



ICAN Australia  
Media briefing

**EMBARGOED to 5pm (EST) Tuesday 15 December 2009**

## **Despite pluses, ICNND report falls short on eliminating nuclear threat**

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd joined Japanese counterpart Yukio Hatoyama in Tokyo today to receive the major report of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND). Sponsored by both governments, the report "Eliminating Nuclear Threats" was presented by the Commission's Co-chairs former Foreign Ministers Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi.

A strong positive aspect of the report is a comprehensive understanding that nuclear weapons are a momentous threat to global security and that it is essential, feasible and urgent to eliminate this threat. ICAN Australia welcomes the report as a contribution to the necessary dialogue on issues vital to us all. However, we are disappointed that the potential of the Commission to advocate for a comprehensive roadmap for getting the world to zero nuclear weapons within the next few decades has not been fulfilled. Some key concerns of ICAN Australia about the report are detailed below.

### ***A clear roadmap to eliminating and outlawing nuclear weapons is needed***

The Commission recognises the need for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), a comprehensive global treaty to get to a world free of nuclear weapons. But it does not envisage a NWC being negotiated until the latter part of the period 2012-2025. This delays getting on with what will be a difficult and complex but necessary process and undermines the urgency of getting to zero.

ICAN strongly advocates a Nuclear Weapons Convention along with many other civil society organisations around the world. A model NWC, in circulation for over a decade through the UN, has recently been updated, and is gaining increasing political support from governments around the world.

The model NWC outlines how to get to zero. An NWC will need to 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. It will need to strictly control fissile materials which can be used in nuclear weapons and the means to produce them.

In September 2009 the notion of a NWC attracted cross-party support by the Australian Parliament in a unanimous report of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties that examined Australia's role in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

ICAN advocates that negotiations on an NWC should commence by 2015 and a treaty be concluded by 2020.

### ***Moving faster to bring down the danger of nuclear weapons use***

The Commission advocates reducing current arsenals by around 90% by 2025. While this may sound substantial, 2,000 nuclear warheads is still 20 times the number now known to be capable of causing unprecedented global cooling likely to persist for a decade, slashing food production and causing upwards of a billion people to starve.

Nuclear weapon numbers will have to come down in stages, but the Commission does not present a plan or timeframe for its elimination phase beyond 2025. In the absence of a clear roadmap to zero,

there are dangers associated with a still cataclysmic destructive capacity being perceived as in any way acceptable, safe or stable. An action agenda towards a world free of nuclear weapons should leave no justification for keeping nuclear arsenals, albeit at lower numbers, which will continue to incite proliferation.

The Commission commendably argues that nuclear-armed states move to commit that they will not be the first to use nuclear weapons. But recommending that the timeframe for achieving this stretch out to 2025 is too long, and detracts from the need for commitments along these lines in the next months in the lead-up to the key May 2010 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. It is widely held that unless nuclear-armed states show by then that they are serious about disarmament, the Conference will fail and escalating proliferation is likely to follow.

Nor does the report articulate the important role that allies of nuclear-armed states like Australia and Japan can play to support disarmament and remove any role for nuclear weapons in their own security policies.

### ***Nuclear power and nuclear weapons***

The Commission's brazen promotion of nuclear power sits uneasily with its recognition of the need to control the inherently dual-use processes of uranium enrichment and reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel to extract plutonium. It is contradictory for the Commission to promote nuclear power, exacerbating proliferation dangers, without adequately addressing the current failures of the non-proliferation regime and demonstrating how they can be fixed.

ICAN Australia's position is that achieving and sustaining a world free of nuclear weapons would be much easier and quicker in a world in which nuclear power was being phased out. However while nuclear power is used, the industry needs a major overhaul so that uranium enrichment only occurs under strict international supervision, and reprocessing of spent reactor fuel to extract plutonium ceases.

### ***Next steps***

Despite these concerns, ICAN Australia welcomes much of the report, and the substantial efforts of the Commissioners and Advisers globally to build a good case for disarmament, which we hope they will now be busy advocating. We also welcome their emphasis on the importance of the role of civil society. But we must turn words to action, and on nuclear disarmament it is governments which must act. We urge the Australian government to consider and respond expeditiously to the report and commit to accelerating its timetable all the way to a world free of nuclear weapons.

ICAN Australia has prepared a more detailed briefing of this report which is available online from 5pm, 15 December 2009 at [www.icanw.org](http://www.icanw.org).

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#### ***Media enquiries:***

Teri Calder  
ICAN Australia Communications Coordinator  
Tel: 03 9347 4795 Mob: 0425 230 679  
Email: [teri@icanw.org](mailto:teri@icanw.org)

#### ***Media spokespersons for ICAN Australia:***

Associate Professor Tilman Ruff  
ICAN Chair and Adviser to the ICNND Co-Chairs

Dimity Hawkins  
ICAN Australia Campaign Director

*"The road to nuclear hell is paved with defensive intentions." Kelvin Thomson MP, JSCOT report 106 on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, 2009.*