

Waking up the Public and Pushing Governments

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The warnings to the world about nuclear dangers are piling up.

-- U.N. Secretary-General Kof Annan says the world is “sleepwalking” toward a possible nuclear catastrophe.

-- Mohamed El Baradei, the 2005 Nobel Peace Laureate and Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, says the present trampling on nuclear safeguards is leading to a lawless world.

-- Hans Blix, head of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, says the 27,000 nuclear weapons in the world are “alarmingly high” and wants a World Summit to revive negotiations to outlaw all nuclear weapons.

We who are gathered at this great World Peace Forum must amplify the warnings we are receiving from distinguished world leaders. Let us send forth a clear message to the Government of Canada and indeed to all 188 states belonging to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty:

It is urgent to revive negotiations leading to the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons.

Much of the world wants to move in this direction. We must protest against those who would deny humanity its rightful demand to remove this nuclear Armageddon from our heads.

The message must be clear and straightforward:

Nuclear weapons are immoral, illegal, militarily useless and they are devoid of any intellectual standing. They are a curse upon humanity. They must be done away with.

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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 about 27,000 nuclear weapons would be in existence. The Cold War is long over, but half the world's population still lives under governments 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.

We must convey to the public 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 is trying 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. The U.S. is preparing

“reliable replacement” warheads with new military capabilities and undermining the Non-Proliferation Treaty with a nuclear technology deal with India.

Both 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.

But the public is asleep. Many of those who are awake are skeptical that nuclear disarmament can ever occur. It is the job of this World Peace Forum to demand action. We want to prevent another Hiroshima and another Nagasaki. We want to end the prospect of an Armageddon. We want to provide hope to the people of the world that the ultimate evil of nuclear weapons can be eliminated.

The public, for the most part, have forgotten what nuclear weapons are all about. The very idea of a nuclear weapon is to kill massively. U.N. studies have shown that the social and economic consequences of a nuclear war in a world intimately inter-connected in life-support systems would be

catastrophic. Put simply, people need to be reminded that nuclear weapons have no place in civilized international relations.

If we expect the Canadian government to play a role in pressing the nuclear weapons states to fulfil their legal obligations under the NPT, then civil society must speak out. 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 Defence systems are important examples of the Canadian government responding to public opinion – once that opinion is aroused.

Getting the truth out about nuclear weapons runs up against a wall of resistance. Denial. Obfuscation. Apathy. Moreover, with the Canadian government wanting to maintain good relations with the United States, there is a reluctance to interfere in the U.S. government's perceived security demands.

It is well known that U.S. security policies today are driven by the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. But nuclear weapons are not a solution to terrorism. In fact, the only guarantee against a terrorist attack with nuclear weapons is the complete elimination of all nuclear weapons. The security architecture for a nuclear weapons-free world must be built.

In such a complex field, Canada cannot perhaps do much alone. But working with like-minded states, it can do a lot to bridge the gulf between the nuclear and non-nuclear states. Canada's multilateral diplomatic work on the nuclear agenda in no way diminishes our sensitive inter-relationship with the U.S.'s genuine security needs. Canadian governments have long balanced the Canada-U.S. bilateral agenda and international work. In fact, it is necessary to inter-twine bilateral and multilateral work because the cities of Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal are just as much at risk of the physical and economic fallout of nuclear warfare as the cities of New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

The Middle Powers Initiative urges the Government of Canada to re-commit itself to multilateral diplomacy in dealing with the present crises in the nuclear disarmament agenda. Canada, which has long upheld the integrity of the NPT and developed a well-earned reputation for verification expertise, should instruct the appropriate Canadian diplomats to work closely with like-minded states in advancing practical proposals.

MPI suggests five priority measures: a Fissile Materials Cutoff Treaty; verification of reduction and elimination of nuclear arsenals; reduction of the operational status of nuclear forces; the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; and strengthening assurances of non-use of nuclear

weapons against non-weapon states. These measures would decrease risks of use, diminish the access of terrorists to catastrophic weapons and materials to build them, raise barriers to acquisition by additional states, generate support for strengthening the non-proliferation side of the regime and resolving regional crises, and create the pre-conditions for elimination of nuclear arms.

Governments today need to be pushed to sane policies for nuclear disarmament. We are here at the World Peace Forum to push them. We are here to provide hope to the world.