

# Nuclear Disarmament



## Christian Source Documents

In 1983, Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches stated:

“We believe that the time has come when the churches must unequivocally declare that the production and deployment, as well as the use of nuclear weapons, are a crime against humanity, and that such activities must be condemned on ethical and theological grounds.

Furthermore, we appeal for the institution of a universal covenant to this effect so that nuclear weapons and warfare are delegitimised and condemned as violations of international law.”<sup>1</sup>

In 2004, the United States Government, together with the National Council of Churches, representing 140,000 Protestant congregations, and Pax Christi, declared nuclear weapons “inherently immoral”.

On 24 September 2009, the Vatican Secretary for Relations with States in his speech to the UN Security Council argued for serious and concrete steps to be made towards nuclear disarmament: “Today’s world demands a courageous leadership in reducing those arsenals to a complete zero.”<sup>2</sup>

## Background

Despite concerns about nuclear weapons over the past 60 years, there are now nine or ten nations possessing around 27,000 nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup> The world has been fortunate that these weapons have not been deployed so far. However, this good fortune cannot be expected to continue indefinitely. Nuclear arsenals are still justified on the basis of the deterrence principle, predicated on unproven theories developed during the past decades.<sup>4</sup> Nuclear weapons still remain as the deadliest threat to humanity.

“Churches must prevail upon governments until they recognize the incontrovertible immorality of nuclear weapons. (#8)

“From its birth as a fellowship of Christian churches, the WCC has condemned nuclear weapons for their ‘widespread and indiscriminate destruction’ and as ‘sin against God’ in modern war (First WCC Assembly, 1948), recognised early that the only sure defence against nuclear weapons is prohibition, elimination and verification (Second Assembly, 1954) and, *inter alia*, called citizens to ‘press their governments to ensure national security without resorting to the use of weapons of mass destruction’ (Fifth Assembly, 1975).” (# 9)

**World Council of Churches,  
Ninth Assembly, Brazil, 2006**

<sup>1</sup> “Interfaith questionnaire on Elimination of Nuclear Weapons: US presidential candidates’ responses”, in *Disarmament Diplomacy*, 50 (September 2000), <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd50/50views.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Vatican Secretary for Relations with States, to UN Security Council, 24 September 2009, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/secretariat\\_state/2009/documents/rc\\_seg-st\\_20090924\\_mamberti-security-council\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/secretariat_state/2009/documents/rc_seg-st_20090924_mamberti-security-council_en.html)

<sup>3</sup> USA, Russia, UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, almost certainly Israel and possibly Iran and North Korea

<sup>4</sup> “Principles of Deterrence”, John M. Collins, *Air University Review*, November-December 1979 <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1979/nov-dec/jcollins.html>



It is encouraging that key people, such as President Obama, have recently sought to reduce the nuclear arsenal, but reduction is happening too slowly. The UN Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review of 2010 did not substantively advance disarmament.

### What can we do?

One can argue that Australia is not a nuclear power and, as a middle power, has limited influence on nuclear disarmament. However, being one of the major exporters of uranium ore, it could have some sway. Can a small advocacy group, such as SPC, influence the Australian Government? The downside of nuclear weapons is so cataclysmic that we should try to do whatever we can.

*UN Photo/Mark Garten. Ban Ki-Moon on World Day of Peace 2009.*

What does Australia have to help influence the nuclear disarmament debate?

- Australia is a middle power with considerable influence and good relations with many other nations of significant size and power, and can act as a mediator in brokering solutions.
- We have a very effective Foreign Affairs Minister who has already shown initiative in this area.

We have already written to the Foreign Affairs Minister on this basis. It is for us and other allied organisations, such as ICAN and Pax Christi, to continue to urge the Australian Government to take further action.



*Photo courtesy Neko Fever flickr CC*

### Suggested Actions

- In a strategic policy sense, we need to urge governments to have nuclear weapons declared illegitimate, and that to possess them – as in the successful use of this approach with land mines – is to be a ‘pariah state’.
- Urge our Government to continue to press for disarmament, more specifically, for Australia to:
  - i. formally support adoption of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, as recommended by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties’ Report on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (JSCOT);

- ii. push for the UN Conference on Disarmament to take a greater role in nuclear disarmament, as advocated by the May 2010 NPT Review Conference of May 2010; and
- iii. put as a *sine qua non* condition on any yellowcake sales to India, that it must first sign and accord with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty before Australia agrees to trade.



*Atomic weapons, Ohio. Courtesy Blondie5000, clickr, CC*

- In addition (consequent to Tilman Ruff's presentation on this website), urge the Government to:
  - ban exports of uranium to nuclear weapon states unless bilateral nuclear safeguards agreements are ratified providing verifiable assurance that Australian uranium will be used exclusively for peaceful purposes;
  - continue to lobby for the cessation of reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel (thus denying anyone access to material for weapons use) through the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty as advocated in JSCOT (Recommendations 3 & 4);
  - investigate further restricting processing to enrichment so that it can be done only by multilateral bodies, e.g. UN (Recommendation 7 of JSCOT);
  - undertake research for a legal framework for a comprehensive NWC (Recommendation 9 of JSCOT), and seek regional support for this strategy;
  - in defence talks with allies, to push for less or zero dependence on nuclear defence, (which may assist Obama in this regard);
  - to take up these matters with the Government subsequent to a response from the Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade to our letter of February 2011.
- to collaborate with ICAN which helps and advises us on these matters, and which already leads an international NGO fight for nuclear disarmament;
- to urge NGO counterparts in nuclear states to continue to do the same.

Furthermore, in response to the Fukushima disaster, the Australian Government:

- urge the imperative for tighter and more transparent regulatory regimes for nuclear reactors;
- in respect of Australian uranium exports, impose as a condition the compliance by recipient reactors with these tightened international and national regulations.

**Bill Frilay  
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