

**New Canadian Action  
in the Second Nuclear Age**

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**Address to  
Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons**

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The Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons faces new challenges in the Second Nuclear Age, and nuclear weapons abolitionists must soon decide how they will respond.

The year 2005 has not been, to put it mildly, a good year for nuclear disarmament. The Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, in May, failed to agree on a single substantive item. The document issued by world leaders at the Summit marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations was shorn of any reference to disarmament or non-proliferation. An attempt by a number of States, including Canada, to jump-start nuclear disarmament negotiations via a resolution at the U.N. First Committee crashed on take-off. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is paralyzed. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty is stagnating.

Canadians seem blithely unaware of the increasing dangers of nuclear weapons. They appear not to have heard the warning of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has foreseen the consequences of a nuclear catastrophe in one of the great cities of the world. “Tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people would perish in an instant, and many more would die from exposure to radiation,” he said. The consequences for the global economy would be catastrophic.

What do Canadians need to learn? What should the CNANW be helping the public – and the politicians – to understand?

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When the first atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, it could hardly have been imagined that sixty years later more than 30,000 nuclear weapons would be in existence. The Cold War is long over, but half the world population still lives under a government brandishing nuclear weapons. More than \$12 trillion has so far been spent on these instruments of mass murder, which is a theft from the poorest people in the world. The present nuclear weapons crisis has, in fact, led to the opening of the Second Nuclear Age.

First, we must understand the dimensions of the crisis. The longstanding nuclear weapons states, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and China, are making nuclear weapons permanent instruments of their military doctrines. India, Pakistan and Israel have joined the “nuclear club.” North Korea has tried to get into it. Iran is suspected of trying to acquire the capacity to convert nuclear fuels for peaceful purposes into nuclear weapons. NATO is maintaining U.S. nuclear weapons on the soil of six European countries, and the U.S. is preparing “reliable replacement” warheads with new military capabilities.

The U.S. and Russia have put new emphasis on the war-fighting role of nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapons states refuse to give up their nuclear arsenals, and feign surprise that other nations, seeing that nuclear weapons have become the currency of power in the modern world, are trying to acquire them. So are terrorists. No major city in the world is safe from the threat of a nuclear attack. The risk of accidents is multiplying daily. All these are the characteristics of the Second Nuclear Age.

Thinking that the nuclear weapons problem went away with the end of the Cold War, much of the public is oblivious to the new nuclear dangers. In the case of many politicians, they don't even know that they *don't* know about this greatest threat to human security the world has ever faced. They do not recognize the continued existence of enormous stocks of nuclear weapons, most with a destructive power many times greater than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is not understood.

Nuclear weapons are instruments of pure evil. A nuclear explosion, either by design or accident, would kill massive numbers of people, create international chaos, and cripple the world economy.

Nuclear weapons are devoid of the slightest shred of moral legitimacy. Prominent jurists consider their use illegal in any possible

circumstance. The nuclear weapons states are deliberately undermining the rule of law in maintaining them.

It staggers the imagination to consider what the enormous sums spent on nuclear weapons could have done for education, health, and other requisites for the development of peoples everywhere. The United States spends \$110 million *every day* on the maintenance of its nuclear forces and seeking money from Congress for new ones. This is driving world military spending, which, in 2004, exceeded \$1 trillion, a 20 percent increase in two years.

Governments have thrown democracy out the window in their zeal for armaments. Nowhere have citizens clamoured for nuclear weapons. Rather, governments have either imposed them or manipulated public opinion to get people to quietly accept them. A 2002 poll of citizens in 11 countries, including the U.S. and Canada, showed that 86 percent of people either strongly agree (72 percent) or agree to some extent (14 percent) that all nations should sign a treaty to ban all nuclear weapons. Governments are ignoring this opinion; the public, except for core groups of activists, is not actively demanding that governments move toward such a treaty. Instead, the public is saying, we should cure the worst of poverty and restore a clean environment.

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It is in times of crisis that the nuclear disarmament movement has been strongest. This was true in the 1980s when there were massive protests against NATO's deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe. Today, the Abolition 2000 movement is gaining strength, and the number of expert non-governmental activists in dialogue with governments is growing. Solid work is being done in laying the political, legal, and technical foundation for a nuclear weapons-free world. This work appears to be overshadowed by the magnitude of the nuclear crisis, but the quality of the work gives hope that the world, once awakened, can move beyond a repetition of the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The framework for a nuclear weapons-free world is coming into view even as the daily news seems discouraging. It is perhaps paradoxical that a light can be seen, by those with vision, even in the darkness of the moment.

My experience tells me that it is reasonable to hope for, and to work for, a world beyond Hiroshima. As a parliamentarian, diplomat and educator, I have worked on nuclear disarmament issues for more than 30 years. I understand the lassitude and obstinacy of governments all too well. But I also see the developments taking place in civil society where

increasing numbers of highly informed and deeply committed activists are cooperating with like-minded governments to get things done to improve human security. The Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty, the International Criminal Court, and the new surge of government commitment to Official Development Assistance have come about because of civil society's input into government machinery.

We stand on the threshold of the construction of a viable plan for a nuclear weapons-free world resulting from the active cooperation of knowledgeable leaders of civil society working with those politicians and officials of like-minded governments who truly want to move forward.

The Middle Powers Initiative – a creature of the CNANW and thus you should take pride in its accomplishments – is now moving forward with a new “Article VI Forum” to stimulate the deliberating and negotiating processes and thus revitalize the disarmament fora. The Forum will conduct high-level meetings of diplomats, decision-makers, and experts; undertake related briefings, consultations, and missions to capitals; and produce and disseminate publications. The aim is to advance international cooperation to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to fulfill existing commitments to achieve the reduction and elimination of nuclear arsenals.

On October 3, 2005 at the United Nations, New York, twenty-eight States launched the Forum to undertake work on examining the legal, technical, and political requirements for a nuclear weapons-free world.

The participating States at the initial meeting were: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Germany, Holy See, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Samoa, South African, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey.

MPI has thrown out a challenge to these like-minded States:

Instead of accepting the roadblock thrown up by the nuclear weapons States, a group of like-minded States could now start work to identify the legal, political and technical requirements for the elimination of nuclear weapons. This work should start at first among like-minded non-nuclear weapon States working in a non-combative atmosphere. The Article VI Forum could then follow, in subsequent meetings, a dual track consisting of informational and preparatory work for the development and implementation of the legal, political and technical elements, and the exploration of ways to start negotiations on disarmament steps leading to a nuclear weapons convention or a framework of instruments for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The Article VI Forum was endorsed by a number of the participating States as an excellent way to advance the nuclear disarmament agenda. A second meeting, March 1-4, 2006 at the Clingendael Institute, The Hague,

will specify steps that could be taken unilaterally, bilaterally, regionally, and/or multilaterally.

This work is by no means vague. It will build on the substantive work done at the NPT 2005 Review Conference even though that work was put back on the shelf because of the procedural breakdown. Main Committee I and its subsidiary body at the Review Conference recommended the following:

- NWS must stop nuclear sharing for military purposes under any kind of security arrangements. This is particularly applicable to the deployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in six European countries.
- The most effective way to prevent nuclear terrorism is the total elimination of nuclear weapons.
- International action to stop proliferation is essential.
- Building upon the decisions taken at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, including the “unequivocal undertaking” for total nuclear disarmament, no new nuclear weapons should be developed.
- Anticipating the early entry-into-force of the CTBT, the moratorium on testing should be maintained.
- The NWS must respect existing commitments regarding security assurances pending the conclusion of multilaterally negotiated legally binding security assurances for non-nuclear States Parties to the Treaty.
- Nuclear weapon free zones strengthen the non-proliferation regime and deserve to receive security assurances.

-- Assurances are not applicable if any beneficiary is in material breach of its own non-proliferation and disarmament obligations.

This is a coherent agenda for action. What it requires is a number of like-minded governments to lead the way.

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When the NPT Review Conference ended in failure, Canada said: “this is a Treaty worth fighting for and we are not prepared to stand idly by while its crucial supports are undermined.” Later, Canada said it is exploring the possibility of inviting NPT States Parties to a meeting in 2006 to “address the reform agenda and go some way to make up for the time wasted this May.” And, when the 2005 resolution to galvanize the First Committee was aborted, Canada said it retained the option of reintroducing the initiative to overcome the present impasse in which “the security interests of the many are being held hostage by the policies of a few.”

It is now necessary for the dedicated leaders of civil society in Canada to – very publicly – encourage the Canadian government to move along. Civil society has produced results before. Never doubt this. Canada’s rejection of the Iraq war and refusal to join the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense systems are important examples of the Canadian government responding to public opinion – once that opinion is aroused.

That is the job of the CNANW, its member organizations and all those groups across Canada who care deeply about the human security agenda.

New networks of concern and action must be formed. Civil society in all its manifestations – community, academic, religious, business, social – must be animated to speak out. If we do not, then the present efforts of the major nuclear powers to have their publics forget about the nuclear weapons issue will lead to even greater dangers.

The Canadian government, buttressed by an active civil society, can lead the way. The government should give full backing to the MPI Article VI Forum. It should lead like-minded States in developing the political, legal and technical requirements for a nuclear weapons-free world. The CNANW must help develop Canadian public opinion to support this constructive work for a saner, safer world.