

NGO Presentations
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Introduction

Convenor: Peter Weiss, President of the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, and former President and current Vice President of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms
Speaker: John Burroughs, Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy

The Chinese word for crisis consists of two characters, one representing danger and the other opportunity. This truism is particularly applicable to the current phase of the nuclear dilemma. The danger as well as the opportunity are in several ways greater than ever. Let me mention some of them:

- The current nuclear arsenals include weapons with many times the yield of the bombs the United States dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The most numerous warhead in the US arsenal has nearly seven times the yield of the Nagasaki bomb. The largest warhead in the Chinese arsenal has more than 250 times the Nagasaki yield. Try to imagine what devastation weapons with seven times and more the power of the Nagasaki explosion could cause if dropped on population centers or anywhere else on this globe.
- The new strategic doctrines of some of the nuclear weapons powers go considerably beyond the old ones. They envisage, for instance, the use of nuclear weapons in the event of “surprising military developments.” At least on paper, the conventionalization of nuclear weapons is in full swing.
- States possessing nuclear weapons are less committed to their elimination than they used to be, despite the clear requirements of NPT Article VI and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. Speaking to reporters in Mumbai on March 4, 2008, General Kevin Chilton, the commander of US strategic forces, said: “I believe we are going to need a nuclear deterrent ... for the remainder of this century, ... I think what we need is a modernized nuclear weapon to go with our modernized nuclear platforms”.
- At the same time, the desire of some non-nuclear weapon states as well as non-state actors to “join the club” is becoming well nigh irresistible. Multilateral, universally applicable management and ownership of technology to make nuclear fuel – or nuclear bombs – have yet to be established, and Global Nuclear Energy Partnership-type proposals would promote reprocessing of spent fuel and use of plutonium-based nuclear fuel.

Now for a look at the bright side:

- The current situation in the Korean peninsula, which not long ago threatened to erupt into a full-scale war, demonstrates that nuclear diplomacy can work, even as between two determined opponents.
- Recent statements by high officials familiar with the nuclear question, including Dr. Blix, Dr. ElBaradei and a number of delegates to the Conference on Disarmament, have been made with a tone of urgency not heard before; they bring to mind Dr. King's phrase about “the fierce urgency of now.”
- Perhaps most important is the number of new and influential voices from all shades of the political spectrum—including former Cold Warriors like Sam Nunn and Henry Kissinger—calling for a nuclear weapons-free world. This is, of course, music to the ears of those of us in

civil society who have been pursuing this goal for over half a century, despite its somewhat elitist tone. But never mind, we activists are used to this sort of thing: the people lead and eventually the leaders follow.

I thank you for this opportunity to be heard, on behalf of myself and my colleagues who will now address the details in which the devil is said to reside.