led process towards nuclear non-proliferation and complete disarmament.

The MPI stands for a "verifiable, irreversible and enforceable legal ban on nuclear weapons" and wants urgent action on U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon's five-point proposal for nuclear disarmament, which calls for the development of "mutually reinforcing" framework agreements or a nuclear weapons convention.

"The overwhelming desire of governments and people for the abolition of nuclear weapons requires practical action," MPI chairman Richard Butler said in a statement sent to IPS last week. "Nuclear weapons' continued existence threatens all and poses unacceptable risks."

The MPI is lobbying world diplomats for their support to implement Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in which the nuclear states commit themselves to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

End of June, Butler, a veteran Australian diplomat who has served the U.N. as nuclear weapons inspector, presented a brief to the governments at the U.N. as part of MPI's ongoing project to ensure implementation of agreements under the NPT. ➡

While he was preparing to have talks with fellow diplomats at the U.N. headquarters in New York on disarmament actions last week, MPI founder Senator Douglas Roche of Canada embarked on a world tour for the same reason.

Before his departure to Europe, Russia, China and India, Roche, who has been nominated for Nobel Prize, noted in a statement that landmines and cluster munitions had been banned by treaty "once people realised the humanitarian consequences of their continued use."

He went on: "There is now similar realisation of the threat to humanity, not just if nuclear weapons are used, but by the threat of use, their possession and their proliferation."

For his part, Krieger admires his Canadian counterpart's efforts for nuclear disarmament and peace, but, at the same time, he is wary of the consequences of actions that the U.S. Congress and the administration might take in the coming days.

"It's a huge problem for the U.S. to continue seeking domination in the world," he told IPS. In his view, the policymakers in Washington must realise that the security of the U.S. does not lie in increasing the military budget, but in cutting it substantially.

"The increase [in spending] on nuclear weapons would send a message to the world is that the U.S. is not serious about nuclear disarmament," he concluded. (IPS | June 6, 2011) ◆

Picture on page 94: David Krieger

Original: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=55938>

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For more than a decade, the U.S. nuclear policy establishment has cracked down on Iran and North Korea, the first for allegedly trying to develop nuclear weapons and the second for its avowed nuclear programme, but has not given a clear signal about when it would be ready to destroy its own huge nuclear arsenal.

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UN to Host World Summit on Nuclear Safety

BY THALIF DEEN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The severity of the recent nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant in Japan has prompted U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to convene a high-level meeting of world leaders on a politically-sensitive issue: nuclear security.

"We have to reevaluate nuclear risks and nuclear safety in response to the disaster in Japan," he told reporters Wednesday.

The meeting, scheduled to take place during the upcoming session of the General Assembly on Sep. 22, is expected to focus on strengthening the global nuclear safety regime and ensuring maximum nuclear safety standards.

"This requires in-depth analysis on design, construction, training, quality assurance systems and stringent regulatory mechanisms," the secretary-general said.

This exercise, he said, will also need a serious global debate on broader issues, including assessment of the costs, risks and benefits of nuclear energy and stronger connections between nuclear safety, nuclear security and nuclear non-proliferation.

The damage to the nuclear power plant in Japan, which followed a devastating earthquake and tsunami last March, resulted in radioactive contamination threatening lives and causing a mass exodus of residents in and around the neighbourhood.

The last major nuclear accident was the 1986 Chernobyl disaster, whose radioactive fallout caused a catastrophe in several European countries, with the most affected being Belarus, the Ukraine and Russia.

The United Nations has placed the Fukushima accident on par with Chernobyl.

Asked if the high-level meeting will bolster the global campaign for nuclear disarmament, John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, told IPS that nuclear disarmament will be at least implicitly on the agenda for the September meeting on nuclear safety.

He said the meeting will seek to prevent Fukushima-type nuclear reactor disasters, and focus on nuclear security and the prevention of non-state extremist acquisition of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

"That's because many non-nuclear weapon states are resistant to the imposition of more onerous standards on safety and security while a two-tier system persists in which only a few countries have nuclear weapons and nationally-controlled nuclear fuel production facilities," Burroughs said.

Of course, he said, all will support safety standards that really make sense. "No country wants to experience a Fukushima or Chernobyl-type catastrophe," he said.

But enthusiasm for global regulation diminishes when sought within a highly discriminatory system, he pointed out.

The secretary-general, who has consistently maintained that "a world free of nuclear weapons is one of my top priorities," said he has called for a U.N. system-wide study on the implications of the accident at Fukushima.

The study will also look at how the international community can better deal with the emerging nexus between natural disasters and nuclear safety. ☺

He said the September meeting will build on next month's ministerial conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna that will address measures needed to enhance nuclear safety in the wake of Fukushima.

While supporting the IAEA initiative, he said, the high-level meeting in September will also provide a bridge to the second Nuclear Security Summit next year in Seoul.

He also pointed out that 2011 marks the 15th year of the Moscow Declaration on Nuclear Safety and Security. The Moscow summit took place in April 1996, on the tenth anniversary of Chernobyl.

"Twenty-five years after Chernobyl and in the aftermath of Fukushima, I believe it is high time to take a hard look at the issue of strengthening nuclear safety and security," Ban told reporters Wednesday.

Asked about the relationship between nuclear security and nuclear disarmament, M.V. Ramana, an associate research scholar with the Programme on Science and Global Security at

Princeton University, told IPS, "I do not think that an emphasis on nuclear security alone - i.e., just ensuring that fissile material isn't stolen - will accelerate nuclear disarmament."

He said it is the elimination of nuclear weapons on a non-discriminatory universal basis that is needed.

"However, that process will likely be set back by any large scale expansion of nuclear power," said Ramana, author of several books, including "Prisoner of the Nuclear Dream" and "Bombing Bombay? Effects of Nuclear Weapons and a Case Study of a Hypothetical Explosion".

"I personally think that safety and security are quite different," Ramana said. Both are important, but they have to be engaged with separately.

Further, in the context of nuclear safety, "I think it is very important to involve people who are independent of nuclear establishments around the world in the process, in addition to organisations like the IAEA."

Ban said he has been telling world leaders that while the responsibility for nuclear safety rests with individual governments, they should revisit their nuclear safety standards. "All this strengthening of nuclear standards should be coordinated and done at the national and international level," he said.

He also highlighted the nexus between security and safety.

"We have to be very careful, very vigilant, against any possibility that nuclear materials or nuclear technology could be slipped into the hands of the wrong person, wrong country or wrong organisation, namely terrorist groups, or any country whose regime would not be committed to international peace and security," Ban said.

"That is why I am raising this issue very seriously," he declared. (IPS | May 11, 2011) ◆

Original: <http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=55429>

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Post-Osama, Pakistan May Be More Unrelenting on FMCT

BY SHASTRI RAMACHANDARAN*



NEW DELHI (IDN) - An early resolution of the prolonged deadlock, in which the United Nations Conference on Disarmament is trapped for over two years, appears unlikely given the prevalent mood in Pakistan.

In the aftermath of the United States forces killing Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, about an hour's drive from Islamabad, Pakistan is bound to take a harder line in multilateral forums on issues that impact its security and strategic interests. Such a hardening, reinforced by Pakistan's India-centric security concerns, would be conspicuously manifest on issues perceived to be driven by "a West-scripted agenda in UN forums, such as disarmament and non-proliferation".

One such issue, which Pakistan has resolutely stonewalled thus far, is the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) under tortuous negotiation in the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD), and the conclusion of which, in Islamabad's view, would put India in a vastly more advantageous position vis-à-vis Pakistan.

Boxed into a corner by the international community as a "haven for terrorists" and the fount of both regional and global terrorism, a battered Pakistan, seething at the humiliation of foreign forces transgressing its sovereignty, is in no mood at present to strike compromises when it comes to larger global concerns.

Pakistan seems determined to continue obstructing any movement towards wrapping up the FMCT in its present form, as this does not take into account India's existing stockpile of fissile material. This was made clear, both on and off the record, by a number of high-ranking government officials and functionaries in state-funded institutions, in the course of interactions with this writer during his recent visit to Pakistan.

Even before U.S. forces struck to liquidate bin Laden, Pakistan had been blocking a consensus on FMCT -- a key item on the agenda of the 65-nation Conference on Disarmament for over a decade now.

The FMCT acquired a new urgency with the declaration of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, in April 2009, highlighting the need for an early agreement to halt production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

It gained further impetus with President Barack Obama's Prague Speech in April 2010, wherein he sought the international community's support to negotiate and conclude an FMCT. In its Nuclear Posture Review (2010), the U.S. explicitly committed itself to negotiating a verifiable FMCT.

The Session of the UN Disarmament Commission in 2010 made it an issue of greater priority by urging early commencement of negotiations on FMCT in the CD. Thereafter, in May 2010, the NPT review conference exhorted Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) to declare and place their fissile material which are no longer required for military purposes under the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In spite of these diverse moves that should have collectively hastened efforts and spurred the CD on to conclude the FMCT, there was startlingly no progress. In fact, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed his frustration at the CD being made hostage to India-Pakistan nuclear gamesmanship, though he took care to avoid naming them. His warning of the CD's credibility being at stake came in January 2011.

However, that did not serve to prod Pakistan in the required direction along with the rest of the members in the CD. Pakistan's opposition to FMCT, as articulated by its representative to the CD, Zamir Akram, is that, in its present form, it is discriminatory and would enable India to increase its stockpile of nuclear warheads.

Pakistani officials this writer spoke to in Islamabad in the third week of April 2011 are one in the view that the FMCT will allow India a free hand in stockpiling fissile material. "Existing stocks should be reduced and gradually eliminated. The first step towards that is to reckon with existing stocks," said a highly placed diplomat who is conversant with the issue but unwilling to go on record. ☺

An overwhelming majority of CD members are said to view Pakistan's rejection of the FMCT negotiations as being compelled by its need to match India's strategic advantage; and, they feel this is a bilateral problem, between India and Pakistan, to which the larger issue of non-proliferation and disarmament should not be subordinated.

However, Islamabad's position is that every country decides on such issues on the basis of its national interest. "If Pakistan's interests are ill-served, it is immaterial whether one or more countries are involved; and, whether the country is far or near. The point is the principle, and the principle cannot be discriminatory," said an expert on disarmament at The Institute of Strategic Studies (ISS) in Islamabad.

The principle Pakistan invokes may be found in what is known as the Shannon Mandate of 1995, Canadian Ambassador Gerald Shannon's report proposing an ad hoc committee which would allow delegations to raise issues relating to future and present stocks of fissile material and managing such material.

Pakistan backed the Shannon Mandate as it would help deal with the question of past fissile stocks. Precisely for that reason, the FMCT has not moved beyond where it was in 1995 -- and is unlikely to unless either Pakistan goes along with the rest of the CD or FMCT is taken out of the CD.

"It is not a situation of Pakistan versus the rest as portrayed," Pakistan's Acting Foreign Secretary Muhammad Haroon Shaukat told this journalist on April 23, 2011 in Islamabad. "There are others, too, with us," he added.

Shaukat explained that Pakistan has a stake in stability in South Asia and CD is facing a fundamental threat. "Maybe, India, too, has similar concerns. In the CD, Pakistan is positive on South Asian stability and would be guided by consensus on stability and security of Pakistan as well," he stated.

He declined to be drawn into discussing Pakistan's guiding considerations, saying, "I have given a generic answer. Do not push me further," said Shaukat.

"There cannot be different yardsticks for different countries. No double standards are permissible," declared Pakistan's former foreign secretary Riaz Hussain Khokhar. A former ambassador to China and High Commissioner to India, Khokhar was firm that Pakistan should not change its position. "We

should remain steadfast: existing stockpiles must be taken into account or countries like Pakistan will be at a disadvantage."

III-Advised

He felt that the UN Secretary-General would be ill-advised to take FMCT out of the CD. Pakistani diplomats point out that "Cut-off" implies only a halt in future production and this cannot be endorsed. "The CD's effort does not take into account existing stocks of fissile material. As a result, it pushes Pakistan into an inferior position vis-à-vis India, which has much larger stocks of weapons-grade uranium," observed Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, ISS Director-General.

A former ambassador to China and the U.S., and High Commissioner to India, Qazi also served as the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Iraq and, later, the Sudan.

He pointed out that the U.S. signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement with India. "It has allowed India to receive fuel from the U.S. for peaceful purposes, which gives India the option to direct the stockpile for weapons purposes."

If the CD wants to end the stalemate, Qazi told this correspondent, "The way forward is to take existing stocks of fissile material into account." He stressed that the FMCT, as it stands, does not take account of existing stocks. India has more stocks and this puts Pakistan at a disadvantage in the context of India's nuclear cooperation agreement with the U.S."

Across the community of officials, diplomats and strategic affairs experts, the view is that Pakistan is being pushed into a corner, and by the U.S. leaning in favour of India. "The U.S. wants to maintain its monopoly, and allow stockpiles only to those countries which are in line with its policy. Naturally, the pressure is on Pakistan," Malik Qasim Mustafa Khokhar, Research Fellow at the ISS, Islamabad, told this correspondent.

Khokhar who specializes on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation is convinced that the UN Secretary-General is trying to move the issue out of the CD. "The reason is the CD functions on the consensus system. And, if they take it out of the CD, there are chances of forcing the issue through majority vote." ➡

Khokhar says Pakistan has made it known that if FMCT is taken out of CD, it would be difficult for Pakistan to cooperate with the international community on disarmament. "China supports Pakistan's position, and so do others," he added.

He says FMCT covers additional stocks and "CD is trying to cap future production of fissile material. The Pakistani position is: include existing stockpile, and proportionately, allow us to have a stockpile".

"For the balance required to maintain deterrence between India and Pakistan, we need to take into account both India's nuclear weapons and fissile material stockpiles. We cannot agree to freeze existing inequality, when it directly threatens our security." This is the bottom line for Pakistan, articulated by Khokhar but endorsed by everyone else.

*The writer, who recently travelled to Pakistan at the invitation of the Government of Pakistan, is a former Editor of Sunday Mail and has worked with leading newspapers in India and abroad. He was Senior Editor & Writer with China Daily and Global Times in Beijing. For nearly 20 years before that he was a senior editor with The Times of India and The Tribune. Besides commentaries on foreign affairs and politics, he has written books, monographs, reports and papers. He is co-editor of the book 'State of Nepal'. (IDN-InDepthNews/12.05.2011) ◆

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The Ten Bring Nuke Abolition Back on Global Agenda

BY RAMESH JAURA*

BERLIN - Heart-rending images of Fukushima disaster and a tidal wave of popular uprisings in the Arab world threatened to blur the compelling need for a nuke liberated Middle East as part of a world free of nuclear weapons. A transcontinental 10-nation initiative seeks to jolt the international community out of a mind numbing stupor.

While pointing to "the danger to humanity posed by the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons and the necessity to address increased proliferation risks, to decrease nuclear arsenals, to strengthen nuclear security and to improve nuclear safety," foreign ministers of 10 non-nuclear states have pledged "to promote the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East."

In doing so, short of stressing the critical role of the global civil society, they have indirectly endorsed key aspects of the Peace Proposal 2011 launched in January by Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist organisation based in Tokyo, with some 12 million members around the world.

Complete elimination of all atomic weapons -- and not just nuclear disarmament -- with the civil society playing a significant role, is the only absolute guarantee against the threat of nuclear weapons, the Peace Proposal stated.

Though the ten foreign ministers, who conferred on April 30 in Berlin, disregard the critical role of the global civil society, they have vowed to "actively promote disarmament and non-proliferation education, based on our conviction that education is a powerful tool for mobilizing further disarmament and non-proliferation efforts globally by enhancing awareness and understanding among our citizens."

The Ten say: "We welcome and support the renewed call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons as the only guarantee against their use or threat of use, and consequently see the need to further reduce the numbers of

nuclear weapons as well as their role in security strategies, concepts, doctrines and policies."

Referring to security strategies that buttress nuclear doctrines, Ikeda argued in his Peace Proposal: "It is necessary to thoroughly challenge the theory of deterrence upon which nuclear weapons possession is predicated: the assumption that the maintenance of security is realized through a balance of terror."

In their 'Berlin Statement', the foreign ministers of Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates reaffirm their "joint intention to work towards achieving nuclear disarmament and a strengthening of the international non-proliferation regime," by working on "specific actions aimed at reinforcing states' export control systems which play an important non-proliferation role."

The foreign ministers of ten countries stretching across continents and regional blocks refer to the joint statement adopted at their first meeting in New York on September 22, 2010, on sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The meeting was co-hosted by the foreign ministers of Australia and Japan.

Ikeda pointed out in his Peace Proposal that "enduring regional stability in the Middle East is unthinkable without denuclearization," and called for creating "conditions propitious to negotiations for a Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction including nuclear weapons".

Such conditions must be created without any loss of time, he said, adding: "It is . . . far from certain that the international conference on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East agreed to by last year's NPT Review Conference will in fact be held as scheduled in 2012, much less that it will produce a successful outcome."

The uncertainty about the 2012 conference on the Middle East underlines the need for further efforts to create the conditions for dialogue, said Ikeda. ☞



nuclear disarmament."

Apparently sharing SGI president's concern, the Ten assure: "We intend to promote the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free-zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among states of the region concerned, and in accordance with the 1999

Guidelines of the UN Disarmament Commission, convinced that such zones strengthen global as well as regional peace and security, reinforce the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute to the achievement of

"In this respect," they underline "the crucial need to promote the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in line with pending requirements for the organization in 2012 of the special conference agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference."

The landmark NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was convened in May 2010 at the UN headquarters in New York.

The NPT, which came into force in 1970, is one of the United Nations' main set of rules regarding nuclear disarmament and the prevention of proliferation. 190 states are party to the treaty, but four nations that are known or believed to possess nuclear weapons -- India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel -- have not endorsed it.

The Ten feel "encouraged by recent developments, in particular the entry-into-force of the U.S.- Russian New START Treaty and the stated intention of both parties to continue the process of reductions, stressing the need to include all categories of nuclear weapons."

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle was, however, more specific in his opening remarks at the Berlin conference: "We expect the nuclear weapon states to honour the commitments they entered into at the NPT conference last May."

And: "We would welcome a faster pace in nuclear disarmament and a reduced role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines. The world must not lose the momentum that has carried disarmament since President Barack Obama's speech in Prague (in April 2009)."

Westerwelle applauded Russia and the U.S. for returning to the negotiating table. "This is good news for all of us," he said. "Bilaterally, the process seems well on track. Multilaterally, we seem closer to derailing."

Australian Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd appeared to share this view when he pointed out that one year after the latest review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, "We have seen very little practical work done."

But the Ten are optimistic, as Westerwelle put it, that "in the weeks and months to come, our initiative can be instrumental to restart multilateral negotiations. Together we can better overcome entrenched positions, especially at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva."

The joint effort reflects "the importance of an issue that has a direct bearing on the future of humankind," said Mexican Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa commenting the initiative launched in Berlin.

The Berlin Statement says, the consensus reached in May 2010 by the NPT Review Conference on the forward-looking Action plan proves that cooperative, multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation efforts can work if there is the necessary political will.

"Our objective is to maintain the momentum of that successful outcome and to expedite its implementation," the Ten state. With that purpose they have adopted four concrete proposals for action on key elements of the Action plan. ➡

Image: Ten foreign ministers with entourage | Credit: German Foreign Office

Fissile Material

1. Halting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons by agreeing on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT): Such a treaty would curb the risk of future nuclear arms races and reduce the danger of non-state actors getting such material into their hands. It would complement ongoing efforts to secure vulnerable nuclear material across the globe.

FMCT is "an indispensable step on the way towards a nuclear weapon free world," the Ten say, adding: "We are deeply disappointed that one year after the NPT Review Conference, which called in its Action plan for the immediate negotiation of an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), this has not been implemented."

Without naming any countries blocking an accord, the Berlin Statement acknowledges that the security requirements of all states must be addressed in the course of negotiations, but underlines that "there is no reason and no excuse for further delay."

The signatories of the Statement led by Australia, Japan and Germany have initiated intensive efforts to overcome the current deadlock -- caused mainly by Pakistan -- in Geneva Conference on Disarmament.

"However, if the CD, in its 2011 substantive session, remains unable to find agreement on launching FMCT negotiations, we will ask the UN General Assembly, which is already seized of the matter under agenda item 162 entitled 'Follow-up

to the high-level meeting held on 24 September 2010: Revitalizing the work of the Conference on Disarmament and taking forward multilateral disarmament negotiations', to address the issue and consider ways to proceed with the aim of beginning negotiations," the Ten announce.

CTBT

2. Entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature 15 years ago: The foreign ministers call on all States which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT.

"We are encouraged by the commitment expressed by the United States and by Indonesia to ensure ratification of the Treaty. We believe that an effective end to nuclear testing will enhance and not weaken our national as well as global security and would significantly bolster the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime," notes the Berlin Statement.

"We are committed to universalizing the Treaty and to promoting its early entry-into-force. Utilizing various diplomatic opportunities we will urge states that have not done so to sign and ratify the Treaty and promptly complete the steps necessary to bring it into force. We are committed to support the Preparatory Commission of the CTBT-Organization in setting up an effective monitoring and verification system and commend the work already accomplished," the foreign ministers pledge.

Transparency and Accountability

3. Transparency and accountability in the nuclear disarmament process: At the May 2010 NPT Review Conference, the nuclear weapon states committed themselves to speed up progress on tangible steps leading to nuclear disarmament, and to report back to NPT member states. As a confidence-building measure, the Conference encouraged the nuclear weapon states to agree as soon as possible on a standard reporting form.

Foreign ministers of 10 nations say: "We are developing a draft of a standard reporting form which could be used by the nuclear weapon states in meeting that commitment. We will invite the nuclear weapon states to examine our proposal at their Paris meeting in June (2011)."

The proposal sets out the Ten's expectations regarding information that they would like to see all states possessing nuclear weapons provide. "We believe that reporting on the basis of a standardized format, as encouraged in the Action plan adopted by the Review Conference, would build international confidence and help to create a climate conducive to further disarmament. We consider it essential to increase transparency and accountability in the nuclear disarmament process." ↻

Entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) opened for signature 15 years ago:

Compliance

4. Verifying states' compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations: The Berlin Statement underlines that an effective non-proliferation regime is a joint security interest of all nations. Accordingly, the Ten recognise the important role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in verifying states' compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

They highlight the fact that with the entry into force of the IAEA Additional Protocols for the United Arab Emirates in December 2010 and for Mexico in March 2011, all countries belonging to the Ten's cross-regional initiative implement Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocols, which they regard as the necessary verification standard.

The foreign ministers call on all states, in line with the Action Plan of the May 2010 NPT Review Conference, to conclude and bring into force Additional Protocols in order to give the IAEA the additional authority it needs credibly to deter and detect violations of non-proliferation obligations.

The Ten add: "We will continue to advocate bilaterally and multilaterally for the universal application of the Additional Protocol in our respective regions. We offer to share experiences and best practices in the conclusion and implementation of the Additional Protocol with all interested parties, and are ready to provide legal, and other, assistance."

The Ten will take stock of progress on Berlin proposals at their meeting on sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September 2011. Turkey will host the next ministerial meeting of the initiative in 2012. (IDN-InDepthNews/April 30, 2011) ◆

Heart-rending images of Fukushima disaster and a tidal wave of popular uprisings in the Arab world threatened to blur the compelling need for a nuke liberated Middle East as part of a world free of nuclear weapons. A transcontinental 10-nation initiative seeks to jolt the international community out of a mind numbing stupor.

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Amid Turmoil, a Nuke-Free Middle East May Be in Jeopardy

BY THALIF DEEN

NEW YORK (IPS) - A proposed international conference on a nuclear weapons-free Middle East, tentatively scheduled for 2012, may be in jeopardy amid the growing political turmoil sweeping across the Arab world - and Israel's fears of negative fallout on its own security.

The proposal for the long-outstanding meeting was endorsed by 189 member states at the Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) held at the United Nations in May last year.

The Israeli government, while criticising the outcome document of that Review Conference, left the door open for participation in the 2012 conference.

But the political uprisings in the Arab world, including the ouster of the Israeli-friendly Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, have triggered expressions of Israeli concern - specifically its own security in an increasingly hostile environment.

Israel has privately expressed the view that its undeclared nuclear weapons are the best guarantee of its security. The changing political environment, including a strongly pro-Palestinian government in Cairo, may justify its refusal even to participate in the conference aimed at making the region nuclear weapons-free.

Hillel Schenker, co-editor of the Jerusalem-based Palestine-Israel Journal, told IPS it is clear the conference cannot succeed unless both Israeli and Iranian representatives participate, "and this requires a careful, sophisticated approach".

While Israel is an undeclared nuclear power in the Middle East, Iran is being dubbed as a would-be nuclear power, according to experts in the region.

Asked about the impact of the ongoing Arab social revolutions, Schenker said the sense of uncertainty and the apparent end of the status quo only serve to reinforce the need to move forward towards a Middle Eastern regime for security and cooperation.

He said the movement towards the proposed conference now depends on the appointment of a U.N. envoy, who will then meet with the relevant governments and representatives of concerned civil society in the region, to set the format and shape of the conference, and to determine its location.

A sceptical Peter Weiss, president of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy and a member of the executive committee of Americans for Peace Now, told IPS, "My own view, as of now, is that little of consequence is likely to come from it, because Israel will be the last country in the world to give up its nukes."

"The Israeli government will probably not attend or, if it does, will pose conditions for getting rid of its nukes which they know the other countries can't accept," he added.

Weiss, who contributed an article to a special issue of the Palestine-Israel Journal - "A Nuclear-Free Zone in the Middle East: Realistic or Idealistic?" - said the fact that the issue was published at all - besides public conferences in Jerusalem and London - shows there is some movement in Israel on the topic.

He said four or five years ago, the subject of Israel's nuclear weapons was completely taboo.

Meanwhile, the United States, which traditionally throws a protective arm around Israel, has already laid down a condition in advance of the pre-conference preparations.

Last July, when Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu met with U.S. President Barack Obama, he was assured that the 2012 conference would not single out Israel.

A White House statement also insisted the conference would only take place "if all countries feel confident they can attend, and that any efforts to single out Israel will make the prospects of convening such a conference unlikely." ↻

Schenker told IPS it is clear that while asking Israel to sign the NPT and open its nuclear facilities for inspection may be one of the end goals of the process, it is a non-starter at this stage if people want to convene an inclusive conference with any chance of success in 2012.

The basis for a successful conference in 2012 is a two-track process, based upon the Arab Peace Initiative, which was adopted at the Arab League Summit meeting in Beirut in 2002, and has until now been reaffirmed every successive meeting, he said.

He said one track should discuss ways to advance towards Israeli- Palestinian and Israeli-Arab comprehensive peace, and the other track should discuss ways to advance towards a Middle Eastern regional security and cooperation regime, which will include a nuclear and mass destruction weapons free zone.

Asked whether the nuclear meltdown in Japan would have an impact on the upcoming conference, Schenker said it only serves to heighten awareness about the need for creating a Middle Eastern regional security regime which deals with nuclear questions.

While the Israeli print and electronic media is usually focused primarily on internal issues, or issues which relate directly to the country, the drama in Japan, and particularly at the Fukushima reactor, has been in the headlines for weeks.

Even Netanyahu declared that he was less enthusiastic about nuclear energy than he was before, Schenker added.

Schenker said he has personally participated in a number of relevant initiatives linked to the topic, including a meeting of concerned Israelis, mainly academics and security people, convened by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (close to the German Social Democratic Party), which discussed possible formulas that could enable Israel to participate in the 2012 conference.

Secondly, a civil society CSCME (Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Middle East) initiative in Germany in January 2011, which took place parallel to the "Jasmine Revolution" in Tunisia, with the participation of representatives from Israel, Iran, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Kuwait.

And thirdly, the Horizon 2012 conference project on the Japanese Peace Boat in the Mediterranean Sea, in March 2011, with civil society participants from Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the United Nations and European representatives of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

He said an Iranian accepted the invitation but was unable to participate because he did not obtain the necessary visa from the Greek embassy in Tehran.

The goal of all of these meetings was to discuss formulas to enable a successful conference in 2012. (IPS | April 28, 2011) ◆

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This compilation is purported to make accessible in print all articles that were written and disseminated through the network of IPS and that of partners between April 2011 and March 2012 as part of the SGI-IPS project.

We hope this compilation will enable interested readers -- and perhaps researchers too -- to inform themselves of some important developments leading up to the landmark 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Written by professional journalists drawn from diverse social and political backgrounds, these articles record ongoing developments related to nuclear abolition and provide an insight -- from the viewpoint of professional journalists -- into what goes into making things happen before they happen.

These articles are reproduced in the chronological order -- the latest first -- as these are freely available online at www.ipsnews.net/news/projects/nuclear-weapons and www.nuclearabolition.net.

While all articles continue to be obtainable on the Internet, this compilation in print or as .pdf offers a short cut sans World Wide Web, handy anywhere and any time that suits the reader's convenience.

We hope you will enjoy reading these articles -- and will welcome your feedback.

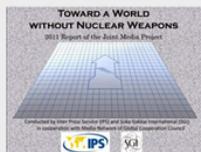
Thanks due to the support of project director, Mr. Katsuhiro Asagiri, president of IPS Japan, and IPS editors and journalists as well as of those outside the network of IPS, we are in a position to offer you these articles in the form of this compilation.

Profound thanks also to SGI for the close and fruitful cooperation.

Ramesh Jaura | Global Coordinator and Editor-in-Charge



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Nuclear Abolition News | IPS

By JASMIN RAMSEY*

WASHINGTON (IPS) - The one agreement that talks between Iran and the P5+1 – the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council plus Germany – produced after a "technical meeting" in Istanbul was a decision to schedule more talks.

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By SIDNEY D. DRELL and JAMES E. GOODY*

Less than a year after the first atomic bombings, Albert Einstein warned, "Our world faces a crisis as yet unperceived by those possessing power to make great decisions for good or evil. The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything save our modes of thinking and we thus drift toward unparalleled catastrophe." Despite Einstein's warning, this drift continued over the next four decades, prior to the



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