



10 April 2014

The Honorable John Baird, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Foreign Affairs Trade and Development Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2
Canada

Fax : 613-996-9880
Email: john.baird@parl.gc.ca

Re: Nuclear Weapons

Dear Minister Baird,

We are writing to you out of conviction that greater progress toward eliminating nuclear weapons is necessary, urgent and possible. This letter requests that the Canadian government take specific steps in that regard during the Preparatory Committee of the Non-Proliferation Treaty meeting, 28 April – 9 May 2014, at the United Nations.

The Canadian Council of Churches is sending this letter in collaboration with the World Council of Churches and its member churches. It is an inter-regional call for action by a variety of churches which are contacting their governments. On June 25 2010 The Canadian Council of Churches and its member churches wrote collectively and unanimously a letter to the Prime Minister urging him and the Government to give renewed and urgent attention to nuclear disarmament (attached).

We would like to express appreciation for the fact that our government took part in the 2nd International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Nayarit, Mexico, in February. The meeting clarified critical nuclear challenges by bringing together a significant cross-section of the international community for an evidence-based accounting of what nuclear weapons do to people, societies and the environment.

It seems clear that similar evidence-based accountability is very much needed at the forthcoming NPT Preparatory Committee. As you are aware, the meeting is charged with assessing progress on the NPT Action Plan of 2010. While the plan strikes a much-needed

balance between disarmament and non-proliferation, four years have passed with very little evidence of follow-through on disarmament. In particular, the key Disarmament Actions (Actions 1 - 10) remain almost completely unfulfilled.

Meanwhile, there has been vigorous action on one topic in the NPT Action Plan. A multilateral humanitarian initiative has emerged around the states parties' "deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons" and "the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law."

It is on this point that we earnestly request the Canadian government to engage in constructive, collective actions at the Preparatory Committee. We ask that the government highlight, affirm or acknowledge in its statements:

New Momentum for a Ban – Affirm the new momentum toward a ban on nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds. The new momentum has been generated since 2010. The evidence is found in the humanitarian initiative's high levels of participation, the shift in the terms of debate on nuclear weapons, and new awareness of economic, political and ethical costs of retaining nuclear weapons. We refer to milestones like the Open-Ended Working Group convened in Geneva in mid-2013 and the humanitarian impact conferences in Norway and Mexico.

Such progress is drawing strength from among the majority of states without nuclear weapons and from civil society including churches. It is important to note that most public opinion surveys show strong opposition to nuclear weapons, a marked contrast to the long-standing deadlock in multilateral disarmament forums.

Ban Helps Fulfil NPT – Reference the ways in which a humanitarian ban on nuclear weapons would enhance states parties' capacity to achieve the NPT's goals. For example, banning nuclear weapons because of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences would build the norm against nuclear weapons precisely where the NPT falls short: (a) Setting a common standard for all states while ending the special status of a few states; (b) Placing nuclear weapons under the rule and obligation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law; (c) Recognizing the essential role of non-nuclear majority states in creating conditions for a nuclear-weapon-free world and achieving this global public good of the highest order.

Join Vienna Conference – Announce at the NPT Preparatory Committee that our government will participate in the 3rd International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, to be convened by Austria in late 2014. This will further strengthen the current, majority-led momentum.

Like the United Nations, the World Council of Churches has condemned nuclear weapons since the first use seven decades ago. The Canadian Council of Churches too has a long history of engagement on nuclear disarmament, notably through Project Ploughshares (ploughshares.ca). Late last year, the worldwide Assembly of the World Council of Churches stressed the collective obligation today to protect life in the face of common, global threats. Together, we reject the claim that any nation's security requires the capacity to annihilate other nations. And together, we call on governments to "negotiate and establish a ban on the production, deployment, transfer and use of nuclear weapons in accordance with international humanitarian law".

Thank you for your consideration. We will look forward to receiving your reply.

Please be assured of our continued prayers for you, Minister Baird, and for the Government of Canada, as you carry out your responsibilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Hamilton". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary

Attachment: Letter to Prime Minister Harper, *A World Without Nuclear Weapons*, 25 June 2010

cc: Paul Dewar, M.P., Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Marc Garneau, M.P., Foreign Affairs Critic, The Liberal Party of Canada
Jean François Fortin, M.P., Foreign Affairs Critic, Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, M.P., Green Party of Canada

Lt. Colonel Jim Champ, President, The Canadian Council of Churches
Rev. Dr Olav FykseTveit, General Secretary, World Council of Churches, Geneva