

1. Abolition Is the Only Way: Introduction to the NGO presentations

Convenors: Xanthe Hall, IPPNW; John Loretz, IPPNW; Urs Cipolat, Tri-Valley CAREs; Diane Perlman, PsySR

Speaker: Xanthe Hall, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

Why are we always here and what do we want?

Non-Governmental Organisations have an important role to play in international decision-making. The participation of civil society in shaping our world and guarding its most precious ideas and values is vital. While governments remain the ultimate decision-makers, it is NGOs that allow citizens across the globe to partake in the political process and make their voices heard. Together with the Mayors, from whom you have already heard, we represent millions of people worldwide. Opinion polls show that these people want to live without the scourge of nuclear weapons, in a world where governments are mature enough to resolve conflicts with more effective, non-lethal methods. This is why we endorse the Mayor's campaign "2020 Vision".

NGOs working for nuclear disarmament have, year after year, participated in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Conferences in order to promote the transition to a nuclear weapon-free world with three obligations of non-proliferation, disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons. The treaty contains all three obligations and does not make a hierarchy of them. We consider them all equally important to the survival of our world.

Some say we should not admit that the NPT is in crisis for fear of undermining it. We disagree. In order to make the Treaty work as it was intended, we must recognise that it has long been in crisis. Secretary-General Annan's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change did just that. In its recent report, it stated that "the nuclear non-proliferation regime is now at risk because of lack of compliance with existing commitments, withdrawal or threats of withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to escape those commitments, a changing international security environment and the diffusion of technology." The Panel's final conclusion is especially alarming: "We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the non-proliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation."

We consider it our common responsibility at this Conference to stop the further erosion of the NPT and to strengthen the Treaty. Even though the NPT is in crisis, it remains a fundamental stepping-stone on the way towards a safer, nuclear weapon-free world. The NPT has set the global norms for non-proliferation and disarmament for 35 years, and the vast majority of its members continue to comply with its obligations without question. We commend these countries and appeal to all NPT member states to work tirelessly toward the preservation and strengthening of the Treaty.

This opening statement is a collective product of all NGOs participating in this Conference. It sets out, simply, our reasons why we believe that nuclear weapons in

today's world are of no use at all, to anyone, for any reason. Later you will hear our main recommendations. We urge you to consider these reasons and recommendations in your deliberations about the future of the NPT.

A. Why Nuclear Weapons are Obsolete

1.) The finger is still on that button

The Cold War is over. Yet thousands of nuclear weapons remain on hair trigger alert in the US and Russia. These could go off by accident, as a result of human error, or through unauthorised use, killing millions.

2.) On offer: Nuclear Weapons for Everyone

Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea. That makes nine nuclear weapon states, despite the NPT. Who will be the next nuclear weapon state? If the NPT falls apart, will we be forced to live in a world with dozens of countries armed with nuclear weapons and no controls? Already nuclear technology is being sold on the black market.

3.) A smoker cannot forbid others to smoke

No state wants other states to get hold of nuclear weapons. Neither do we. Mohammed El-Baradei, Director-General of the IAEA, said: "As long as you continue to have countries dangling a cigarette from their mouth, you cannot tell everybody not to smoke with a high degree of credibility". And yet the nuclear weapon states are modernising their own arsenals. The US is even planning new types of nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Posture Review and one budget request after another make this undeniable. New and existing nuclear weapons (for example Mininukes and Bunker Busters) might be used in "preventive" warfighting against hardened underground targets. The suggestion that the collateral damage could thereby be minimised, reduces the threshold for the use of such weapons. Expert studies have shown that, however small, these weapons would still produce high levels of fallout and remain weapons of mass destruction that kill and contaminate with radiation. Moreover, our information indicates that the nuclear earth penetrator would not be have a small yield at all.

4.) Nuclear weapons don't stop people from dying

The big threats that our world is facing today cannot be averted through possession of nuclear weapons. Mass destruction takes place daily without any bombs going off at all. There can be no military protection for the victims of respiratory diseases, diarrhoea, malaria, hepatitis, measles, and AIDS. Or of environmental degradation, starvation, poverty, or climate change. Or civil war, using small arms and machetes. These are the real killers. Security against these threats cannot be provided by nuclear weapons. What we need is clean water, nutrition, health, education and a safe place to live. The tsunami in South Asia showed us that spending money on a tsunami warning system could have saved many lives. So why are we spending billions on missile defence and nuclear weapons instead of investing in technology to promote human security? On the other hand, every single disarmament measure is a step towards confidence and trust-building and frees more resources for real security measures.

5.) You are the nuclear target

If you point nuclear weapons at anyone, then they are pointed at you. The possession of nuclear weapons is an invitation for others to acquire them and threaten you with them.

6.) After the fact: There is no medical aid

Once the worst has happened – whether an all-out nuclear war caused by accident or a “limited” nuclear war – health services will break down. The number of burns alone would overwhelm the most well-equipped burns unit. Assuming there are any burns units. Or people to staff them. Radiation sickness will follow. Many people will die a terrible death without any medical relief at all. In a “conventional” war or a major disaster, such as the December tsunami, health services are barely able to cope and often break down. In a nuclear war there would be no chance at all.

7.) Nuclear weapons cannot deter terrorists

A suicide bomber or an attacker armed with a carpet knife who is prepared to give his life for his cause cannot be deterred by any kind of threat, including a nuclear threat. On the contrary, the very existence of nuclear weapons and fissile materials from which to make them leaves the world more vulnerable to attack from non-state actors. Radioactive materials - whether legally or illicitly acquired - can be used either for making a nuclear weapon or for use in a radiological weapon.

Abolition is the only way

The goal of this opening statement is to show you why we believe that nuclear weapons in the 21st century are obsolete. At the end of these presentations, we intend to also provide you with a set of carefully deliberated recommendations on how to move forward toward the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide.

More collectively prepared NGO presentations will now follow. These include NGO expert analyses of topics you will be discussing over the next few weeks. Many NGOs will present additional events and briefings on these topics during the Conference. These are interspersed with the “voices” of the people, including those of indigenous peoples, youth, and the hibakusha. Even though numerous, all of our interventions today underscore the centrality of the NPT and the categorical imperative of achieving a nuclear weapon free world.

At the end of this session, we will have the opportunity for a direct exchange - there will be time set aside for “interactivity” between you - the States parties - and us, the citizens of the world who have dedicated our lives to the abolition of nuclear weapons. We thank you for attending this session, and we appreciate your rapt attention. For the information, perspectives and analysis you are about to hear will not only inform your debate, but it will enable you to use this Review Conference to get us that much closer to a nuclear weapon-free world.

From where you are now, the global abolition of nuclear weapons may seem a long way off. But it is the only way. And the sooner you start, the sooner you’ll get there. As NGOs, we are here not only as a voice of civil society reminding you to get on with the

job, but also a source of technical, scientific and medical knowledge at your disposal. The closer we are able to work together toward our common goals of peace, security and sustainability, the more likely it is that we will achieve them. And achieve them we must.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.