

CRISIS IN NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT CANADA SHOULD BE CATALYST IN URGENT RESPONSE

Statement by Member Groups of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

October 21, 1999

Alarmed by the US Senate's vote against the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the undersigned members of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (CNANW) express their deepest concern that this vote may encourage the spread of nuclear weapons. As a Party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the US is obligated to conclude negotiations on nuclear disarmament. The CTBT was intended as a step in that direction. The US, through its refusal to ratify, has failed to show good faith. The United States, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom maintain 5,000 nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert and are modernizing their arsenals. This flagrant disregard for their NPT obligations has encouraged dangerous moves toward nuclear recourse in states like Pakistan, now under military dictatorship. Ten years after the Cold War, the risk of nuclear weapons use is as great as ever.

We therefore call upon the Government of Canada to make a clear commitment to a total ban on nuclear weapons and to take dynamic, urgent and effective steps toward that goal.

In recent years, many opportunities to move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons have been lost. But such a bridge to a nuclear-weapon free world can, and must, be built. The worldwide movement to abolish nuclear weapons — reflected in the work of informed citizens' organisations, respected authorities and like-minded governments — is steadily gaining strength. Canada has good credentials and is well placed to play a leading role in the worldwide campaign to de-legitimize nuclear weapons.

Canada's achievements

The Government of Canada should be commended for leadership in advancing the nuclear disarmament agenda. Working with Germany last fall, Canada promoted vigorous discussion of the New Agenda Coalition's resolution at the United Nations. This led to 12 NATO States (including Canada) abstaining on the resolution rather than voting against it, as did the nuclear-armed NATO states. The Government's positive response to the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs' report on nuclear weapons, and its subsequent urging of NATO to review nuclear weapons policies, contributed to NATO's stating on April 24th that the Alliance would consider options for its security policies.

Nuclear disarmament is in crisis

NATO, having reaffirmed that its nuclear weapons are "essential", is retaining its option to use them first. NATO's eastward expansion has raised legitimate fears, especially in Russia, of a new Cold War. These fears were reinforced by NATO's use of military force in the Balkans without UN Security Council consent. This development, as well as internal military, political and economic pressures, has convinced Russia to emulate NATO's reassertion of the importance of nuclear weapons.

The inherent weakness of a discriminatory non-proliferation regime was clearly demonstrated in 1998 when India and Pakistan became overt Nuclear Weapon States, following in the footsteps of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. Progress on agreements between the US and Russia to reduce nuclear weapons has stalled. The NATO Nuclear Weapon States and/or India and Pakistan block constructive proposals by Non-Nuclear Weapon States in the UN Conference on Disarmament. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty has suffered a severe setback and is nowhere near entering into force. The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is being undermined by US plans to develop destabilising missile defences. The Non-Proliferation Treaty is in jeopardy as a result of the deadlock persisting between the Western NWS and the leading Non-Nuclear Weapon States.

This worsening international climate greatly increases the threat of nuclear war and signals a struggle of immense proportions to maintain the viability of the NPT after 2000.

NATO's backpedaling

NATO, led by its three Nuclear Weapon States, the U.S., the U.K., and France, is trying to bury the idea of reviewing its nuclear weapons policies. Since April, when that review was promised, discussion has been

muted. Moreover, NATO proclaims that its basic strategic doctrine of nuclear deterrence is unchanged: it refuses even to consider a policy of No-First-Use. A NATO review will not be credible as long as the basic doctrine is unexamined, discussion is held behind closed doors, and there is no public input into policy-making or the review process.

As long as NATO remains intransigent, the demand of thinking Canadians, concerned about the requirements of a viable global security system, for Canada to leave NATO will grow.

Canada's role

Canada cannot work alone to abolish nuclear weapons. Pressure from its military allies is a constraint. But Canada can take effective action by working with like-minded States so that a new coalition of respected middle-powers can together pressure the Nuclear Weapon States to fulfill their treaty commitments. This is the approach taken by the New Agenda Coalition (NAC). Canada has already pledged to work with NAC in pursuing shared nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives.

NAC's Resolution

The New Agenda Coalition has introduced a new resolution in the U.N. General Assembly which:

"Calls upon the Nuclear Weapon States to make an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the speedy and total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to engage without delay in an accelerated process of negotiations, thus achieving nuclear disarmament to which they are committed under Article VI of the NPT."

The resolution also calls upon the Nuclear Weapon States to de-alert their nuclear weapons. This would be done by physically separating the warheads from their delivery

- Continued on Page 3 -

vehicles. The possible failure of computers to recognize the year 2000 could infect the command, control, communications and intelligence systems of nuclear arsenals. The world needs the safety that de-alerting would ensure, not just on January 1, 2000, but throughout every day of every year.

Our appeal

We urge the Government of Canada to press forward on nuclear disarmament in the knowledge that 92 percent of Canadians want Canada to play a leading role in securing the elimination of nuclear weapons. By simultaneously supporting the New Agenda Coalition and working for a change in NATO's policies, Canada could make a significant contribution to ensuring the survival of the NPT, which is in itself so central to Canada's policies.

We therefore call upon the Government of Canada:

- **To work to ensure that NATO's intended review of nuclear weapons policy is both thorough and transparent, and to conduct public hearings on this issue within Canada;**
- **To support the work of the New Agenda Coalition, in particular by voting for its resolution in the UN General Assembly;**
- **To advocate immediate negotiations on a total ban on nuclear weapons.**