

Address by Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.
Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
Annual General Meeting
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With this meeting, the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons enters a new era. I wish immediately to give my full support to the new Co-chairpersons, Robin Collins and Sylvie Lemieux, and the Steering Committee around them. Earl Turcotte has left large shoes for the new leadership team to fill. One cannot express sufficient thanks to all those who, over many years, have given, and continue to give, dedicated service to CNANW. One name, Bev DeLong, stands out, and I thank her on behalf of all in CNANW for her years of tireless and selfless service to building up this movement.

The change in CNANW leadership occurs at just the moment when the nuclear disarmament movement has reached a milestone. The entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has brought nuclear disarmament in from the outer cold of sterile discussions to a significant accomplishment in raising the global norm against the possession of nuclear weapons.

Let not the opposition of the nuclear weapons states to the new Treaty discourage us. This is indeed a milestone, for it shows that a growing number of nations and dedicated civil society activists can take resolute action against the prevailing military doctrine of nuclear deterrence. This dangerous doctrine has led to the present modernization of nuclear weapons. Any use of nuclear weapons will produce catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

The powerful do not recognize the new Treaty and refuse to be bound by it — yet. But the ground on which the nuclear weapons states stand is shifting. The

louder the nuclear weapons states protest against the efficacy of the new Treaty, the more they show their fear of its growing influence.

All great social movements go through three stages: first, the ideas for change are dismissed, often with ridicule, by the powerful; second, the powerful protest against change; third, the change is incorporated into public policy. All these stages happened with slavery, colonialism and apartheid. Climate change is going through this process. Nuclear weapons are next.

The new Treaty is a stepping stone to progress ahead. It strengthens the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which obliges all states to negotiate in good faith the elimination of nuclear weapons. It brings us closer to a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention, which would codify the institutional arrangements essential for accomplishing the prohibition and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons.

These challenges have been thrust upon us by the movement of history. A stabilized and safer world will come into better view as we move through perhaps the greatest transformation in human conduct in history – the journey from a culture of war to a culture of peace. It is beyond question that the journey has started.

We do not look for a perfect world by any means, but we want the seeds of nonviolence, planted in the earth by those who have already grasped nonviolence in all its aspects as a core value, to bloom. Human beings are not destined for war or extinction. The inventiveness of human beings, who every day are developing conflict resolution machinery to avoid war, is creating our own future, not passively abandoning ourselves to fate.

These are the ideas the CNANW is constantly putting before the Government of Canada. We accept the challenge to keep promoting these ideas.

The hope we express as our journey continues has never been more energizing.

