



A global abolition treaty: getting us to zero

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"Who will stop Nuclear Next Use?"

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Thank you to the Nautilus Institute and in particular to Richard Tanter for the work in bringing us all here together today. I have been impressed by the diversity of views on the many issues covered here. This forum and the considered discussion that has taken place affirms my growing belief that we are getting towards that often illusive "tipping point" that will see the global movement on nuclear disarmament take hold in the world.

It's a tipping point 64 years in the making. We've felt close to it at times in the past but there is something coming now and we have to believe its going to be good. The groundswell of public opinion is growing rapidly, and as we all know, it is that which will change the world – the bold vision of individuals and groups like ICAN and many others, coalitions of groups large and small around the world who will force governments to listen and to act.

And indeed they are starting to do so.

THE JSCOT REPORT

Just this week we had some remarkable results on this in Australia.

On Thursday the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, a major parliamentary cross party committee, released its 200+ page report reviewing all nuclear disarmament treaties in Australia and internationally. Many months of effort went into this, and many of the people speaking and in the audience here today participated in that inquiry. This report is groundbreaking in many ways; it is a benchmark from which other initiatives will need to measure their success and of which they should take special note, and congratulations need to be given to those who made it happen.

From an ICAN perspective, there were three things that deserve particular mention arising from this important report:

Recommendations 8 and 9 which call for our government to make clear in international fora its support for the adoption of a Nuclear Weapons Convention and which asks of the Australian government that they allocate research and consultation resources to the development of a Nuclear Weapons Convention with a clear legal framework and enforceable verification.

In addition, **Recommendation 21** calls for the Parliament to commit to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

DETERRENCE

Admittedly some of this seems remarkable a mere few months after the Rudd government outlined an on-going role for nuclear deterrence in Australia's latest Defence White Paper. In this, numerous references were made to the role of US nuclear weapons in securing our future. Just one quote from the White Paper says:

*"It is the Government's judgement that stable nuclear deterrence will continue to be a feature of the international system for the foreseeable future, and in this context extended deterrence will continue to be viable."*¹

No it won't. President Obama is right now offering the world a promise of a greater security and if we are to take up this offer, to make that promise a reality, Australia needs to turn rhetoric into action and help clear the pathway for the US by eliminating all references to a reliance on nuclear deterrence, that faulty old umbrella, from our defence policy.

To get serious about real security we should put our intellectual, political and diplomatic energies into a real solution, a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

THE CONVENTION

So what is this Convention and what are we all on about?

A group of experts from around the world first developed the model Nuclear Weapons Convention in 1997, then updated it in 2007 when ICAN relaunched it again. The model is the result of a massive collaboration of experts from around the world over many years, and it is becoming increasingly recognized for its merits on technicalities, legalities and for the sheer sense of it all. This model Nuclear Weapons Convention, now accepted as a UN document, outlines how we can get to zero nuclear weapons.

It will set the rules, schedule and verification mechanisms for the prohibition of development and testing, production and stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon, said in a speech a year ago when urging all parties to the NPT, particularly nuclear weapons states, to work towards disarmament:

*"They could pursue this goal by agreement on a framework of separate, mutually-reinforcing instruments. Or they could consider negotiating a nuclear-weapons convention, backed by a strong system of verification, as has long been proposed at the United Nations...I have circulated to all UN member states a draft of such a convention, which offers a good point of departure."*²

That was this document here. (show SoS)

As noted by Gareth Evans when he gave evidence to the JSCOT hearing on this issue

"...[a NWC] would have within its scope the whole content of the NPT, plus the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, plus the Fissile Material Cut off Treaty, plus some additional verification strategies."

He noted it would be a great global catch-all, one which allows us to start from the beginning. But importantly it will allow us also to reach an end point.

¹ Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030 | Australian Government, Department of Defence | Defence White Paper 2009 www.defence.gov.au | page 39

² Ban Ki Moon. *The United Nations and security in a nuclear-weapon-free world*. East-West Institute, New York 24 Oct 2008

To rid the world of nuclear weapons, we need a road-map, we need a plan.

Yes, the plan needs to incorporate many steps. But we need a plan that brings these steps together and then takes it all the next yard, eliminating these weapons once and for all.

THAT plan is a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

To get there, we need our government and others to take a lead right now...
to truly commit to a Nuclear Weapons Convention
to commit to getting the world to zero.

GETTING TO ZERO

Whether in taking measures to reduce our carbon emissions in answer to the crisis of climate change, or in working towards nuclear disarmament, zero is now recognized as a truly aspirational goal. It's a happy reversal of Cold War thinking.

Civil society has been pushing for zero since the invention of these weapons. At times in our past we have seen massive surges of public sentiment on this issue, and great leaps forward. But we have also too often seen a slowing in diplomacy, and a failure of government action, making the ultimate goal seem at times unreachable.

We need all governments to get past hurt pride that it is non-government organisations and experts who have developed the most comprehensive plan to rid the world of these weapons. Technical, legal, diplomatic as well as policy experts who have taken the time to seriously examine the model NWC have agreed that this is an exceptional start.

So we need governments to seriously sit down and examine the model NWC and to say what works, what doesn't, and to make a concerted start at finding the common ground, that growing common ground, on the desire to rid the world of these weapons.

This model was never intended to be pulled off the shelf and put into force. It is just that, a model, an opening point for discussion, a place from which we can step off and find that road to zero.

With the Obama Opportunity and growing international political will, the time to do that is right now.

Is a nuclear weapons convention achievable?

Yes it is.

Is it needed?

Yes it is, desperately so.

And can we do it?

Yes we can.

Thank you.