

18 March 2014

HE Ms Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia
HE Mr John Baird PC MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada
HE Sr Heraldo Muñoz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chile
HE Mr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Germany
HE Mr Fumio Kishida, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan
HE Sr José Antonio Meade Kuribreña, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Mexico
HE Mr Frans Timmermans, Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands
HE Prof. Viola Onwuliri, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria
HE Mr Albert del Rosario, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, The Philippines
HE Mr Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Poland
HE Mr Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Turkey
HRH Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs, UAE

Your Excellencies,
Your Royal Highness,

We write on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) – a coalition of non-government organizations in more than 90 nations – to wish you a productive ministerial meeting of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) in Hiroshima in April, and to offer some views on how best to advance our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Since the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference of 2010, international discussions on nuclear disarmament have focused increasingly on the catastrophic humanitarian impact of any use of nuclear weapons. It is highly appropriate, therefore, that the NPDI has chosen to meet next month in Hiroshima, a city whose residents, past and present, understand all too well the devastating effects of these terrible weapons of mass destruction.

We agree with the conclusion expressed by 125 states in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly last October that “it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances”. We must all dedicate our efforts towards ensuring that no one else ever suffers as the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have suffered.

We firmly believe that the only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons are never used again, whether by accident or design, is to eliminate them without delay. We are deeply concerned by the lack of commitment of the nuclear-armed states to achieve the goal of elimination. Their various programmes to upgrade and modernize their nuclear forces suggest an intention to retain these weapons indefinitely.

In the absence of genuine leadership on disarmament by the nuclear-armed states, it is essential that the rest of the world find ways to strengthen global norms against nuclear weapons. In this regard, we consider it very important that the Oslo and Nayarit conferences on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons brought together so many governments and significant international organizations and actors to highlight the unacceptable global consequences of nuclear weapons.

As the chair of the Nayarit conference noted in his summary, “in the past, weapons have been eliminated after they have been outlawed”. We agree fully with his conclusion that “this is the path to achieve a world without nuclear weapons” and the “time has come to initiate a diplomatic process ... to reach new international standards and norms through a legally binding instrument”.

For your meeting in Hiroshima, we offer the following recommendations:

1. The NPDI should support the growing international call for negotiations in the near term on a treaty to ban the use, deployment, production, stockpiling and transport of nuclear weapons, and require their total elimination. It is wholly unacceptable that the very worst weapons of mass destruction are the only ones not yet prohibited by clear, treaty-based international law.
2. The NPDI should again welcome the strong focus in recent years on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Moreover, it should refrain from suggesting that certain nations have a legitimate security interest in possessing or otherwise relying on these weapons. It will be important for the NPDI to recognize, as have the majority of states, that nuclear weapons only make the world a less secure place for all.
3. The three NPDI members that host US nuclear weapons on their soil, together with Italy and Belgium, should reject the proposed modernization of these weapons and remove them without delay. A lack of consensus among NATO members on nuclear-sharing doctrines is no excuse for retaining the ultimate weapons of mass destruction.
4. The seven NPDI members that formally subscribe to the notion of “extended nuclear deterrence” should take immediate steps to adopt nuclear-weapon-free defence postures. As other states have demonstrated, this does not require the rejection of military alliances, including with nuclear-armed states. Current military arrangements of reliance on nuclear weapons imply that these weapons are legitimate, useful and necessary, rather than immoral, inhumane and unacceptable, and increase the dangers of their use, encourage nuclear proliferation and impede their eradication.
5. The NPDI should welcome the chair’s summary of the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Nayarit, and encourage all states to attend the third humanitarian conference in Vienna later this year. We believe that the Vienna conference, in continuing the fact-based discussion on the effects of nuclear weapons, will provide an important opportunity to achieve further progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

We urge you to consider these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Dr Tilman Ruff AM
Co-Chair (Australia)



Mr Akira Kawasaki
Co-Chair (Japan)



Mrs Susi Snyder
ISG Member (Netherlands)