Advancing the disarmament goals of the NPT – steps towards universality

Presentation by World without Wars and Violence to the 2017 Prepcom in Vienna

Chair, national delegates and representatives of civil society,

We meet here in Vienna with a completely new nuclear disarmament landscape in front of us to the one seen in the failed 2015 Review Conference. The failure of the nuclear armed states parties to accept any measures to advance towards a ban treaty led non-nuclear armed states to take their own steps to fill the legal gap and prohibit nuclear weapons. The talks in New York in March this year have been a model of how States should engage with civil society in the field of nuclear disarmament to intelligently and carefully consider what should go into the ban treaty. We have high hopes for a robust and clear treaty to make all aspects of nuclear weapons manufacturing illegal when the talks conclude in July. This treaty fits coherently within the scope of measures foreseen within Article VI of the NPT. It is quite beyond belief to hear arguments to the contrary. And let’s be clear, without civil society, we wouldn’t be weeks away from this treaty.

We are in a new landscape and in a new moment of history because non-nuclear armed states have realised precisely how much power they have when they work together with civil society organisations against the common tyranny of nuclear terrorism exerted by the so-called “responsible” nuclear weapons states.

This changed landscape is a place in which our common intelligence and collective imagination can be put to good use to see how nuclear disarmament can be further advanced, and we wish to develop three aspects in which all NPT States Parties and civil society can work hand in hand and take further steps to the goal of full implementation of the NPT’s non-proliferation and disarmament pillars.

Conflict resolution, reducing the need for nuclear weapons

We are sympathetic to the non-nuclear states parties who signed the NPT in good faith in return for non-proliferation and disarmament only to have the P5 together with India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea block the system. In this light we believe that there is a lot that States can do to resolve the problems that prevent universality of the treaty. The P5 should, of course, already be leading the way in these efforts if they were truly acting in good faith. Will it be down, once again to the moral majority of non-nuclear armed states?

In World without Wars we propose the formation of a block of nations within the UN conformed of the anti-nuclear moral majority. These states, some 130 of whom participated in the Ban Treaty negotiations in May would use all their diplomatic, political and economic will to tackle the problems of nuclear disarmament.

In this scenario the following steps could be taken:

1. The organisation of international initiatives, open to states and civil society organisations to address, as a priority among many other issues:
   a. The conflict in Jammu Kashmir as a step towards peace between India and Pakistan.
   b. Peace in the Korean Peninsula, bringing to an end the Korean War, demilitarisation and withdrawal of foreign troops, and an eventual Korean reunification, should the population of those two countries so decide freely in a referendum.
c. Peace in the Middle East and reconstruction of war-torn regions as a key step in stopping the migration disaster that is affecting people of the region and the humanitarian strain put on third countries.

2. Divestment from nuclear-armed states and the establishment of a new economic bloc of nations that is diverse enough in resources, both natural and human, to resist the economic pressure of the world’s most powerful nations who shamefully blackmail the rest of the world.

3. The refusal to sell military hardware to any country outside the bloc.

4. The establishment of reconciliation services to go into conflict areas and work with the populations to deconstruct the negative images that have been built up of other nations, communities, religious groups, races, tribes, etc., which may be at the root of the conflict. We do not expect the four nations outside the NPT to unilaterally give up their nuclear weapons, without this being part of a process of global disarmament that also includes the P5, but we expect the global conditions to be created under which those weapons never need be used, where all the component parts are dismantled and under international inspection, and where the fissile material can never fall into other hands. There is no reason why this can’t be coordinated in a timetable that also includes the P5 and their disarmament also.

Education for Peace and Disarmament

I would now like to consider another important aspect that can be undertaken by all States Parties in order to create a culture in which nuclear weapons are considered abhorrent to human beings, namely education.

Those of us who participated in the Humanitarian Consequences conferences in Norway, Mexico and Austria came away with an updated understanding of the horrors of nuclear explosions be they intentional or accidental. We updated the images in our head from the grainy, black-and-white pictures of the aftermath of US atomic bombs. We learnt about the consequences of a single detonation on a major metropolis such as New York or Moscow. We heard about the appalling suffering of the Hibakusha from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We learnt about the further suffering of people in places hitherto unreported widely such as the people of the Marshall Islands, Aboriginal communities in Australia, and the Kazakhs living around Semipalatinsk. We have heard the first-hand accounts of the horrors, the deaths, the birth defects, the transmission of DNA mutations to second and third-generation survivors. We have heard how women and children are disproportionately affected by ionising radiation. We have heard this, felt physically sick and been moved to tears.

We have heard about the many near misses when bombs fell out of the sky and only through the smallest technical failure didn’t detonate. We learnt how Stanislav Petrov saved the world on the 26th of September 1983 because he didn’t report an oncoming attack because his intuition told him it was a technical malfunction. We learnt how the NATO Able Archer military exercises a few weeks later almost started World War III.

Yet who outside those conferences knows these things? Many countries have suggested in these very forums that measures need to be taken to educate the world about such matters. Civil Society organisations are willing to work hand in hand with national governments and institutions such as UNICEF in order to develop the appropriate educational materials and have it inserted in national curricula so that every child on the planet grows up learning about nuclear weapons, the horrors they inflict and the risks that we live with. We are ready to help governments train the future generations about peace, disarmament and nonviolence. Shouldn’t such personalities as Gandhi
from India, Luther King from the USA and Silo from Argentina, and the many other pioneers of nonviolence both male and female around the world also be taught in Schools?

**The world of Art and Culture**

The third area I’d like to address is the world of Art and Culture, because a heavy responsibility lies with the creative arts to also create the social atmosphere in which violence, wars and nuclear bombs are considered immoral and unjustifiable.

Let us not forget that President Reagan watching the film “The Day After” was so moved that it led him to change his mind on the prevailing policy of nuclear war which subsequently led to the signing of the INF Treaty.

Art and Culture have the possibility to change the world. And more importantly Art and Culture travels the world and has the capacity to enter and inform every household on the planet in a way that nothing else can.

Where the private entertainment industry is reluctant to fund such productions itself, governments must step in and, through the use of funds given to Ministries of Culture, bring nuclear issues to the forefront of humanity’s consciousness and keep them there so that we may never forget the horrors waiting to be unleashed.

**Conclusion**

Ladies and gentlemen,

In World without Wars we know that all of this sounds naïve and idealistic but we see two choices, one is a world in which we hope for the best that somehow and someday disarmament will come about through the NPT as universality and other steps are magically achieved, and the other is a world in which a renewed strength of purpose of the non-nuclear-armed states and their allies is applied seriously to the task of resolving the barriers to universality and the subsequent rapid implementation of all aspects of the NPT.

These can be none other than conflict resolution, and to create the conditions for conflict resolution it needs to be supported by education programmes to inform the youngest generations about the dangers we face as humanity, and cultural programmes to inform the older generations.

The nuclear disarmament movement is woefully under-funded. Many of us are life-long, unpaid volunteers who do this out of a vocation to try to save our planet from disaster. Many of us are in organisations dreadfully starved of funds.

We have seen with the ban treaty how a wise application of funds can lead to a dramatic change in the landscape. This experience must show the delegates of the countries present that investment in disarmament activities is productive and is money much better spent than on military budgets.

In each of the countries represented here are activists willing to work hard with governments to drive forward a programme of peace, nonviolence and disarmament in the fields of international relations, in education and in culture. You can ensure that those activists are funded and that international experts are able to keep on bringing you the latest information you need in order to make informed choices in forums such as this one.

There is a path to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Let us take it together, join forces; governments, civil-society, and individuals and advance towards a world free of nuclear weapons and the threat of the annihilation of our species.