

ICNND Report – Civil Society Response

The pace is too slow. Implementation must be accelerated.

December 15, 2009

The International Commission on Non-proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament (ICNND), a joint initiative of the governments of Australia and Japan, has released a report entitled *Eliminating Nuclear Threats*. We honor the efforts over the past year of the Co-chairs, Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, and of the other Commissioners. Unfortunately, as members of civil society aspiring for nuclear abolition, we must say that the report falls well short of our expectations. The pace of the action plan for nuclear disarmament laid out in the report is far too slow. Rather than adding to the global momentum for nuclear abolition, there is a danger that it could in fact act as a brake.

The Commission said that it aimed to produce a “realistic”, “action-oriented” report. Indeed, the report contains many useful and practical recommendations. We support many of these recommendations. However, the criterion of whether or not something is deemed “realistic” must not be used as an excuse not to take action or to delay action. The fact that the majority of people and nations in the world want nuclear weapons abolished quickly is another “reality”. And the most fundamental reality is that every day nuclear weapons continue to exist extends the danger they will be used before they can be abolished. It is also a fact that the majority of UN Member States have signed nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties and have expressed their support for commencement of negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The 171 countries which endorsed a UN resolution calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which was led by countries including Japan and Australia and co-sponsored by the United States, do not want nuclear weapons to be permanently maintained, albeit at reduced levels.

Governments should take the report’s recommendations seriously, but aim to implement them ahead of the timetable outlined in the report.

Aiming for Zero – Nuclear Weapons Convention Now

The biggest reason for our disappointment is that the report failed to draw a practical path to nuclear abolition as an urgent and achievable goal. The report aims for a “minimization point” by 2025, when there should be fewer than 2,000 nuclear weapons in the world. Beyond that, no process or timetable for moving to zero is presented. There is a risk that such an agenda might have the effect not of advancing the goal shared by the Commission of a world free of nuclear weapons, but of being used to perpetuate a world where fewer nuclear weapons are maintained indefinitely.

The Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) have in their courageous testimony and personal witness, appealed that such a tragedy must never be repeated anywhere on earth. They proclaim that the use of nuclear weapons is a crime against humanity and that the human race cannot co-exist with nuclear weapons. Scientists warn of the global environmental destruction and consequences if even a tiny fraction of existing nuclear weapons are ever used again. Recent international developments demonstrate that as long as some countries possess nuclear weapons, or endorse their value, other countries will seek to acquire them. For this reason, civil society has been demanding a comprehensive approach towards the abolition of nuclear weapons. Mayors throughout the world have proposed that nuclear weapons be eliminated by 2020. The Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are calling for the consecration of a world without nuclear weapons in that year. Anyone who seriously listens to these voices can only conclude that the action plan laid out in this report lacks an awareness of the urgency, or a sense of the crisis we face.

The report suggests that a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) will be necessary in order to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. We give the Commission credit for this recognition. The Commission’s recommendation that “work should commence now on further refining and developing the concepts in the model Nuclear Weapons Convention now in

circulation” is useful, and we encourage governments to act on this, with a view to commencing multilateral negotiations on a real nuclear weapons convention no later than 2015. However, the report relegates the drafting of such a NWC to sometime around 2025. Such a timetable is far too slow and complacent. The fact is that a model NWC drafted by NGOs over a decade ago has already been submitted to the United Nations by the governments of Malaysia and Costa Rica and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has repeatedly called for UN Member States to seriously consider such a convention. This year a multiparty committee of the Australian Parliament unanimously recommended that the Australian Government support a NWC. What is required is for governments of every country, in cooperation with civil society, to begin working for a NWC now.

Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons

We warmly welcome that the report calls for the de-legitimization of nuclear weapons and recommends that the role of nuclear weapons in security policies be limited. The report recommends that, while aiming for a “no first use” nuclear posture, all nuclear-armed states should declare that the sole purpose of their nuclear weapons is the deterrence of nuclear attack. The wording and the target year are very conservative, but represent a step in the right direction. As the report recommends, it is especially important that the United States should clearly adopt this much narrower role for nuclear weapons in its Nuclear Posture Review, which will be completed at the beginning of next year. Such a declaration, which should be emulated by all the nuclear weapon states that currently rely on first-use-based nuclear postures, must contribute to strengthening the norm that nuclear weapons must not be used.

It is significant that a commission led by Australia and Japan, both of which rely on extended nuclear deterrence (the so-called nuclear umbrella), made such a recommendation. In particular, it was reported that during the Commission’s deliberations, the Japanese participants resisted such a limitation on the role of nuclear weapons. We will be carefully watching the actions taken by the Japanese government on this issue. In our view it is totally unacceptable for government officials in non-nuclear weapon parties to the NPT to resist disarmament by the nuclear weapons states and threaten or imply that they might acquire nuclear weapons if the nuclear umbrella is dismantled in favor of non-nuclear deterrence and defense.

The reason why the overwhelming majority of states have pledged not to obtain nuclear weapons is not that they believe in the nuclear deterrence of a handful of nuclear-armed states. It is because people’s consciences dictate that nuclear weapons should not be allowed to be used or possessed. Both Australia and Japan should take the lead by abandoning their dependence on nuclear deterrence, expanding and creating new nuclear-weapon-free zones and pursuing security policies and alliances that do not rely on nuclear weapons.

Control of Materials and Technology

The report refers to the threat of nuclear terrorism and the risks associated with peaceful uses of nuclear energy. However, the specific measures proposed for controlling materials and technology that can be diverted to nuclear weapons, including uranium and plutonium, are inadequate. The report was released just as COP 15 of the Framework Convention on Climate Change was being held in Copenhagen. At a time when the world’s energy policies are at a turning point due to global warming, much stronger measures are called for to deal with the risk of nuclear proliferation associated with nuclear energy.

Action Towards the NPT Review Conference

At the May 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference the international community must make concrete progress and create the conditions for nuclear abolition. When deciding the fate of the human race, if asked whether we should respect the will of the overwhelming majority, or give priority to the few countries that dominate this majority, our choice is clear. If we believe in decency, democracy and the rule of law and wish to choose a path which guarantees the future of

the human race, it is obvious that we must give first priority to the voices of the majority. This majority has clearly demonstrated its desire for the total abolition of nuclear weapons.

The average age of the Hibakusha is over 75. It is the shared responsibility of the global community to realize a world without nuclear weapons while some of these people are still living. We strongly call upon the governments of Australia and Japan, as well as the governments of all other countries, to show initiative in implementing the Commission's relevant recommendations with an accelerated timetable. We will be closely following the actions that they take.

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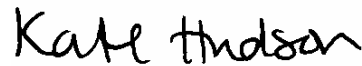
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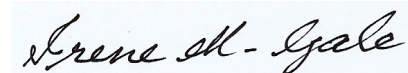
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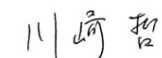
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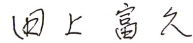
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