

## **Introduction to NGO Presentations to NPT Prepcom**

*Convened and delivered by: Peter Weiss, International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms*

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates: My name is Peter Weiss. I am Vice President of IALANA, the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms.

I am grateful for the opportunity which you have given to civil society to share with you some of its concerns about the subject of this meeting. Like all of you, we have great expectations for next year's NPT Review Conference. It will take place in a new climate of internationalism which affords reason to hope that cooperation is replacing domination in world affairs and that international law is resuming its rightful place as the operative expression of the world's yearning for peace and justice.

My message, by way of introduction, is simple: For the first time since those two fateful days in August of 1945, the voices demanding "never again!" are growing to a thunderous chorus which can no longer be ignored. It comes, as always, mostly from the vast majority of countries who have kept their Article II pledge to renounce these hellish weapons, but also now from all shades of the political spectrum in the minority of countries who possess them, but have done little to fulfill their part of the Article VI bargain. It is welcome news when the new President of the United States declares that he will make a nuclear weapons free world a central element of American foreign policy and when leaders of other nuclear weapons countries voice that sentiment as well. It is welcome news when the Secretary General of the United Nations states that one way to achieve this objective is to begin discussion of the Draft Nuclear Weapons Convention which Costa Rica and Malaysia have made into an official UN document and it is welcome news when the European Parliament endorse the nuclear weapons convention.

At the same time, the danger of nuclear proliferation is arguably greater than ever. NPT is fraying at the seams; the noxious myth of deterrence remains firmly embedded in the strategies of the nuclear weapons states; the mantra of "going down to 1000" has emerged as a false substitute for real disarmament; the CD slumbers on in its perennial deadlock; and the dark cloud of nuclear terrorism continues to hang over all our heads.

This combination of negative and positive factors, of hope and despair, makes it absolutely essential to press on the door opening toward a nuclear weapons free world and to do so in a committed and robust manner, not merely step by halting step. Going down to three zeros, as in 1000, is not enough; going down to zero is imperative. If we embark on this path, our children and grandchildren will thank us. If we do not, history will not absolve us.

I thank you for your attention.