

# TOWARD A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

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**TOKYO, Mar 16 2009 (IPS)** - Crying out in opposition to war and nuclear weapons is neither emotionalism nor self-pity. It is the highest expression of human reason based on an unflinching commitment to the dignity of life.

In the quest for global peace and in the hope of stimulating discussion of various critical issues, I have been authoring an annual peace proposal since 1983. This year, again, the realisation of a world free from nuclear weapons is a principal theme.

A first crucial step in the process of ridding the world of nuclear weapons is to hold a US-Russia Summit on nuclear disarmament at the earliest possible moment.

Newly-inaugurated US president Barack Obama stated during his presidential campaign last year, "We need to work with Russia to take US and Russian ballistic missiles off hair-trigger alert; to dramatically reduce the stockpiles of our nuclear weapons and material."

Meanwhile, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev last October stressed the "exceptional importance" his government places on concluding a new, legally-binding Russian-American agreement to replace START 1 (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), which expires this December.

It is essential that the heads of state of these two nations conduct frank face-to-face dialogue to move the disarmament agenda forward. Between them, the US and Russia account for 95 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal, and the significance of a resumption of bilateral talks on nuclear disarmament will be immense.

These two states have a historic opportunity to show strong leadership by setting targets for nuclear warhead reduction to replace START 1, ensuring a robust verification regime, and initiating talks on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). It is also important for the US to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

We must never forget that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) does not give the five nuclear-weapon states the right to retain their special status indefinitely. Building on a US-Russia consensus, a five-state summit for nuclear disarmament with the participation of the UN secretary-general should be convened regularly to draw up a roadmap of specific measures to fulfill their disarmament

obligations under Article VI of the NPT. Such good faith efforts on the part of the nuclear-weapon states are essential if confidence in the NPT is to be restored. Only then will it be possible to win the trust of countries outside of the NPT regime and obtain commitments on freezing and dismantling nuclear weapon development programmes.

Alongside such steps, global society, working through the United Nations, should press for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) -a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons, including their development and testing. The only effective means of protecting ourselves from the threat of nuclear weapons is to abolish them within a legal framework capable of ensuring that they are never produced again.

A Model NWC has already been circulated as a UN document. In an unprecedented move for a UN secretary-general, last year Ban Ki-moon added his voice, urging governments to consider an NWC.

Public support for nuclear abolition is gathering momentum: a poll conducted in 2008 in 21 countries, including the nuclear-weapon states, showed that on average 76 percent of respondents favored an international agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons. This is highly significant as it was the strong grassroots support of civil society that drove the groundbreaking campaigns for the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997 and the Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008.

It is necessary for the people of the world to join in solidarity to “lay siege” to the very idea of nuclear weapons. The Global Zero campaign launched in December 2008 is also focused on the broad-based mobilisation of international public opinion to achieve the elimination of these horrific weapons.

In 2007, Soka Gakkai International (SGI), an international grassroots Buddhist movement, initiated a People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition campaign, including exhibitions, seminars led by youth, and the creation of a five-language DVD documenting the experiences of atomic bomb survivors. Rooted in a commitment to human security, we will continue to develop this campaign in collaboration with other NGOs active in the disarmament field.

The SGI has been campaigning for nuclear abolition for more than half a century. This movement, originating in Japan, the first country to experience the full horrors of nuclear weapons, is founded on the belief that they are a manifestation of the darkest impulses within human nature, an absolute evil that threatens our collective right to live and undermines the very possibility of human dignity.

We need a revolution in consciousness on the most fundamental level -one that reawakens our humanity- if we are to challenge and defeat the myth that security can be built on the threat of mass and perhaps mutual destruction.

The journey may seem long and daunting, but we must remember that each courageous step can drive a process of transformation, ultimately changing the course of history. I urge people everywhere to raise their

voices against nuclear weapons, to unleash a groundswell of dialogue for peace that will define our age.  
This is the most assured strategy, the truest path to peace. (END/COPYRIGHT IPS)