

Expert Seminar on Restoring Canada's Nuclear Disarmament Leadership

STATEMENT:

Canada must recover its leading role in working for the elimination of nuclear weapons, a role that has been cast into doubt under the Harper government. That was the dominant finding for the sponsors of a special seminar of 20 nuclear disarmament experts held February 3-4, 2008 in Ottawa.

The seminar was co-sponsored by six leading groups: the Middle Powers Initiative, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the Rideau Institute, the Simons Foundation, Canadian Pugwash Group and Physicians for Global Survival – all of which have endorsed this statement.

The seminar considered the new report of Canada World's Poll, principally sponsored by The Simons Foundation, showing that 88 percent of Canadians think nuclear weapons make the world a more dangerous place and would support the elimination of nuclear weapons through an enforceable agreement.

Special attention was paid to the incoherence and contradiction between Canada supporting the “unequivocal undertaking” to the total elimination of nuclear weapons required by the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Canada's continued allegiance to NATO's policies stating that nuclear weapons are “essential.”

Concern was expressed during the seminar that NATO's policies for the retention of nuclear weapons are now trumping the NPT's legal obligations for nuclear disarmament. The government's own website, stating that Canada's nuclear policy now must be consistent with NATO's policies, calls into question whether the NPT is still the central instrument in which Canada's nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament policy is rooted. A strong call was made for Canada to work with Germany and Norway in their current efforts to overhaul NATO's outdated policies, particularly as set out in its Strategic Concept, for retention of nuclear weapons.

Having heard the testimony and discussion of the experts at the seminar, and with a view to the preparations underway for the 2010 Review conference of the NPT, the sponsors of the seminar have set out this urgent agenda:



The Peace Bell, a symbol of the peace accord between Canada and Japan, in the Japanese Garden of the Montreal Botanical Gardens.

1. Prime Minister Harper must unambiguously affirm the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. In that call, he would be joining senior American figures Henry Kissinger, William Perry, George Shultz, and Sam Nunn who in January issued that call a second time, joined by Mikhail Gorbachev, Madeleine Albright, Colin Powell and a growing list of global leaders.
2. That assertion by the Prime Minister must in turn be coupled with a re-energized Canadian diplomacy to produce action on priority, actionable, and universally agreed steps toward nuclear elimination, such as:
 - De-alerting all deployed weapons to remove the threat of accidental annihilation,
 - Entry into force of the comprehensive ban on testing nuclear weapons (CTBT),
 - A ban on production of fissile material for weapons purposes (FMT), and
 - Substantial, irreversible, and verified reductions to existing arsenals.
3. Canada must work for a review of NATO nuclear policy to reject the fiction that nuclear weapons “preserve peace.” Canada should press NATO to revise its Strategic Concept to acknowledge that nuclear weapons pose an unacceptable risk to humanity, and that their early elimination is essential to human security. To move from words to action, NATO should be challenged to remove, and dismantle, all US tactical nuclear weapons from the territories of non-nuclear weapon states of the alliance and to call on Russia to reciprocate with cuts to its arsenal of tactical weapons as a step toward complete nuclear disarmament.
4. India, Israel, and Pakistan must be integrated into the disarmament and non-proliferation mainstream. To that end, Canada should continue to call on all three to honor the repeated demands of the international community “to accede to [the NPT] as non-nuclear-weapon States promptly and without conditions.” Until India signs the NPT, Canada should also insist that any proposed civilian nuclear cooperation with India be contingent on India taking clear and irreversible steps toward disarmament, including ratification of the CTBT, a verifiable freeze on its production of fissile materials for weapons purposes, and formal acceptance of the disarmament obligations set out in Article VI of the NPT.
5. Canada must also be energetic in non-proliferation efforts, especially since Canada is a prominent supplier of uranium and technologies for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In the context of increasing demand for energy and the spread of nuclear technology, Canada should be a leader in the pursuit of multilateral control over all weapons-sensitive elements of the nuclear fuel cycle.
6. Canada should also mobilize political and diplomatic resources to continue efforts to enhance the NPT’s administrative, diplomatic, and enforcement mechanisms so that NPT states can more effectively address non-compliance issues.

The seminar recognized that a world facing rapidly advancing climate change and an extraordinary array of additional challenges – energy deficits, burgeoning pollution, acute water shortages, unrelenting hunger, grossly inadequate health services, and chronic armed conflict – should not also be burdened with the continuing threat of nuclear annihilation. In the face of cumulative and deeply consequential environmental damage, the human community is awakening to the reality that the earth is a delicate, fragile home. Each generation has a sacred duty to nurture the planet and to care for its people. It is a duty that is violated and dishonored by the maintenance of arsenals to assault, or even to threaten, the earth and its people with the almost limitless destructive power of nuclear weapons. Responsible stewardship of the earth requires no less than the permanent elimination of nuclear weapons, and Canada’s place should be clearly in the vanguard of this inescapable struggle.

The report on the seminar is available at: www.rideauinstitute.ca

Contacts for sponsoring groups:

Middle Powers Initiative

The Hon. Douglas Roche O.C., Chairperson
Email: djroche@shaw.ca
Phone: (780) 466-8072

The Simons Foundation

Dr. Jennifer Allen Simons, President
Email: jennifer_simons@sfu.ca
Phone: (778) 782-7778

Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Bev Delong, Chairperson
Email: bevdelong@shaw.ca
Phone: (403) 282-8260

The Rideau Institute

Steven Staples, President
Email: [sstaples@rideauinstitute.ca](mailto:ss Staples@rideauinstitute.ca)
Phone: (613) 565-9449 ext 24, Cell. 613-290-2695

Canadian Pugwash Group

Dr. Walter Dorn, Chair
Email: dorn@cfc.dnd.ca
Phone: (416) 482-6800 et 6538

Physicians for Global Survival

Dr. Nancy Covington, President
Email: nancy.covington@ns.sympatico.ca

Groups endorsing this declaration:

Project Ploughshares

Canadian Federation of University Women

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), section canadienne

Pacific Peace Working Group

The Canadian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)

International Physicians for Humanitarian Medicine, Geneva

The Boundary Peace Initiative

Project Ploughshares Calgary

Lawyers for Social Responsibility

Brampton Coalition for Peace and Justice

Veterans Against Nuclear Arms (VANA) ON-QUE Region

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace

World Conference of Religions for Peace Canada

Veterans against Nuclear Arms, Saskatchewan

World Federalist Movement - Canada

Group of 78

Artistes pour la Paix

Science for Peace

Canadian Unitarian Council
Peace Monitoring Group

Peace Watch Working Group,
First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa

Hiroshima Day Coalition

Toronto Raging Grannies

KAIROS BC-Yukon

Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility

Canadian Peace Alliance