NGO Statement to First Committee on military expenditure, human security, and nuclear power*

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk to you on behalf of the NGO community about the relationship between military spending and human needs and the connection between the dangers associated with nuclear power and disarmament. As representatives of civil society, we urge you to see the pressing need for disarmament, and in particular nuclear disarmament, as part of the larger need for human security throughout the world.

Every year the First Committee gathers to discuss disarmament and the threat of nuclear weapons, while the states that possess nuclear weapons continue to invest money in modernizing, upgrading, and extending the life of their arsenals and the arms trade continues to grow. What we want to emphasize to you today is that international security will never come from arms - whether conventional or nuclear - but from human security: an end to poverty and disease; the advent of widespread sustainable, renewable energy; and nurturing rather than poisoning our environment. Until people everywhere have access to clean water, food, medicine, education, and opportunity, no amount of conventional or nuclear arms will suffice to meet the challenges all countries will inevitably face, as the rich grow richer at the expense of the poor and resources we take for granted today in certain parts of the world become as scarce as they are elsewhere.

In 2008 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon revealed a 5-point proposal for nuclear disarmament, saying, “The obstacles to disarmament are formidable. But the costs and risks of its alternatives never get the attention they deserve. But consider the tremendous opportunity cost of huge military budgets. Consider the vast resources that are consumed by the endless pursuit of military superiority.”1 Today we say to you that resources need to be allocated away from military pursuits, and priorities of government spending around the world must change.

At its essence, military spending is a global crisis of priorities. Worldwide military spending in 2010 amounted to $1.46 trillion.2 New estimates put global nuclear weapon spending at $100 billion this year, and project a combined $1 trillion in spending over the next ten years.3 Yet the most recent United Nations fact sheet on achieving the Millennium Development Goals states that 1.4 billion people still live under the international poverty line of $1.25 per day.4 Governments spend too much money and intellectual capital on nuclear and conventional weapons instead of on addressing basic human needs, which if fulfilled would bring true international stability.

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4 http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/MDG_FS_1_EN.pdf

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While billions of dollars are wastefully allocated to developing new nuclear weapons and delivery systems that will keep the threat of nuclear weapons alive for decades, approximately one in four children under the age of five is still underweight in the developing world.\(^\text{5}\) The World Bank estimates an annual investment of $40 to $60 billion – approximately half the amount currently spent globally on nuclear weapons – would enable the Millennium Development Goals on poverty alleviation to be achieved by the targeted year of 2015.\(^\text{6}\) Poverty, illiteracy, and disease can be replaced by opportunity, education, and health by changing global spending priorities; these are the only true measures by which real security will ever be achieved.

The United States spends more on its military than almost every other country in the world combined. Neither the financial crisis nor slight decreases in deployed nuclear warheads has proved enough to stem spending on nuclear weapons, facilities, and delivery systems in the U.S. – in fact, this spending has increased. Investment in nuclear weapon infrastructure has increased by 21\%, or $85 billion over the next ten years, and an additional $100 billion has been slated for nuclear weapons programs over the same period. In total, approximately $533 billion is earmarked for nuclear weapons, facilities, and means of delivery over the next ten years in the United States.\(^\text{7}\)

In 1953, then President Eisenhower said, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense… is there no other way the world may live?"\(^\text{8}\) Still, politicians in the U.S. are currently debating which social programs to cut in order to avoid making meaningful cuts to defense and nuclear weapon spending. Last month new U.S. Census Bureau statistics revealed that 46.2 million Americans live below that agency’s measure of poverty,\(^\text{9}\) showing clearly that the U.S. government has misplaced spending priorities at home as well as abroad.\(^\text{10}\)

The United States is not alone. Like the U.S., Russia is investing in new nuclear weapon facilities and means of delivery at an estimated cost of $70 billion over the next ten years.\(^\text{11}\) China is modernizing its strategic forces to remain viable through 2050, with new nuclear-

\(^\text{5}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{10}\) The Obama administration has outlined plans to replace 12 of the existing 14 Trident nuclear-armed submarines that now carry 228 missiles armed with about 1,100 thermonuclear warheads. The Pentagon is seeking billions to extend the life of 420 Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles and develop and build a follow-on intercontinental missile. Pentagon planners also want 80 to 100 new nuclear-capable strategic bombers with a new air-launched, nuclear-capable cruise missile to replace the existing B-2 and B-52 bombers that are expected to last another 20 years. The total lifetime costs for the new subs and bombers alone would exceed $400 billion.
\(^\text{11}\) http://www.globalzero.org/en/page/cost-of-nukes
capable submarines and mobile ICBMs for an estimated $6.8 billion in 2010, and France and the United Kingdom are spending an estimated $5.9 billion and $4.5 billion this year respectively on their nuclear weapons and delivery systems.\textsuperscript{12}

Other nuclear-armed states are similarly choosing to spend billions on nuclear weapons programs while achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 remains in danger. In 2011 Pakistan is estimated to be spending $1.8 billion and India $4.1 billion on nuclear weapons programs, while this year Israel is estimated to be spending $1.9 billion on its nuclear weapons program and North Korea $700 million.\textsuperscript{13}

In brief, spending on nuclear weapons, facilities, and delivery systems around the world continues, the goal of which is to extend the role of nuclear weapons in the security policies of nuclear-armed nations well into the latter part of our new century. This is despite the many commitments and obligations made to work toward nuclear disarmament right here at the United Nations.

The Final Document adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference for the first time lifted up the possibility that a nuclear weapons convention could be the tool used to finally fulfill the Treaty’s Article VI disarmament obligation, stating, “the final phase of the nuclear disarmament process should be pursued within an agreed legal framework, which a majority of states parties believe should include specified timelines.” In that same Final Document, nuclear weapon states parties also reaffirmed their “unequivocal undertaking” to achieve nuclear disarmament and the “continued validity of the practical steps agreed to in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference,” which include applying the principle of irreversibility to nuclear disarmament and diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies. Sadly, modernization plans of the nuclear-armed states that project nuclear weapons past 2050 do not give civil society hope that disarmament commitments and obligations will be met.

As the Secretary-General’s 5-point proposal for nuclear disarmament also states, “We should never forget that the nuclear fuel cycle is more than an issue involving energy or non-proliferation; its fate will also shape prospects for disarmament.” The pursuit of nuclear energy has become a matter not necessarily of energy security and independence, but of power and prestige in the international community. It is time that all nations rethink the costs and benefits of nuclear power generation for our interconnected world.

Nuclear energy was originally thought to be the answer to the world’s energy needs that would eventually produce electricity too cheap to meter. We know today, however, that the only way nuclear energy can compete as a source of electricity is through large government subsidies and loan guarantees to cover start-up costs over lengthy periods of power plant construction. The environmental risks of nuclear power are extraordinarily high, as proven by accidents at nuclear power plants caused by engineering flaws, aging, and acts of nature. One such accident has left the land around Chernobyl uninhabitable and another continues to poison the environment and children of Fukushima prefecture in Japan. The world cannot wait for more of these so-called highly unlikely accidents to occur before we address the cost benefit analysis of nuclear power.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
One such accident awaits us thirty-five miles from where we are all now assembled, at the Indian Point Energy Center, home to two operating 40 year old nuclear power reactors that are built on top of two fault lines. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has labeled one of these reactors the least likely to survive an earthquake with its core intact of all 104 operating reactors in the U.S. If there were a catastrophic accident or terrorist attack at Indian Point everyone in this room would be affected. The area’s evacuation plan covers only 10 miles, and that plan was called inadequate by an independent report commissioned by former NY Governor Pataki. At 35 miles away, if an accident happened now at Indian Point, we would be trapped along with the other 8 million people in New York City, as we all became exposed to dangerous radiation.

Article IV of the NPT states that all states parties have the inalienable right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes in conformity with Treaty non-proliferation obligations, and that all parties have the right to participate in the fullest possible exchange of technology for peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This right has become even more important to the vast majority of the world, who watch as nuclear weapon states parties say at once that they are working toward nuclear disarmament while also spending billions on modernizing their nuclear arsenals.

But the cost of continuing to rely on nuclear power is too great. A nuclear power accident in one part of the world affects the global economy and poisons the global environment for decades to come. As we are seeing in Fukushima right now, there are limits to what can be done to contain the environmental damage of a reactor whose core has melted down, which in turn endangers more people, water, soil, and air every minute of every day. Without nuclear power, these catastrophic environmental risks would be eliminated, as would proliferation and terrorism risks associated with the nuclear fuel cycle.

The 2011 Global Hibakusha Statement for a Nuclear-Free World identifies “global hibakusha” as, “all victims of radiation at each link in the nuclear chain – uranium mining, nuclear reactors, nuclear accidents, nuclear weapons development and testing, and nuclear waste.” The statement recognizes that Indigenous people have suffered “radioactive racism” through nuclear testing and nuclear waste dumping, contaminating their land, water, and health for generations to come. Continued reliance on nuclear power will turn more of our friends and families into global hibakusha; we cannot let this happen.

All nations – nuclear-armed and non-nuclear – should renounce reliance on nuclear power, and investment should be made instead into renewable sources of energy that can be more easily brought to the developing world and that do not harm but sustain the environment. National nuclear power programs should not be held up as things of prestige; real international status will come from a breakthrough in renewable energy production and its distribution.

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As representatives here of civil society, we respectfully request delegates consider the following recommendations:

1. Governments reassess their spending priorities and shift the spending of scarce monetary and intellectual capital from nuclear weapons and the military toward human needs, with specific attention given to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by the target year of 2015.

2. The United Nations host a high-level meeting to discuss the results of national dialogues on changing spending priorities to meet human needs and how the international community can work together to best use this “peace dividend” toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

3. Nuclear weapon states pledge to allocate the $40 - $60 billion annually that the World Bank estimates would enable the Millennium Development Goals on poverty alleviation to be achieved by the targeted year of 2015.

4. Nuclear weapon states cease all modernization programs of their nuclear weapons, facilities, and delivery systems, at a potential savings of $1 trillion over ten years. This money should be invested instead in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and funding research and development of sustainable, renewable energy and the means for its distribution around the world.

5. Non-nuclear-weapon states divest public funds from companies involved in the development, manufacture and maintenance of nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles; prohibit any such companies from engaging in nuclear-weapon-related work on their territory; and devise a national strategy to end private investments in nuclear weapons companies.

6. A cost/benefit analysis of continued reliance on nuclear power be initiated, including: the costs of long-term safe nuclear waste storage and the environmental and health effects of nuclear power plant accidents; the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation and nuclear terrorism; the cost of power generation that takes into account all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle – from mining uranium through decommissioning plants – as well as construction costs of power plants without government subsidies or loan guarantees; and the viability of nuclear power as a source of electricity in the developing world.