



ADVANCING UPON THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY IN REDUCING THE NUMBERS OF NUCLEAR WARHEADS WORLDWIDE

Key Terms:

Nuclear weapons and militarism:

Nuclear Weapons are a type of detonative and explosive devices that derive their destructive force from nuclear reactions. As the detonation of a single atomic bomb results in large amounts of fires, blasts and severe radiation, it can wipe out entire cities in a matter of minutes, causing long lasting damage not only to the affected civilians but also the environment. National stockpiles of the nine nuclear weapon states (United Kingdom, China, France, India, Israel (assumed), North Korea (claimed), Pakistan, Russia, and the United States) are said to account to approximately 30,000 nuclear weapons.

Militarism, as listed in the dictionary, is (1) the tendency to hold military efficiency as the supreme ideal of the state, and (2) the use of military power to achieve non-military goals. It has cost the world over 1.7 trillion dollars this past year, depriving the poor of urgently needed resources for development and protection of the earth's ecosystem. Furthermore, it adds to the likelihood of war with all its accompanying suffering.

Non-Proliferation Treaty:

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (hereinafter NPT) is an international treaty that came into effect in 1970. Altogether, 189 states have joined the treaty (originally 190, since North Korea acceded to the NPT but never came into compliance, announcing its withdrawal in 2003) making it the most subscribed treaty in the world. The four UN member states that have never joined the NPT include Israel, India, Pakistan and South Sudan. The NPT builds on a consensus that all nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy and that nations with nuclear weapons have the responsibility to

move towards disarmament. According to the treaty it is also necessary to globally end the production of missile material for weapons.

Since 1970, Review Conferences are held every 5 years to examine the steps countries have taken towards reaching their goals. So far the treaty has been widely criticized for its ineffectiveness in persuading all governments to take steps towards living in a world without nuclear arsenal. The danger of either malfunction, or active usage of nuclear warheads in conflicts keeps on growing as the signatory states fail to fully comply to the treaty.

At the moment, the five nuclear weapon states under the NPT are USA, Russia, United Kingdom, France and China. Having no obligation towards the global community not to use them, the non-NPT nuclear powers include India, Pakistan and North Korea. Israel remains the only non-NPT state with undeclared nuclear powers.

Disarmament:

It is the reduction or limitation of the size, equipment, armament, etc. of the army, navy or air force of a country. The term generally refers to a country's military or specific type of weaponry. It is often taken to mean total elimination of weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear arms.

General and Complete Disarmament was defined by the United Nations General Assembly as the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, coupled with the "balanced reduction of armed forces and conventional armaments, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower military level, taking into account the need of all States to protect their security." ¹

Background Information:

Ever since the United States had deployed the first atom bomb in July 1945, its destructive power showed that nuclear weapons would dominate future conflicts. In fact the first resolution of the General Assembly on January 24th in 1946 called for creating a commission designed to help obtain the

1 UN General Assembly, Final Document of the First Special Session on Disarmament, para. 22. (<http://www.un.org/disarmament/HomePage/SSOD/A-S-10-4.pdf>)

elimination of national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.

This however failed to prevent the Nuclear Arms Race between the United States and USSR that nearly escalated during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Both superpowers started stockpiling vast amounts of active nuclear warheads, until they possessed enough of them to destroy each other many times. The theory was that such weapons increased security as the other side would not attack since it would also be destroyed by retaliation. However, in practice the Crisis showed that there were risks in such a strategy and both sides continued to research technology that would yield them "victory" in a nuclear conflict.

Since the Arms Race became a topic of everyday conversation and increasingly of protest, within months the public anxiety of citizens all over the world rose uncontrollably. In the case of the USA and USSR, many lived in fear, having opposing views to their leaders who believed nuclear weapons acted as a deterrent. People felt helpless and a surprising amount of them feared that they were amongst the last generation of humans to ever walk this planet.

On the other hand, this mass hysteria also bore its fruit. Disarmament movements became popularised, giving way to treaties such as the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the Non-Proliferation Treaty that later came into effect. (The Non-Proliferation Treaty was opened for signature in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. Up to this date, it has been ratified by 189 UN member states.)

The recent 3rd International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons concluded that the impact of the use of just one nuclear weapon is unacceptable. A mere 100 would lower the earth's temperature by over 1 degree Celsius for at least ten years, causing massive disruption of global food production and putting 2 billion people at risk of starvation. If we fail to prevent nuclear war, all of our other efforts to secure peace and justice will be for naught. We need to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

Commencing negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons as soon as possible would fulfil existing obligations enshrined in the NPT, which will be reviewed in May of 2015, and the unanimous ruling of the International Court of Justice.²

Summary:

The spread and use of nuclear weapons is to this day a fundamental threat to the security of all peoples and nations. The continuing view of great powers that they can achieve their goals through military force calls for direct action. Today the UN faces proliferation that demands new strategies and new approaches as it has a pivotal role to play in preventing another possible crisis. When coming up with an effective solution, all parties should bear in mind the words of J. F. Kennedy. "In the final analysis our most common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal."

Useful links for your research:

Preventing Collapse: The NPT and a Ban on Nuclear Weapons:

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/npt-ban.pdf>

(Includes: Lack of progress on disarmament by the 2014 Preparatory Committee, Action 5 of the 2010 NPT action plan, Creating conditions for disarmament and provides a more in-depth reading about the current situation)

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty:

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/npt>

(includes: further information about the NPT and most importantly the overviews of all the Review Conferences)

Nuclear Weapons: www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/search.un.org/search

International day against nuclear tests:

www.un.org/en/events/againstnucleartestsday/

NATO Review – The Non-Proliferation Treaty: the most important treaty in the world?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPo7IK4Oi4M>

Nuclear Arsenals by country: <http://www.icanw.org/the-facts/nuclear-arsenals/>

Nuclear Weapons Timeline: <http://www.icanw.org/the-facts/the-nuclear-age/>

² World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates: Final Declaration

<http://www.pressenza.com/2014/12/world-summit-nobel-peace-laureates-final-declaration/>