

Communique

January 27, 2010

For immediate release

Canada should support treaty banning nuclear weapons: experts

Prime Minister Harper should actively support new calls for a global treaty to ban all nuclear weapons, experts said today.

“The Canadian government needs to step up its efforts to stop the dangerous spread of nuclear weapons” said former Senator Douglas Roche following a two-day conference in Ottawa attended by academics, civil society leaders and government representatives. Participants included representatives from the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Canadian Pugwash Group, Physicians for Global Survival, Project Ploughshares and World Federalist Movement-Canada.

“It is urgent that Prime Minister Harper and Foreign Minister Cannon publicly address nuclear disarmament and reaffirm Canada’s commitment to a world without nuclear weapons,” added Ernie Regehr, Senior Policy Advisor, Project Ploughshares.

Panelists called for Canada to work to change NATO’s nuclear weapons policies, which still – 20 years after the end of the Cold War – claim that nuclear weapons are “essential.” This stand contradicts Canada’s commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which obliges all members to work for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

“This ambivalence should end now that U.S. President Barack Obama has come out so strongly for active work leading to a nuclear weapons-free world,” added Prof. Erika Simpson, University of Western Ontario and Vice-Chairperson of Canadian Pugwash Group.

Conference panelists noted there are at least 23,000 nuclear weapons still in existence with a combined blast capacity equivalent to 150,000 Hiroshima bombs. The U.S. and Russia each have 2,000 nuclear weapons on dangerously high alert. “With more nuclear-armed states now, and more system vulnerabilities, the near miracle of no nuclear exchange cannot continue in perpetuity,” commented Dr. Dale Dewar, Executive Director of Physicians for Global Survival.

“Negotiations should start now on a Nuclear Weapons Convention, which would be a treaty banning the production and deployment of nuclear weapons anywhere”, said Bev Delong, Chairperson, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. “Already, 124 states at the U.N. have voted for such a measure, but Canada is still abstaining on the grounds that a global ban is ‘premature’.”

The group criticized this Canadian reluctance and stated, “The key to a nuclear weapons-free world is to start the negotiations now while political conditions are right,” said

Pierre Jasmin, President, Les Artistes pour la Paix. This is the position taken by 481 members of the Order of Canada, who have called on Canada to work actively for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

A new moment has opened up with both U.S. and Russian leaders seriously committed to set the world on an irreversible path to zero nuclear weapons. The world risks falling into a security trap in which the elimination of nuclear weapons will remain an "eventual" goal, meaning that the goal is so far over the horizon as to be meaningless.

"The nuclear weapons cycle, 65 years old, must be broken now before a new and exceedingly dangerous spurt of nuclear proliferation takes place."

The sponsoring groups issued these recommendations to the Government of Canada:

- i) It is urgent that the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister find early and prominent opportunities, including the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and Canada's chairmanship of the G8 and G20 meetings in Canada, to publicly address nuclear disarmament and reaffirm Canada's commitment to a world without nuclear weapons.
- ii) Canada should encourage a new NATO Strategic Concept that:
 - welcomes and affirms the groundswell of calls for a world without nuclear weapons;
 - confirms NATO's commitment to the objectives of the NPT and declares that the intent of Article VI is a world free of nuclear weapons; and
 - commits NATO to security and arms control policies that conform to Articles I and II of the NPT and that are designed to achieve the nuclear disarmament promised in Article VI.
- iii) The Canadian Government should support new initiatives within Europe and publicly indicate its support for the removal of all remaining non-strategic nuclear weapons from European soil, in support of longstanding international calls that all nuclear weapons be returned to the territories of the states that own them.
- iv) Canada should support the development of an improved strategic relationship with Russia including initiatives such as upgrading the NATO-Russia Council; promoting continuing strategic dialogue between the US and Russia in support of a new nuclear disarmament treaty; and follow-on measures that engage other states with nuclear weapons, including China.
- v) Canada should work to forge a consensus within NATO: that the policies of nuclear weapon states, and of NATO, should reflect the global norm, which has existed since 1945, against the use of nuclear weapons.
- vi) Canada should compliment the United States and Russia for negotiations toward a START replacement treaty and insist on commitments at the NPT Review Conference to further US and Russian reductions and to multilateral reductions leading to elimination.
- vii) As a NATO ally, Canada should encourage that the Alliance takes advantage of this

moment to reduce and phase out the role of nuclear weapons in its security doctrines. The voice of Canada must be heard in these new, highly charged deliberations.

viii) Canada should press for the NPT Review Conference to commit to preparatory work on a Nuclear Weapons Convention, or framework of instruments, for sustainable, verifiable, and enforceable global elimination of nuclear weapons.

ix) The government should restore the practice of an inclusive approach to NGOs by naming representatives of civil society to the Canadian delegation to the 2010 NPT Review Conference in May 2010.

Contact: Ernie Regehr, O.C., Senior Policy Advisor, Project Ploughshares c: (519) 591-4421