Imperative for disarmament
An entirely preventable risk continues to threaten the world

Push for abolition
A Q&A with ICAN’s Beatrice Fihn

Canada’s ‘to do’ list
Toward a world free of nuclear weapons

Hiroshima Day
A keynote address on the anniversary of the bombing

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Nuclear Disarmament
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COVER: ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) youth campaigners from Hiroshima have launched a project to send 1,000 hand-folded paper cranes (depicted) to the president or prime minister of every UN member state – a total of more than 190,000 cranes. In return for this gift, they are seeking a message of support for a treaty banning nuclear weapons. ICAN
The imperative for nuclear disarmament

The case for nuclear disarmament is rooted in both concerns about the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and about the ways in which international rights and responsibilities are exercised.

By Cesar Jaramillo

Hiroshima could happen again. The doctrines, actions, and postures by those that embrace the purported benefits of nuclear weapons seem more conducive to perpetuating, rather than renouncing, nuclear weapons retention.

Moreover, nuclear weapons continue to be framed as the supreme security guarantee for the majority of the world’s population—either through direct possession or by virtue of collective security arrangements. India and China alone account for more than 2.5 billion citizens whose governments continue to retain a nuclear arsenal and, with it, the distinct possibility of engaging in nuclear warfare.

This is why the primary rationale for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons rests in the possibility that a catastrophe could occur, by accident or design, and would likely involve greater numbers of vastly more powerful bombs than those used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Until all nuclear weapons are eliminated, an entirely preventable risk lingers. What drives the push for nuclear abolition is not just the recognition of what is essentially a truism—that if nuclear weapons exist, they might be used. It is also that:

- The unacceptability of this scenario has been exposed and denounced on political, humanitarian, strategic, economic, social, environmental, legal, and ethical grounds.
- The risk of nuclear weapons use is exacerbated with high-stakes international security tensions, especially between nuclear-weapons states.
- It defies logic that the odds in such crises will always favour nuclear restraint.
- We have the diplomatic and political capacity to begin a robust, multilateral process to achieve nuclear abolition.
- It is unlikely that this task will become easier if postponed.

No credible multilateral undertaking now exists that will lead to nuclear disarmament in the foreseeable future. Yes, there have been several efforts to further the nuclear disarmament agenda: from open-ended working groups to high-level

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meetings; from groups of governmental experts to informal consultations. But they have tended to navigate hypothetical waters and their proposals to pursue and achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world may never be implemented.

These worthy initiatives do address important matters: how particular issues could be tackled in an eventual nuclear disarmament process; which technical aspects would be relevant at various stages of negotiations; what verification mechanism would be in place under any number of theoretical scenarios; who might lead the process. And the same concerns are revisited through slightly different lenses year after year. The reality, however, is that there is no comprehensive abolition process to lead. Or disarmament to verify.

An increasingly loud denunciation of the intransigence of states with nuclear weapons can be heard around the globe. Calls for the immediate commencement of a serious process to eliminate nuclear weapons are more persistent.

In recent years, renewed attention to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has served as both catalyst and rallying point for a growing number of states and international civil society organizations. Key points include:

- The widespread and long-term devastation to ecosystems, the global economy, and human society from a limited nuclear-weapons exchange—even the end of human civilization and all life;
- The impossibility of providing effective emergency relief following the use of nuclear weapons; and
- Complete nuclear disarmament as the only certain way to avoid such a catastrophe.

From the humanitarian perspective the case is simple. Because the effects of the use of nuclear weapons are unacceptable, the risk that they might be used must be completely eliminated.

It’s a strong case, because it doesn’t require that debates about the usefulness of nuclear weapons be settled first. In other words, there doesn’t need to be consensus on the political or military role of nuclear weapons or on their effectiveness to deter aggression. So, the argument from a humanitarian perspective is not just that the benefits of nuclear weapons have been widely contested, but that any advantages—real or perceived—of nuclear weapons are outweighed by humanitarian considerations.

Further, the imperative for nuclear abolition does not only hold on humanitarian grounds. The difficulties in pursuing a world without nuclear weapons epitomize a broader multilateral system riddled with double standards. No realistic observer—in or out of government—would likely characterize the period since the NPT came into force as a time of significant progress in negotiating complete nuclear disarmament. The global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime constitutes a case study in inequitable, discriminatory global governance.

Nuclear-weapons states extol the virtues of nuclear weapons for safeguarding their national interests, but expect no one else to embrace the same rationale. They demand immediate, consistent compliance with the non-proliferation obligations of the NPT, but disregard their own responsibility to disarm. They consider nuclear weapons possession—or pursuit—by some states unacceptable, but seem content to accept the nuclear-weapons programs of military or economic allies, even if outside the NPT framework.

Some double standards are so entrenched that they hardly elicit any scrutiny. What does it say about the balanced application of international norms when each “P5 + 1” state (China, France, the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, plus Germany) castigates Iran over its nuclear program, but has nuclear weapons on its own territory? The P5 (permanent members of the UN Security
Council) are nuclear-weapons states under the NPT. Germany has U.S. bombs forward deployed on its soil at the disposal of NATO—in contravention of NPT provisions that specifically prohibit transferring and receiving nuclear weapons.

International Humanitarian Law (IHL) is often invoked to strengthen the norm against nuclear weapons. It is true that the use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with fundamental IHL precepts, including the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality, which govern the legal use of force and dictate that the anticipated civilian harm from an attack during conflict must not be excessive in relation to the anticipated military gain.

However, IHL is insufficient to challenge the status quo. A key limitation of various resolutions, statements, and legal precedents rooted in IHL is that they specifically refer to the threat or use of nuclear weapons—not to their possession.

Nuclear-armed states claim that they are formally compliant with IHL provisions since they are neither threatening to use nor using nuclear weapons. Only if and when they do use nuclear weapons will they be in violation of IHL.

An argument could be made that mere possession amounts to threat. Nuclear weapons on high-alert increase the threat, as does the absence of a no-first-use policy. But not everyone would accept this reasoning. From the perspective of IHL, the case against possession is not nearly as strong as the case against use. And in the bizarre logic espoused by nuclear-armed states, there is no contradiction between possessing nuclear weapons and saying that they hope to never again use them.

In nuclear disarmament discussions there are frequent references to the research, development, possession, testing, stockpiling, use, and threat of use of nuclear weapons. In the end, the key feature is possession—which is where IHL falls short.

Given the inadequacy of IHL to fully address the risk posed by nuclear weapons, what is needed is a multilateral framework to unambiguously prohibit every dimension of nuclear weaponry—including possession—and to achieve the elimination of these weapons in a specified timeframe.

The continued existence of nuclear weapons is not a sign that the case for nuclear disarmament is flawed, but that some states refuse to accept it. For now, the “never again” mantra often voiced by Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors—or Hibakusha—is a plea, not a guarantee. □
The problem of nuclear weapons

“It is time for a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory, and universal nuclear weapons convention.”

ABOVE: The UN Security Council meets amid the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, when the Soviet Union came close to launching a full-scale nuclear attack. UN Photo
Having learned to live with nuclear weapons, we have become desensitized to the gravity and immediacy of the threat. The tyranny of complacency could yet exact a fearful price with nuclear Armageddon.

Courting nuclear Armageddon
Forty-four years after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) came into force, the world still finds itself perilously close to the edge of the nuclear cliff. The cliff is perhaps not quite as steep as it was in the 1980s, but going over it would be fatal for planet Earth. Authoritative roadmaps exist to walk us back to the relative safety of a denuclearized world, but a perverse mixture of hubris and arrogance on the part of the nuclear-weapons states (NWS) exposes us to the risk of sleepwalking into a nuclear disaster. Even a limited regional nuclear war in which India and Pakistan used 50 Hiroshima-size (15 kiloton) bombs each, could lead to a famine that kills up to a billion people (Helfand 2012).

Nuclear weapons could be catastrophic if ever used by both sides in a war between nuclear-armed rivals; prospects for their use have grown since the end of the Cold War. For nuclear peace to hold, deterrence and failsafe mechanisms must work every time. For nuclear Armageddon to break out, deterrence or failsafe mechanisms need to break down only once. Unlike most situations where risk can be mitigated after disaster strikes, with nuclear weapons all risks must be mitigated before any disaster (Hellman 2011).

Deterrence stability depends on rational decision-makers being always in office on all sides—a dubious and not very reassuring precondition. It depends on there being no rogue launch, human error, or system malfunction—an impossibly high bar. The number of times that we have come frighteningly close to nuclear holocaust is simply staggering (Schlosser 2013). According to one U.S. study, more than 1,200 nuclear weapons were involved in significant incidents between 1950 and 1968 because of security breaches, lost weapons, failed safety mechanisms, or accidents when weapons were dropped or crushed in elevators, etc.

The most graphic example is the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. The U.S. strategy was based on the best available intelligence, which indicated that there were no nuclear warheads in Cuba. In fact Cuba had 162 warheads (McNamara 2013). In November 1983, in response to NATO war games exercise Able Archer, which Moscow mistook to be real, the Soviets came close to launching a full-scale nuclear attack.

Nuclear weapons bring the added risk of proliferation to extremist elements through leakage, theft, state collapse, and state capture. A nuclear program breeds excessive centralization of political control and obsessive secrecy. It can lead to the creation of a national security state with a premium on governmental secretiveness, reduced public accountability, and increased distance between citizens and government. A nuclear program undermines democratic accountability and contributes instead to a culture of lies and evasions. The nuclear age has also left a trail of grave environmental damage.

The impact of the NPT
The NPT has kept the nuclear nightmare at bay since 1968. Virtually the entire family of nations has signed it. The number of countries with nuclear weapons is still in single figures. Yet at the same time, the nuclear arsenals of the five NPT-
defined nuclear-weapons states (N5—the United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France) expanded enormously under the NPT umbrella. The global total of nuclear warheads climbed steadily after 1945, peaked in the mid-1980s, fell dramatically for about a decade and then stabilized in the new millennium. Currently there are more than 16,000 nuclear weapons stockpiled by the world’s nine nuclear-armed states; 5,000 warheads are launch-ready, 2,000 in a state of high operational alert.

The N5 must be deemed to be in violation of their solemn obligation to disarm. The advisory opinion of the World Court in 1996 was that the NPT requires them to engage in and bring to a conclusion negotiations for nuclear abolition. Yet a surprising number of arms control experts focus solely on the non-proliferation side to demand denial of technology and materiel to all who refuse to sign and abide by the NPT, and punishment of any who cross the threshold.

The symbiotic link between non-proliferation and disarmament is integral to the NPT. Most countries gave up the weapons option in return for a promise by the N5 to engage in good-faith negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons. The most powerful stimulus to nuclear proliferation by others is the continuing possession of nuclear weapons by some. Within the constraints of the NPT, a non-nuclear industrialized country such as Japan can build the necessary infrastructure to provide it with the ‘surge’ capacity to upgrade quickly to nuclear weapons. The NPT proscribes non-nuclear states from acquiring nuclear weapons, but fails to offer a strategy for dealing with non-signatory countries. It permits withdrawals, such as North Korea’s in 2003, much too easily.

There are other problems. The definition of an NWS is chronological: a country that manufactured and exploded a nuclear device before January 1, 1967. India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, or Iran could test, deploy, and even use nuclear weapons, but would not be described as nuclear powers. Conversely, the UK and France could dismantle their nuclear edifice and destroy their nuclear arsenals, but would still count as nuclear powers.

The world is at a loss on how to stop Iran from crossing the nuclear weapons threshold and how to persuade, coax, or coerce North Korea to step back into the NPT as a denuclearized member in good standing. The NPT is creaking badly even with respect to its nuclear energy bargain. More countries are bumping against the nuclear weapons ceiling at the same time as the world energy crisis is encouraging a move to nuclear energy.

There is a gathering sense around the world that nuclear threats are intensifying and multiplying. There is a growing conviction that existing policies have failed to mute the threats. In the meantime, scientific and technological advancements since 1968 have greatly expanded our technical toolkit for monitoring and verifying weapons reduction and elimination. It is time for a multilaterally negotiated, non-discriminatory, and universal nuclear weapons convention.

**Restarting a stalled agenda**

The only certain way of avoiding a nuclear war is to abolish nuclear weapons.

The nuclear agenda was reenergized with the Prague promise of President Barack Obama in April 2009 to aim for the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. Russia and the United States negotiated, signed, ratified, and brought into force New START to cut back their deployed nuclear arsenals by one-third.

Yet there is a palpable and growing sense, heightened by the crisis in Ukraine, that New START might mark the end of nuclear accomplishments. Not one country that had the bomb in 1968 has given up nuclear weapons. Indeed all nuclear-armed states seem determined to retain their weapons indefinitely. To would-be proliferators, the lesson is clear: nuclear

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NuCleaR DISaRMaMeNT

weapons are indispensable.

A Cold War nuclear posture persists; one good example of this is weapons held on high alert. Some 2,000 nuclear warheads are kept at high readiness to be launched en masse before the apprehended arrival of incoming enemy missiles. Like nuclear terrorism, the launch of nuclear weapons on high alert by mistake, miscalculation, or through a malfunction is low probability but high impact. In the tense environment of nuclear decision-making, high-alert weapons carry a four-fold risk of unnecessary nuclear war:

- Accidental launch (technical failure caused by malfunction);
- Authority to launch usurped by a subordinate official or terrorists (custody failure leading to rogue launch);
- Misinterpretation of incoming warning data (information failure leading to miscalculation);
- Premature and ill-judged response to an actual attack (miscalculation caused by decision-making failure in a crisis).

Taking nuclear warheads and systems off high alert can deepen the stability of nuclear deterrence.

Civil society and the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have a crucial role to play in promoting global norms, monitoring state compliance with agreed commitments, and reflecting community values and concerns that do not always find expression in governmental processes.

The most productive way for committed states and NGOs to generate political momentum for the nuclear disarmament cause may be to emphasize the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. This was the primary motivation behind the challenge to the legality of nuclear weapons mounted in the World Court that resulted in the 1996 advisory opinion that their use was indefensible except, possibly, in self-defence when a state’s very survival was at stake.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference expressed “deep concern at the catastrophic..."
humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, and reaffirmed the need for all states at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.” A key message from the first humanitarian consequences conference in Oslo in March 2013 was that no country or international body has the capacity to address the immediate humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation or provide adequate assistance to victims. The second conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons was held in Mexico in February 2014, with Austria scheduled to host the third this coming December. The momentum building up behind the humanitarian impact movement is proving to be a diplomatic irritant to the nuclear-armed states.

A roadmap to abolition
Like chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons cannot be un-invented. But, like them, nuclear weapons can be controlled, regulated, restricted, and outlawed under an international regime that ensures strict compliance through effective and credible inspection and verification.

The circuit-breaker in the countervailing nuclear-weapons capability spiral is the United States. It has a special responsibility to light the way to nuclear abolition as the only country to have used them and as the world’s biggest military power. By destroying its nuclear stockpile, Washington would prove that national security can be safeguarded without a nuclear-weapons capability.

A zero option that destroyed the infrastructure of the nuclear weapons industry would be far easier to police even against non-state groups. The best way to keep nasty weapons out of the hands of nasty groups is to keep them out of the hands of governments, including good governments.

What we need is a multiphased roadmap to abolition that prioritizes concrete immediate steps in the first few years, such as introducing more robust firewalls to separate possession from use of nuclear weapons; further significant cuts in existing nuclear arsenals and a freeze on production of fissile materials in the medium term; further constraints on the deployment of their nuclear weapons on the territories of other states, for example by means of regional NWFZs; and an enforceable, new, international nuclear weapons convention that requires total and verified destruction of all nuclear stockpiles within our lifetime.

Implementing the NPT’s Article 6 on nuclear disarmament would dramatically transform the NPT into a prohibition regime. Because the NPT has been subverted into a non-proliferation regime, the time has come to look beyond it to a nuclear weapons convention. There are many technical, legal, and political challenges to be overcome. Serious preparatory work needs to be started now, with conviction and commitment.

The most powerful stimulus to nuclear proliferation by others is the continuing possession of the bomb by some. It is difficult to convince others of the futility of nuclear weapons when all who have them prove their continuing utility by insisting on keeping them. The threat to use nuclear weapons, whether to deter their use by others or to prevent proliferation, legitimizes their possession, deployment, and use.

The only choice is between nuclear abolition and cascading proliferation. The notion that a self-selecting group of five countries can keep an indefinite monopoly on the most destructive class of weapons ever invented defies logic, common sense, and all human history. Not surprising, then, that the self-serving belief has already been proven decisively wrong.

As part of a forward-looking agenda, the United States and Russia could initiate negotiations for a new treaty to reduce stockpile numbers for all classes of
weapons, significantly cut back on their 2,000 warheads held in high alert, and embrace the principle of ‘no first use’ in their nuclear doctrines. Washington could also address Chinese and Russian concerns about ballistic missile defence and prompt global strike capabilities.

The United States, China, India, and Pakistan could move to rapid ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. China, India, and Pakistan could freeze their nuclear capabilities at present levels and Pakistan could lift its veto on negotiations for a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. India and Pakistan should avoid destabilizing steps such as the development of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons and missile defences.

Finally, U.S. allies, including Australia and Canada, could accept a significantly reduced role for nuclear weapons in their security protection. None of these steps would jeopardize the national security of the country concerned; each would make the world a little safer.

We need to look beyond and perhaps outside the NPT to realize the goal of nuclear elimination. But we must not jeopardize the regime until we are ready to replace it with something that is better and more robust.

In the journey to a post-NPT world, in which all nuclear weapons have been eliminated and their associated infrastructure has been destroyed under a universal and verifiable nuclear weapons convention, we have to guard against two critical risks. First, at present a significant number of countries shelter under the nuclear umbrella of others. A hasty or premature dismantlement of the U.S. nuclear stockpile, for example, could tempt one or more to acquire an independent nuclear weapons capability. Second, we must make sure that we do not tip back into a world that is once again “safe” for major-power conventional wars.

The problem: Nuclear weapons

Without strengthening national security, nuclear weapons jeopardize international security and diminish our common humanity. Their very destructiveness robs them of military utility against other nuclear powers and political utility against non-nuclear-armed countries. As long as any country has any, others will want some. As long as they exist, they will be used again one day. That is why we must make the transition to a world in which nuclear weapons become progressively marginal and eventually unnecessary.

The problem is not nuclear proliferation, but nuclear weapons. They could not proliferate if they did not exist. Because they do, they will.

The only guarantee of nuclear non-proliferation is nuclear disarmament. The walk to freedom from fear of nuclear weapons may prove to be very long, but we must neither step off the path nor stop short of that destination.

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Ploughshares Program Officer Cesar Jaramillo talks with Beatrice Fihn, who is the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and based in Geneva.

**CJ:** Let’s begin with a bit about ICAN. What can you tell us about the primary objectives, strategies, and membership of the campaign?

**BF:** ICAN is a global campaign coalition working to mobilize people in all countries to inspire, persuade, and pressure their governments to initiate and support negotiations for a treaty banning and eliminating nuclear weapons. Currently, over 380 organizations have joined the campaign, from 94 different countries.

**CJ:** ICAN supports the pursuit of a ban treaty, even without the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5). What do you understand by ‘ban treaty’ in this context?

**BF:** We don’t have a model treaty, which lays out exactly what a ban would look like in the end. But for ICAN, the ban treaty should be an international, legally binding instrument that will prohibit the use, development, production, stockpiling, and deployment of nuclear weapons.

**CJ:** Some skeptics argue that without P5 participation the process to achieve a ban treaty is pointless. How would you respond to this type of concern? Are there other benefits to
A humanitarian focus means that nuclear weapons are no longer only a topic for technical experts in the arms control community of Washington, DC.

be gained, even if prohibition is not followed by actual elimination?

BF: By just looking at the history of disarmament and arms control treaties, I think it is obvious that treaties matter and have an impact even if they don’t have universal participation. If they didn’t matter, why would you ever need to block anything? The treaties prohibiting other weapons categories, such as the biological weapons convention, the chemical weapons convention, the landmines treaty, or the cluster munitions convention, have all had an impact on states outside the legal regimes.

As we don’t have an explicit legal rejection of nuclear weapons, a treaty banning nuclear weapons would offer states that are concerned about the unacceptable consequences of nuclear weapons the opportunity to formalize a categorical rejection of these weapons by anyone under any circumstances. Such a treaty, even without the nuclear-armed states on board, would enhance the stigma against these weapons, undermine the legitimacy of maintaining and modernizing nuclear arsenals, and would require governments to either continue to support nuclear weapons or reject them entirely. It could be a very powerful tool, even if the nuclear-armed states remained outside.

By contributing to international stigmatization and rejection of these weapons, a treaty banning nuclear weapons can serve as a boost for other ongoing nuclear disarmament and arms control efforts. For example, efforts to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons would be a lot easier if nuclear weapons were illegal and categorically considered unacceptable weapons.

CJ: There has been some confusion about how the proposed ban relates to the longstanding goal of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Can you comment on this? Are they complementary? Mutually exclusive? Sequential? Must governments and/or civil society make choices about which process to support or where to expend energy and resources?

BF: To me, a ban treaty and a nuclear weapons convention are the same thing, only the names are different. It is a treaty that will require all states that join it to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. However, a ban treaty does not have to look like the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention, a draft text originally developed by civil society actors in the 1990s, which had a very detailed account for how elimination could take place and assumed that nuclear-armed states would be a part of the negotiations. While that model has been extremely useful as a campaigning tool and a contribution to the discussion on how to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons, the actual treaty is going to look different depending on who is a part of the negotiations.

While we hope that nuclear-armed states will join negotiations of a ban treaty, we believe we need to be able to negotiate it even without their participation. I think that a ban treaty without the nuclear-armed states could be quite simple and straightforward, with few technical details on elimination. But obviously once a nuclear-armed state wants to join, it would be necessary to negotiate the details and verification of its stockpile elimination.

I don’t think you need to make any choice about which process to support, especially since negotiations haven’t started yet. Once a treaty negotiation starts, I hope that all of civil society and as many governments as possible will join the efforts to make sure that the treaty is as strong as possible.

CJ: Thinking about the series of international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons (Oslo, Nayarit, and Vienna) and specific references to this issue in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, what do you believe has been the main takeaway from the humanitarian initiative thus far?

BF: A humanitarian focus means that nuclear weapons are no longer only
a topic for technical experts in the arms control community of Washington, DC; new actors, such as humanitarian relief agencies, development agencies, and human rights agencies can engage. It also allows a more global engagement; ICAN has seen tremendous growth in the interest in nuclear weapons from NGOs from developing countries. Finally, it activates non-nuclear-weapon states and gives them a key role in nuclear disarmament efforts. This is a powerful new force that I hope will lead to significant results soon.

CJ: Do you think the renewed attention to the humanitarian impact has influenced public discourse and attitudes about nuclear weapons? How?

BF: I think it has definitely influenced the discourse in the venues where nuclear weapons are being discussed regularly. We’ve seen a huge shift in the way governments and civil society actors talk about nuclear weapons since 2010. But the general public still says very little. There’s a lot of work needed to reach out further, but I think the humanitarian impact discourse is very easy for the public to understand. It’s not a technical deterrence theory argument. It’s based on very practical and simple questions: what would happen to my city if a nuclear bomb detonated here? Which hospital would still be able to receive patients? How would emergency workers be able to provide any meaningful help? The humanitarian angle is very useful for raising public awareness and highlighting what an unacceptable weapon this really is.

CJ: The P5 boycotted the Oslo and Nayarit conferences, and their attendance at the December Vienna conference is uncertain. What do you make of their position? Would you encourage them to attend the Vienna conference? Why?

BF: I think it was a mistake not to attend the first two conferences. First, because they possess the most knowledge about the consequences of a nuclear detonation—they have spent a lot of time testing these weapons to measure just that. But also because I think that their arguments for staying away were seen by even their closest friends as dishonest, signaling an unwillingness to even engage in a discussion. I think the nuclear-weapon states missed an opportunity to engage in dialogue.

I hope they do come to Vienna; I think it would be in their interest. I believe that continued boycotting of these meetings will raise more concerns that they are not serious about their commitments to nuclear disarmament under the NPT.

CJ: Nuclear-dependent states have resisted calls to begin preparatory work for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, arguing that the most pragmatic approach is to take a series of steps, such as the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) or Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) ratification. What is your reaction to this position?

BF: I think FMCT and CTBT ratification would be very helpful and useful steps if they could be achieved. But again, these efforts are mainly focused on the nuclear-armed states; the rest of the world is standing still, waiting for a few states to make up their minds. A ban treaty, even without the participation of nuclear-armed states, would strengthen these steps. Wouldn’t it be much easier to ban the production of material for a weapon, if the actual weapon were prohibited first?

CJ: What are your impressions of the role of international civil society in highlighting the humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons?

BF: Civil society has been absolutely instrumental in this process. ICAN doesn’t only focus on these multilateral conferences and meetings; our partner organisations are working closely with foreign ministries, parliamentarians, and national emergency relief agencies, with national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, and with media. The impact of this work was shown in New York in October 2013, where 125 states signed a joint statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and in Nayarit, where 146 states showed up and the Chair concluded that the time has come for a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. Civil society has brought a lot of energy into the ongoing discussions and will now push for concrete action, such as a treaty negotiating a ban on nuclear weapons.

CJ: Are you optimistic? Is there a best-case scenario?

BF: Yes, I’m very optimistic. I think it might take a long time to eliminate all nuclear weapons, but I don’t think prohibiting them needs to be very far off. If civil society continues to engage and mobilize, negotiations could start quite soon. I hope that the Vienna conference will be an opportunity for governments to indicate that they are ready to start negotiating a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. My hopes are that we will start such a process in 2015.

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Commemorating Hiroshima Day

Thanks to the Hiroshima Day Coalition for inviting me to speak at this special commemoration, and thanks to everyone in attendance.

Today is a somber day. But it is also a hopeful day.

Somber because we stand here to remember that dreadful month of August, 69 years ago, when death, destruction, and incalculable human suffering befell the men, women, and children of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Many died instantly; others in the weeks and months that followed. Up to a quarter-million people are estimated to have been killed. Farmers and teachers, singers and poets, sons and daughters, old and young.

Yet some survived: the brave Hibakusha, who have since offered firsthand, living testimony of the utter devastation caused by nuclear weapons and the long-lasting physical and emotional scars they leave behind.

So yes, this is a sad anniversary. A
This is a sad anniversary. A grim reminder that humankind has devised the means to destroy itself—efficiently.

grim reminder that humankind has devised the means to destroy itself—efficiently.

Signs of hope
But this is also a day of hope. Because the push for a ban on nuclear weapons is growing with every passing day. In intensity, in sophistication, in effectiveness, in numbers.

People all over the world are working tirelessly and diligently to make sure that humanity never again witnesses a tragedy like the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

And how can the international community go about preventing such a tragedy? The endgame to nuclear disarmament is remarkably straightforward: there must be a global legal ban on the development, possession, testing, and use of nuclear weapons, with specific provisions for the actual elimination of existing arsenals and a timeline for implementation. There is no other way to rid the world of the most destructive weapons ever made.

Regrettably, the international community has allowed this issue to drift endlessly without resolution, despite overwhelming evidence that nuclear weapons lack any legal, political, military, or moral justification. More than four decades after the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty came into force, and nearly seven decades after the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the states that rely on the purported benefits of nuclear weapons consider serious work toward a Nuclear Weapons Convention “premature.”

The pervasive notion that the primary problem of nuclear weapons is the risk of their proliferation, and not their very existence, cannot be further perpetuated. To be absolutely clear: the main problem with the existence of nuclear weapons is the existence of nuclear weapons. Proliferation concerns are important, of course, but they will never be fully allayed unless the responsibility to disarm is taken seriously by states with nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, the discriminatory nature of the NPT is untenable. Just consider the lopsided logic by which the very states that have developed, stockpiled, tested, and used nuclear weapons deem themselves fit to chastise others on the risks of proliferation. The moral high ground claimed by nuclear-weapons states (NWS) is built upon an extremely weak and inherently unjust foundation.

The combined nuclear arsenal of these states is more than 16,000 warheads, many of which are tens of times more powerful than the ones that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many are on high alert status, ready to be launched within minutes. The risk of deliberate use is compounded by the concomitant risks of accidental or unintended use.

But demands for nuclear abolition are mounting. Calls come from a growing number of scientists, legal scholars, mayors and parliamentarians, active and retired diplomats, statesmen and regular citizens—from both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states.

A series of meetings over the past few years have underscored the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons as a key reason for their unequivocal prohibition. Most recently, in Nayarit, Mexico, the Mexican government hosted official delegations from more than 140 nations, several multilateral organizations, and international civil society representatives, at the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons.

Like the first, held in Norway last year, it was premised on the belief that the only foolproof way to ensure that humans do not again suffer the devastation caused by nuclear bombs is to completely eliminate this category of weapons.

Heightened awareness of the catastrophic consequences of any nuclear weapons use and of the concomitant impossibility of providing effective emergency relief following their use has created a new sense of urgency for their elimination. Organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations office for the coordination of humanitarian affairs have made it abundantly clear that there could be no effective response capacity in the event of a nuclear weapons exchange.

Later this year, the Austrian government will build on the Nayarit conference with another in Vienna. The expectation is that this event will go beyond visceral discussions of the disastrous effects of a nuclear weapons exchange to focus on concrete measures to avoid such an exchange. The difficulties of such a diplomatic undertaking are clear, but nuclear disarmament advocates—in and out of government—are experiencing a rare ray of optimism.

Calling on Canada
And where does Canada stand in this struggle? Unfortunately, it stands
not with the growing number of nations, organizations, and individuals who believe that a ban on nuclear weapons is long overdue. Instead, the Canadian position is aligned with that of the few who continue to question the merits of a nuclear weapons ban.

Yet Canada is uniquely positioned to assume a leadership role in the push for a world free of nuclear weapons. Besides enjoying well-earned international credibility as an honest broker, the country is a member of NATO, a state party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and a member of the G7 and G20.

However, the current government has failed to make nuclear disarmament a top foreign policy priority—a stand that would have wide public support.

Civil society organizations, former diplomats and government officials, and more than 750 recipients of the Order of Canada are urging the Canadian government to support UN resolutions calling for formal negotiations toward a nuclear weapons convention. Polls indicate that more than 88 per cent of Canadians support a legal agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons.

In 2010 a unanimous motion by the House and Senate urged the Canadian government “to engage in negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention as proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General” and “to deploy a major worldwide Canadian diplomatic initiative in support of preventing nuclear proliferation and increasing the rate of nuclear disarmament.”

But it fell on deaf ears.

Last year, during the second Preparatory Committee of the NPT, 80 nations endorsed a joint statement focusing on the devastating humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons use. Canada did not.

In October, 125 nations endorsed a similar statement at the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security. Again, not Canada.

Regrettably, Canada is missing the boat on the growing international tide to finally rid the world of the most destructive type of weapon of mass destruction.

Racing against intelligence

The humanitarian initiative was never focused on merely recognizing the impact of nuclear weapons, but on drawing out the policy implications that follow from such a recognition. If the consequences of nuclear weapons use are unacceptable, and there is a clear and present danger that these weapons may be used by accident, miscalculation, or design, then they must be eliminated.

The process to establish a legal ban on nuclear weapons constitutes a necessary step forward. It will be rooted in the widespread rejection of the continued existence of nuclear weapons and a full recognition of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use.

The road to an actual convention that eliminates nuclear weapons will have obstacles. All the more reason to start laying the groundwork for a Nuclear Weapons Convention now, before the accidental or deliberate detonation of a nuclear weapon—by a state or non-state actor—reminds the world of just how urgent this matter is.

The calls to address the fundamental injustices underpinning the global nuclear disarmament regime are getting louder and more determined. An engaged international civil society will continue to urge progress and scrutinize results. And decision-makers will be increasingly held accountable by their constituents for their failure to act.

Before I finish, let me share a passage by the late author and Nobel Prize laureate Gabriel Garcia Márquez from a speech entitled “The cataclysm of Damocles,” delivered in Ixtapa, Mexico, on August 6, 1986:

The nuclear arms race runs against intelligence. And not just against human intelligence, but also against the intelligence of nature, whose purpose manages to escape even the wise clairvoyance of poetry itself. Since the appearance of visible life on Earth, 380 million years had to elapse in order for a butterfly to learn how to fly, 180 million years to create a rose with no other commitment than to be beautiful, and four geological eras in order for us human beings, unlike our primitive ancestors, to be able to sing better than birds, and to be able to die from love. It is not honorable for the human talent, in the golden age of science, to have conceived the way for such an ancient and colossal process to return to the nothingness from which it came through the simple act of pushing a button. [Translated from the Spanish]

The use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable and the goal of their complete elimination is not negotiable. It is thus imperative that decision-makers realize that they must have the wisdom, the courage, the foresight, and the audacity to rid the world of the most devastating instruments of mass destruction ever conceived. What better way to honour those who suffered the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

The stakes are that high. And the cause is that worthy.

Thank you. □
A ‘to do’ list for Canada

Toward a nuclear weapon-free world

The goal of a world free of nuclear weapons has long been embraced by Canadians

By Paul Meyer

A history of opposition to nuclear weapons

This stand was implicit in the early decision of the Canadian government to forgo acquiring atomic weapons despite its role in their development during World War II. The government of the day benefited from exceptionally perceptive analysis as to the implications of the atomic bomb provided by one of its leading diplomats: Lester B. Pearson.

In a November 1945 memorandum for the Prime Minister, Pearson recognized that the atomic bomb was a “revolutionary” development and that its unparalleled destructiveness required some form of supranational control. If left in the hands of competing rivals (he foresaw that the atomic bomb monopoly would be short lived) the world would be subjected to a disastrous arms race, which “like every other armament race in history would follow the same course, of fear, suspicion, rivalry, desperation and war; only in this case the war would probably mean national suicide” (see Eayrs 1972, p. 278).

Pearson’s hope for effective international control of this revolutionary weapon was not realized, with the advent of Cold War mistrust. Yet Canadian aspirations that the threat posed by nuclear weapons could somehow be negated coloured official and public opinion for years. Significantly, this goal of nuclear disarmament animated the policies of subsequent Canadian leaders as diverse as John Diefenbaker and Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

The abolition of nuclear weapons has also been a formal feature of NATO policy aims, even while the Alliance continues to adhere to a doctrine of deterrence that requires a nuclear component in its mix of forces. Prompted by President Obama’s eloquent endorsement of the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world in his April 2009 speech in Prague, it has, since the issuance of NATO’s Strategic Concept in 2010, also been the official aim of the Alliance to which Canada belongs.

A practical strategy

Yet as anyone who has ever made a New Year’s resolution knows, articulating a goal and devising an effective strategy for realizing it are two very different steps. As a former career diplomat, I have a professional disposition toward developing prac-
tical strategies to achieve concrete results. This sort of operational implementation of policy goals is not readily accomplished in the realm of nuclear weapons, where the armaments in question are held by only a few parties and genuine progress toward fulfilling disarmament commitments can be difficult to measure.

The goal of nuclear disarmament is often treated by states as if it were self-executing, as if articulating and endorsing the aim were a sufficient act of commitment. As some sage has remarked, however, a vision that is divorced from a strategy and the resources to carry it out is nothing more than a hallucination. It is incumbent on those who exercise power to do more than pay lip service to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons; they need to devise and implement a plan to help bring it about.

Canada is well placed, I believe, to play a leading role in the global effort to ensure nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. This will mean, in part, reviving the political and diplomatic effort that characterized Canadian governmental engagement in earlier periods. For example, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs in 1998, after extensive hearings, produced a major study entitled Canada and the Nuclear Challenge: Reducing the Political Value of Nuclear Weapons for the Twenty-first Century. The title of the

ABOVE: Groups from Italy, Fiji, Australia, Canada, and Algeria join some 10,000 supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on a ban-the-bomb protest march from Aldermaston to London in 1962. ©Flashbak.com
The goal of nuclear disarmament animated the policies of Canadian leaders as diverse as John Diefenbaker and Pierre Elliott Trudeau.

report reflected a critical conclusion, that the most important focus of Canadian policy should be “on de-legitimizing and reducing the political value of nuclear weapons” (p. 10).

This call to move beyond the prevailing dependence on nuclear deterrence and the “status”-driven nuclear proliferation that the world had just witnessed in South Asia was a vital contribution to official thinking about nuclear disarmament. The Parliamentary report elicited, in April 1999, a comprehensive response from the Government entitled Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: Advancing Canadian Objectives, which laid out a strategy for advancing Canada’s nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament goals. No more authoritative statement of official policy has been produced and the goals of the strategy issued in 1999 still largely inform Canadian governmental action.

Much of that strategy was premised on the assumption that the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the regime based on it would remain the solid, core foundation for international security. The NPT has, however, been under major strain for several years. It has been challenged by clandestine nuclear programs in member states such as Iraq, Libya, Syria, and seemingly Iran; an outright defection by North Korea; the abdication of the goal of universalization by states keen to strike nuclear deals with non-NPT members; and the failure of Nuclear Weapon States to honour many of their specific commitments for nuclear disarmament.

This central treaty has also continued to suffer from “institutional deficit” and lack of supporting infrastructure. With no standing executive body and no dedicated implementing organization or secretariat, NPT states parties lack the mandate and capacity to respond in a timely manner to the various real world challenges that threaten the integrity and core purposes of the treaty.

If Canada and other NPT member states are to continue to benefit from the relatively stable nuclear order that the treaty represents, they need to become much more active in its defence. Such engagement must go beyond rhetoric to concrete and purposeful action.

Canada’s action list
Following is a short list of steps that Canadian leaders, officials, and parliamentarians can take to advance nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament goals.

1. The Canadian government can, in accordance with the unanimous Parliamentary motion of December 2010, devise and launch a major diplomatic initiative to support our nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament objectives.

2. Canada can become more engaged in the 12-nation grouping of non-nuclear weapon states led by Australia and Japan (the Nonproliferation and Disarmament Initiative) and help galvanize it to press fellow NPT members to greater efforts to reinforce the treaty.

3. As current chair of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, Canada can press for the launch of actual negotiations in a forum not subject to the veto of spoiler states.

4. Canada could join the majority of states that, in line with the NPT 2010 Review Conference outcome, are stressing the humanitarian im-
perative for nuclear disarmament. Canadian endorsement of future statements on this theme would be an initial step. More importantly, Canada should champion measures to prevent the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation, such as de-alerting those U.S.- and Russian-deployed nuclear forces maintained on high alert.

5. Canada could revive its late, lamented verification research program and help to develop verification solutions to contemporary arms control and disarmament problems.

6. Canada could resume its support for having the NPT parties adopt accountability mechanisms, such as empowered annual meetings and systematic reporting that would strengthen the authority and effectiveness of the treaty. Some institutional reform of the NPT is needed if its authority is to be sustained.

7. Canada and likeminded states could devise a diplomatic strategy to get the remaining eight holdouts to agree to the entry into force of the Comprehensive (Nuclear) Test Ban Treaty—a key piece of unfinished business 18 years after this treaty was first opened for signature.

8. Canada, in concert with allies, can work to wean NATO off its formal attachment to nuclear deterrence and enhance the political and conventional military capabilities that the Alliance requires in contemporary conditions.

9. Canada could reinvigorate its dormant leadership position on outer space security in recognition of the close interrelationship among issues of space weaponization, missile defences, and the potential for nuclear disarmament.

10. And last but not least, Parliament can revive the lapsed practice of holding annual sessions with Canada’s Ambassador for Disarmament and arrange for meetings of the parliamentary committees responsible for foreign affairs and defence that would be devoted to the topic of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. Globally, Canadian parliamentarians can agitate for implementation of the resolution “Towards a Nuclear Weapons Free World” that was adopted by consensus at the 130th International Parliamentary Union Assembly in March 2014.

These are practical suggestions for Canada to consider. The list is not exhaustive and others will no doubt have additional suggestions. These recommendations require no major policy departures or resources. They do require a consistent and coherent effort to move from words to deeds. However appealing it is to pay lip service to the aim of a world without nuclear weapons, it will take tangible, constructive measures to actually progress toward it. Canada can and should be part of that progress. □

References


Here were 28 active armed conflicts in 25 countries in 2013, an increase from 26 armed conflicts in 23 countries in 2012.

During 2013, conflicts crossed the threshold of 1,000 fatalities in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Egypt. The conflict in Chad was removed as an ongoing armed conflict, largely because there were fewer than 25 confirmed conflict-related deaths reported during both 2012 and 2013.

The civil war in Syria persisted as the most deadly armed conflict in 2013.

The United Nations reported that up to 40,000 people died in the first half of the year in fighting between government forces and opposition groups. (Reliable estimates for all of 2013 were unavailable.)

In the Central African Republic, the government of President Bozizé was overturned in a coup in March and the leader of the Séléka (largely Muslim) rebel group assumed the presidency. An estimated 1,500 people died during the year.

The Malian government, supported by France, fought against Tuareg rebels and Islamist opposition groups to regain rebel-held territory in 2013. At least 500 people were killed in violent clashes.

In Egypt, the “Arab Spring” citizens revolt, which led to the resignation of authoritarian President Mubarak and the 2012 election of President Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, took a further turn in 2013 when protests against Morsi set the stage for an Egyptian Army coup d’état. Over a thousand civilians died in the subsequent protests against Morsi’s removal and the arrest of many in his government.
Books etc.

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