

# **Starting Work on a Global Ban on Nuclear Weapons**

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**Address to CNANW Round Table on a Global Ban on  
Nuclear Weapons**

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I would like to thank Isabelle Roy for her presentation on the opportunities and challenges of the first PrepComm for the 2015 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It is certainly the desire of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons to work closely with DFAIT in moving forward on the global agenda for nuclear disarmament. Of course, cooperation between DFAIT and civil society, desirable and potentially productive, is not enough by itself to produce a nuclear weapons-free world: it is the political process that determines public policies. The policies of the Government of Canada are under examination here today, and it is those policies that Canadian civil society leaders find wanting.

The DFAIT presentation today has reminded us that Canada's commitment to the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear energy) remains strong; that Canada is working with the 10-member Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative; that Canada wants to see the CTBT enter-into-force and negotiations started on the long-awaited FMCT; that Canada urges deeper cuts in the US and Russian stockpiles; that Canada is working through the Global Partnership to head off the possibility of terrorist

acquisition of nuclear materials.

These steps, even if implemented, are themselves not sufficient to achieve a nuclear weapons free world. They need to be linked into a framework to provide a comprehensive approach to achieving a nuclear weapons free world. Incrementalism is not leading the world to the elimination of nuclear weapons. A framework approach would address the doctrine that underlies the ongoing retention of nuclear weapons.

The nuclear weapons abolition mountain is high indeed and not easily scaled. But a historic shift in attitudes is underway. That shift is quickened by the recognition that the processes of globalization, which are elevating the standard of living for millions upon millions of people, should not be jeopardized by the squandering of billions of dollars on a weapon that has no operational utility.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and US President Barack Obama have tried to lead the way to a nuclear weapons free world. But some major States, Canada in their wake, are tepid in following, seeming fearful of the bold action required to actually free the world of nuclear weapons. Hoping that small steps will suffice in warding off nuclear disaster, they are resisting the call of history to finally put an end to the weapons that challenge all civilization.

To the good, the international community has expressed its deep concern at the “catastrophic humanitarian consequences” of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirmed that all states must comply with international humanitarian law. Also, the 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty put on the world agenda consideration of negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention or framework of reinforcing

instruments. For the first time, the concept of a global legal ban on all nuclear weapons has been validated.

But this advance is held back by the modernization programs of the nuclear weapons states, which retain their military doctrine of nuclear deterrence as a means of exerting power. Some reductions, yes; elimination, no, or at least, not yet. The nuclear powers claim that as long as nuclear weapons exist, they must maintain their arsenals. In the convoluted logic that drove the nuclear arms race during the Cold War, safety from nuclear weapons still depends on their deployment. Zero nuclear weapons is considered but a dream. The powerful defenders of nuclear weapons act as if not possessing nuclear weapons would be an unbearable deprivation. This continued obstinacy has created a new crisis for humanity because failure to seize this moment to start comprehensive negotiations will lead to the further spread, and possible use, of nuclear weapons. Iran is a case in point: diplomatic not military action is required to resolve the crisis of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon capability.

Both the opportunity and the crisis point to an inescapable fact of life in the 21st century: a two-class world in which the powerful aggrandize unto themselves nuclear weapons while proscribing their acquisition by other states is not sustainable. We face the danger of the proliferation of nuclear weapons because the powerful nuclear states have not used their authority to build a world law outlawing all nuclear weapons.

Yet there is hope that a way can be found to move forward together. The 2010 consensus NPT Final Document stated: “The conference calls on all nuclear weapons states to undertake concrete disarmament efforts and affirms that all states need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.” All

states – the strong and weak, the rich and poor – stand on common ground: the global need to reduce nuclear dangers by making it unlawful for anyone to use, deploy, produce, or proliferate nuclear weapons.

Support for starting work now is widespread. More than three-quarters of the countries of the world have voted for a United Nations resolution calling for the commencement of negotiations leading to the conclusion of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Support comes from across the geo-political spectrum, including from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and parts of Europe, and includes support from some of the countries possessing nuclear weapons, including China, India, Pakistan and North Korea. In fact, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons has noted that nations that support a ban make up 81 percent of the world's population. More support is coming from such important groups as the Inter-Action Council – 20 former Heads of State from key countries, including the United States, Canada, Norway, Germany, Japan and Mexico; and the December 2011 Summit of Leaders of Latin American and Caribbean States.

The CNANW urges Canada to join a core group of countries starting an informal process to build the framework for a nuclear weapons free world. This could include preparatory work on some of the elements of a framework, such as verification, national prohibition, exploring what would be required to ensure compliance with a global ban, advancing alternative security frameworks to nuclear deterrence, and further refining the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention to make it into a realistic working draft for actual negotiations. Such work would pave the way for eventual formal negotiations. This could be complemented by actions by like-minded States

to build political momentum for such negotiations through advocacy at the highest level, i.e. Head of State, or through establishing a full-scale international diplomatic conference as called for by numerous commissions.

The crucial point is to start preparatory work before the present window of opportunity closes. This is the approach taken by the Middle Powers Initiative, which proposes that like-minded states start preparatory work now, laying the groundwork for formal negotiations or at least for the UN Secretary-General to convene a diplomatic conference to start the process.

The Middle Powers Initiative has considerable experience in convening states to work together for nuclear disarmament. Over several years, MPI convened six meetings (New York, the Hague, Ottawa, Vienna, Dublin and Geneva) of the Article VI Forum, attended by the representatives of a total of 30 States.

Thus MPI will begin on May 1, 2012 in Vienna a new series of inter-governmental meetings called the Framework Forum. The objective of the Framework Forum will be to provide an ongoing, informal setting where the legal, technical, political, and institutional requisites for a nuclear weapons free world can be identified to build political momentum towards the commencement of formal negotiations for a legal ban on nuclear weapons.

Accordingly, MPI intends devote its efforts leading up to the 2015 NPT Review Conference to convening meetings of interested States to work on building the framework for a nuclear weapons-free world, including preparations for negotiation of a convention or framework of instruments for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Through such diplomatic meetings, MPI hopes to “normalize” the process of preparing for negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. MPI invites Canada to consider hosting such a meeting, and toward that end, accompanied by Ernie

Regehr, I met with Foreign Minister John Baird a few months ago.

DFAIT has so far taken the position that a universalized NPT, a fully in-force CTBT and a fully implemented FMCT are prerequisites before a Nuclear Weapons Convention should be considered. DFAIT should “modernize” its own position and recognize that the time has come to start preparatory work that could enable negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention to begin.

Consider what has happened. For the first time in Canadian history, a substantive motion on nuclear disarmament has been unanimously adopted by both the Senate and House of Commons. The motion endorsed Ban Ki-moon’s Five-Point Plan for Nuclear Disarmament and encouraged the Canadian government to “engage in negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.” It also called on the government “to deploy a major worldwide Canadian diplomatic initiative” for nuclear disarmament. The motion was followed up by All-Party Parliamentary Forums February 28, 2011 and December 5, 2011, which called for Canada to host a preparatory meeting of like-minded States. Joint motions in both chambers occur from time to time, but never has there been one that so substantively addressed the nuclear weapons problem. The will of Canada’s Parliament is very clear.

The motion was stimulated by 570 members of the Order of Canada, who have called on Canada to join a new worldwide campaign for international negotiations to achieve a Nuclear Weapons Convention. This action by prestigious Canadians cutting across all walks of life was also unprecedented.

So we at this forum today ask the government to listen to distinguished Canadians and to Parliament itself. Continued resistance to moving forward, even in a preparatory way, on constructing a global ban on nuclear weapons

will leave the government open to the charge of thwarting the will of the people. After all, is there any active movement in Canadian society putting pressure on the Canadian government not to start preparations for a nuclear weapons free world? The moment for action has arrived.