

BEYOND NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

2016 IS CRUCIAL FOR A NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE WORLD

NEWSLETTER FOR STRENGTHENING AWARENESS OF NUCLEAR ABOLITION | WITH JANUARY 2016 ARTICLES



TOWARD A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD



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Political will and multilateral diplomacy marked a milestone as U.S. President Barack Obama revoked a 20-year system of sanctions against Iran and Federica Mogherini, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and a Council member of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), announced the lifting of EU economic blockade against Tehran on January 16. ➔ Pages 13-14

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North Korea defied world powers, on January 6, by announcing that it had successfully tested a miniaturized hydrogen nuclear device – in contravention of the international norm against nuclear testing. The miniaturizing allows the device to be placed on a missile thereby significantly increasing its strike capabilities not only against Japan and South Korea but also against the United States. ➔ Pages 15-17

North Korea’s Nuclear Test Escalates Military Tensions

As military tensions continue to rise between two of the world’s major nuclear powers – the United States and Russia – the United Nations remains strongly committed towards one of its longstanding goals: a world without nuclear weapons. But North Korea’s announcement of its first hydrogen bomb – tested January 6 – is threatening to escalate the nuclear challenge even further. The 193-member General Assembly wrapped up its 2015 sessions in December adopting 57 draft resolutions on arms control and disarmament – 23 of which were on nuclear weapons. ➔ Pages 18-19

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Nuclear-Test-Ban Debate Focuses on Iran and North Korea

By Ramesh Jaura



Credit: CTBTO

VIENNA (IDN) - Iran and North Korea dominated the landmark symposium ‘Science and Diplomacy for Peace and Security’ organised by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) end of January in Vienna, the capital of Austria.

As chance would have it, ahead of the event, on January 16, U.S. President Barack Obama revoked a 20-year system of sanctions against Iran and Federica Mogherini, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs, announced the lifting of EU economic blockade against Tehran. humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again “under any circumstances”. 132 states described nuclear weapons as “inherently immoral”.

A day later, the UN Security Council announced that it had removed Iranian Bank Sepah and its international subsidiary from a sanctions list. The initiative followed the announcement the previous day of a UN report confirming

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that Iran had completed necessary preparatory steps to start the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aiming to resolve the nuclear issue.

Ten days earlier, on January 6, North Korea defied world powers by announcing that it had successfully tested a miniaturized hydrogen nuclear device – in contravention of the international norm against nuclear testing. North Korea has been under UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions since it first tested an atomic device in 2006. As in the past, the UNSC unanimously condemned this “reprehensible act, which destabilizes regional security”.

North Korea said that it would not give up its nuclear programme as long as the United States maintained what it called “its stance of aggression”. It vowed not to use its nuclear weapons unless its sovereignty was infringed.

The reason why Iran drew the focus of the CTBTO symposium is that along with China, Egypt, Israel and the United States of America, it has signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) but like the other three states has not yet ratified. North Korea was on the radar because like India and Pakistan it has not signed the Treaty.

Altogether 183 member states of the United Nations have signed the CTBT and 164 have ratified. But it will enter into force only when 44 countries complete their ratification procedures. Of these, eight (mentioned above) are still missing.

The importance of the CTBT lies in the fact that it bans nuclear explosions by everyone, everywhere. It makes it very difficult for countries to develop nuclear bombs for the first time, or for countries that already have them, to make more powerful bombs. It also prevents the huge damage caused by radioactivity from nuclear explosions to humans, animals and plants.

The Treaty was opened for signature in 1996. Twenty years hence, the CTBT is in limbo. “Until such time as it enters into force, the CTBT is unfinished business. Unless we finish what we started, there is a risk that we will lose twenty years of hard work and fifty to sixty years of negotiations on a world without nuclear testing,” the CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo said in his opening remarks to the symposium on January 25.

Over 400 representatives from educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, National Data Centres, and government ministries from all regions attended the symposium. Some of the lead negotiators of the CTBT in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in the mid-1990s brought into focus what a monumental accomplishment it was to have the CTBT opened for signature.

They included Jaap Ramaker, Chairman of the CTBT negotiations in 1996, Victor Slipchenko, former CTBT deputy chief negotiator for Russia, Michael Weston, former UK Ambassador to the CD, and Mohamed Mounir Zahr-an, former Egyptian Ambassador to the CD.

Achieving entry into force of the Treaty was the subject of a moderated debate among members of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEM) and other experts who negotiated the Treaty or have been blocking its way to becoming a legally binding law.

The crucial question was: How to set the ball rolling? While one school of thought was of the view that once Washington ratifies the Treaty it has signed, other holdouts would follow suit. But others argued that either Iran or Israel could take the lead.

Israel's *i24news* quoted the Israeli representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Ambassador Merav Zafary-Odiz, saying, “A regional moratorium could enhance security, and potentially lead to a future ratification of the CTBT. Israel has announced its commitment to a moratorium, it would be useful for others to do the same.”

A region wide test ban, Zafary-Odiz said, would enhance security throughout the Middle East, and could also contribute to the efforts to establish a WMD-free zone in the Mideast (Weapons of Mass Destruction).

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Zafary-Odiz criticized the fact that the CTBT ratification was not included in the nuclear deal signed in July 2015 between Iran and world powers. “The ratification by Iran was natural ... to prove Iran’s intentions for the future.”

The CTBTO Executive Secretary Zerbo, on the other hand, rejected the prevailing assumption that “we must wait for one country to set the dominos tumbling”. He said: “I don’t believe that there is one 800lb gorilla and seven 250lb gorillas. No country needs to wait. As far as CTBT entry into force is concerned, all the remaining countries are the same.”

In fact, the Iran deal shows that multilateral collaboration can effectively overcome difficult problems. Many of the key players in the Iran deal – such as EU High Representative Mogherini – are now talking about CTBT entry into force as the next big goal in disarmament and non-proliferation, which can be achieved with a similar approach. “Let’s make her words a reality,” Zerbo said.

He added: “One opportunity is to explore a Nuclear Test Free Zone in the Middle East. By signing the Treaty, Egypt, Iran and Israel have already said no to testing. Let’s turn that no into a never.”

According to the CTBTO Chief, despite its fourth announced nuclear test, engagement with North Korea should not be seen as out of reach. “New channels that may foster incremental change in the DPRK (North Korea) can be explored. I believe that the CTBT can be a part of such engagement. I have consistently said that I do not believe in isolation but rather in dialogue.”

Former UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Zukang Sha from China, supported the view, arguing that “as a sovereign country North Korea deserves respect”. His personal view, he emphasized, was that sanctions were not the way to encourage North Korea to abide by the CTBT and stop all nuclear tests.

Zerbo warned that fatigue with existing structures in non-proliferation and disarmament is a real danger to making progress. “I understand the disappointment that many feel with the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Process. And it is fascinating to see new approaches emerge, such an analysis based on humanitarian concerns.”

Some have now suggested a nuclear weapon convention. “But we should bear in mind that we do not yet have even a nuclear-test free world. It is hard to imagine progress until that is achieved,” the CTBTO head added. He said: “Acting on the CTBT can be ‘disruptive’ in only the positive sense of the word. It would transform bilateral and multilateral relationships, build confidence regionally and globally, and help unlock a range of pending issues in non-proliferation and disarmament.”

Michael Krepon, Co-Founder of the Washington-based Stimson Center said the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the Security Council could play an important role by passing resolutions that lend impetus to entry into force of the CTBT. [IDN-InDepthNews – 31 January 2016]

Kazakh Efforts Lead to a UN Declaration on a Nuke Free World

By J Nastranis

NEW YORK (IDN) - The Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan is widely acknowledged as an unrelenting champion of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The country’s latest accomplishment is the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly along with the *Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World*.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev proposed such a Declaration at the first Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in April 2010. The Declaration adopted on December 7, 2015 is based on the draft submitted by Kazakhstan in October 2015. It was co-sponsored by 35 countries, and received support from 133 countries.

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However, considering that 23 countries voted against it and 28 abstained, underlines, as Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov wrote in a recent article, “the campaign must continue”.

The General Assembly Resolution “invites States, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to disseminate the Declaration and to promote its implementation”.

The Resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-third session in 2018 a report on the implementation of the Declaration, and include it in the provisional agenda under the item “General and complete disarmament”, a sub-item entitled “Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World”.

According to observers, the Resolution crowns Kazakhstan’s persistent efforts to usher in a nuclear weapons free world, which started with the historic closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site in 1991.

As the then Ambassador-at-Large of the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs Barlybai Sadykov [said](#) in an interview with The Astana Times: “It was the first case of closing a nuclear test site in the history of the world at the will of the people. After the closing of the Semipalatinsk test site, other major test sites in Nevada, Novaya Zemlya, Lop Nor and Moruroa fell silent.”

By April 1995, the Central Asian country had transferred all of its Soviet-era nuclear weapons to the Russian Federation. Kazakhstan earlier had 1,410 Soviet strategic nuclear warheads placed on its territory and an undisclosed number of [tactical nuclear weapons](#).

As part of its persistent efforts for a world free of nuclear weapons, Kazakhstan initiated a UN General Assembly resolution calling for an International Day Against Nuclear Tests, inaugurated in 2010, in support of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT is one of the key elements of international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

As co-chairs, Kazakh Foreign Minister Erlan Idrissov and his counterpart from Japan Fumio Kishida addressed the 9th Ministerial-level Conference on Facilitating the Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on September 29, 2015 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The Conference, also known as the Article XIV Conference in accordance with the relevant Treaty article, adopted a [Final Declaration](#), which affirms, “that a universal and effectively verifiable Treaty constitutes a fundamental instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation”.

The ATOM (Abolish Testing. Our Mission) Project is another significant initiative the Kazakhstan President launched with a view to continuing the policy commitment to achieve global nuclear disarmament. It embodies an international campaign designed to provide information about the threats and consequences of nuclear weapons testing.

The project aims to involve civil society, non-governmental and youth organizations in the struggle to end the testing of nuclear weapons, promotes the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and, finally, a world free of nuclear weapons.

In yet another substantial move at the initiative of President Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan has made a significant contribution to the establishment of a Central Asian zone free of nuclear weapons. Since the signing of the [Central Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty \(CANWFZ\)](#) in 2006 in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan has been making practical efforts for the institutionalization of the treaty.

As chair of the CANWFZ treaty for 2012-2014, Kazakhstan held meetings with the countries of the “nuclear five”, discussing the conditions of signing the protocol. On May 6, 2014 in New York, the P5 signed the protocol to the treaty on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons in Central Asia.

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Under the protocol, the nuclear-weapon states have provided “negative security assurances” and committed themselves not to use nuclear weapons against CANWFZ and threaten countries that are parties to the CANWFZ treaty. After the ratification of the protocol by the parliaments of the signatory countries, these commitments will be of a legal nature.

The CANWFZ is the latest nuclear weapons free zone treaty, joining the [Treaty of Tlatelolco](#), Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the [Treaty of Rarotonga](#), South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, the [Treaty of Bangkok](#), Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, and the [Treaty of Pelindaba](#), African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty.

While the five nuclear weapon free zones are an important step towards nuclear disarmament they do not suffice. With this in view, the Universal Declaration on the Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World adopted in December 2015 stresses the need “for effective measures of nuclear disarmament”, which have the highest priority.

The Declaration calls upon “all nuclear-weapon-possessing States to eliminate all types of their nuclear weapons and in the meantime diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies and avoid activities that hamper the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons”.

The Declaration reiterates that each article of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is binding on its States parties at all times and in all circumstances and call upon the nuclear-weapon States to implement their obligations under the Treaty and commitments made at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

The Declaration adds: “We reaffirm our determination to implement nuclear disarmament commitments and obligations and to advance additional measures to strengthen the rule of law in disarmament, including the negotiation and adoption of a global, non discriminatory, multilateral, legally binding instrument for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.”

This is particularly important because countries such as India have refused to sign the NPT stating that it is “discriminatory” because it the P5 have refused to take adequate steps toward nuclear disarmament as require by treaty.

The trust placed in Kazakhstan’s commitment to non-proliferation and a world free of nuclear weapons was confirmed in August 2015 when the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) signed an agreement with the Central Asian country to set up the IAEA Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank in Oskemen, Kazakhstan.

“The IAEA LEU Bank, operated by Kazakhstan, will be a physical reserve of LEU available for eligible IAEA Member States. It will host a reserve of LEU, the basic ingredient of nuclear fuel, and act as a supplier of last resort for Member States in case they cannot obtain LEU on the global commercial market or otherwise. It will not disrupt the commercial market,” according to the Vienna-based agency. [IDN-InDepthNews – 25 January 2016]

Banning The Bomb With Science And Diplomacy

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN | VIENNA (IDN) - The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) is organising a symposium on the role of science and diplomacy for peace and security as the first in a series of events this year to push for entry into force of a law prohibiting atomic explosions by everyone and everywhere.

The ‘Science & Diplomacy for Peace & Security’ conference is being convened from January 25 to February 4 at the Vienna International Centre, the UN headquarters in the Austrian capital, in a year that marks the 20th anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

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Achieving a nuclear test ban treaty became a major initiative of JFK's presidency. This was during the most dangerous period of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Credit: CTBTO

Participants in the symposium will include some of the lead negotiators of the CTBT in the Conference on Disarmament in the mid-1990s.

Keynote speakers will include the CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, Joseph Cirincione, President, Ploughshares Fund and David Strangway, President Emeritus, University of British Columbia and Canada Foundation for Innovation.

The importance of this event lies in the fact that though the CTBT is almost universal it has yet to become law. Since it opened for signature in 1996, 183 countries have signed the Treaty. 164 of them have also ratified it, including three of the nuclear weapon States: France, Russia and the United Kingdom. But 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries must sign and ratify before the CTBT can enter into force.

Of these, eight are still missing: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA. On the other hand, India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign the CTBT.

In fact the three countries have violated the de facto moratorium and tested nuclear weapons since 1996: India and Pakistan in 1998, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 2006, 2009, 2013 and on January 6, 2016.

In run-up to the symposium, the CTBTO head Zerbo highlighted the CTBT's role as a "game changer" for global peace and security. Referring to the DPRK's nuclear test announced on January 6, he said: "Without a global system for monitoring and detecting signs of nuclear explosions, and no means of transmitting the relevant data in a timely and non-discriminatory manner, the international community would not be empowered to draw conclusions on the nature of an event."

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Addressing the Annual Conference of the Academic Council on the United Nations System – ACUNS on January 13, in Vienna, he said: “The very existence of the CTBT has all but put a stop to nuclear testing. Many States condemned the announced test as breaking with a de facto norm against testing. While this demonstrates that the Treaty is as important as ever, it is also a wake-up call to finally bring it into force,” he told ACUNS delegates.

It is hardly known that a verification regime to monitor the globe for nuclear explosions is nearing completion with around 90 percent of the 337 planned International Monitoring System facilities already in operation.

In view of the fact that the threat of nuclear weapons has faded from public concern and mainstream news media provide little coverage of the subject, together with the Atomic Reporters, CTBTO will debate on January 26 “If nuclear weapons and nuclear testing are a great risk to life on earth, are news media failing the public by not paying them more attention?”

Nevertheless, as Zerbo pointed out, time is ripe for the CTBT entering into force. The Iran deal after two years of negotiations and several years of hard work behind the scene, he said, shows that multilateral collaboration can effectively overcome intractable problems.

“Many of the key players in the Iran deal – such as EU High Representative Mogherini – are now talking about CTBT entry into force as the next big goal in disarmament and non-proliferation, which can be achieved with a similar approach. Let’s make her words a reality,” he told ACUNS delegates.

The forthcoming symposium will carry forward the message emerging from the 9th Ministerial-level Conference on Facilitating the Entry into force of the CTBT on September 29 at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

The conference was co-chaired by Erlan Idrissov, Foreign Minister of the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan, and Japan’s Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

The Kazakh Foreign Minister warned delegates he would be “blunt, even undiplomatic” in pushing for a legally binding nuclear test ban. “Our countries (Kazakh and Japan) have the moral right to be aggressive about abolishing nuclear weapons.”

Co-chair Kishida highlighted Japan’s historical role and obligation to work with the international community to ban nuclear tests and nuclear weapons, making particular reference to this year’s 70th anniversaries of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the experience of nuclear-bomb survivors, the Hibakusha.

The Conference was attended by a large number of Foreign Ministers from ratifying states, as well as Members of the Group of Eminent Persons (GEM), including the EU High Representative Mogherini, former UK Secretary of State for Defence Lord Desmond Browne, Commissioner of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane, and CTBTO Executive Secretary Emeritus Wolfgang Hoffmann.

Some of them will also be participating in the Science & Diplomacy For Peace & Security symposium in Vienna.

The Conference, also known as the Article XIV Conference in accordance with the relevant Treaty article, adopted a Final Declaration, which affirms, “that a universal and effectively verifiable Treaty constitutes a fundamental instrument in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation”. [IDN-InDepthNews – 20 January 2016]

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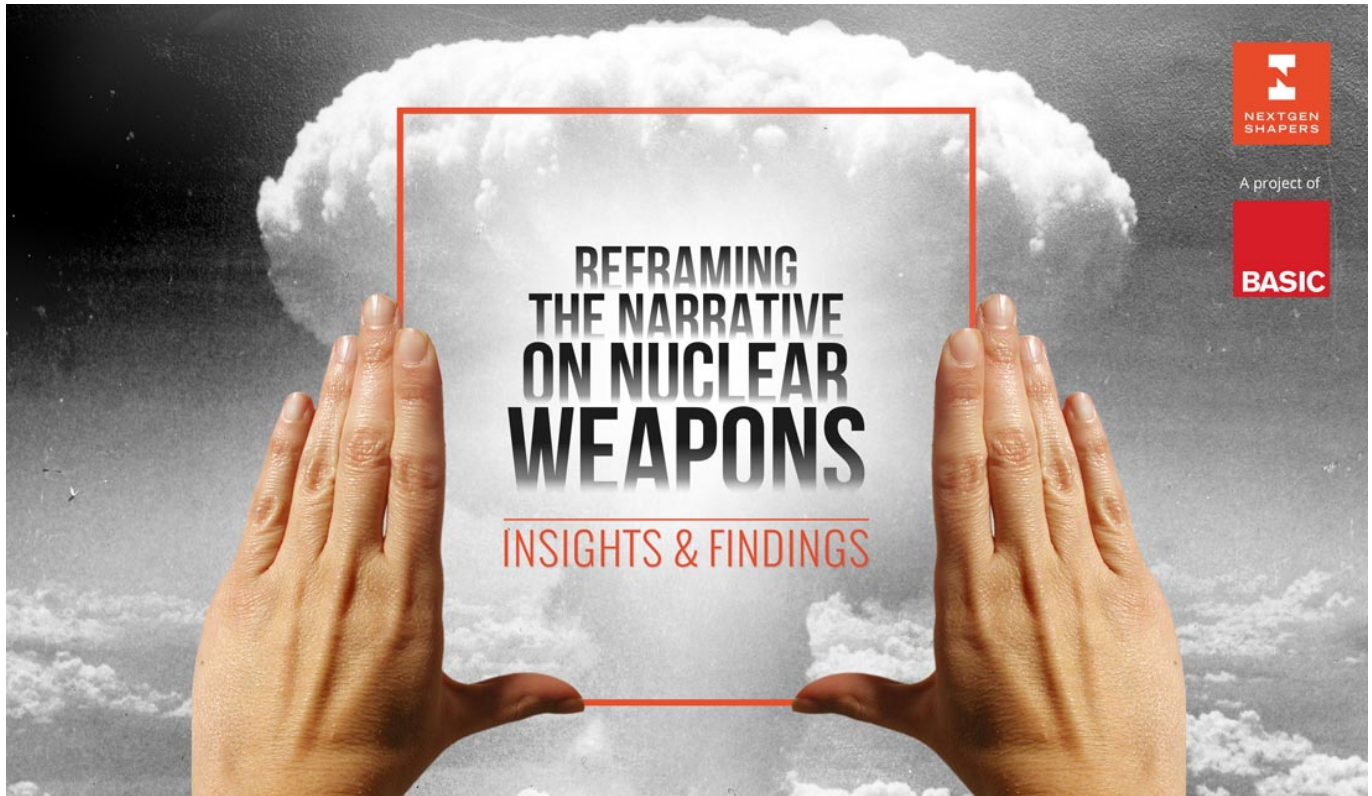
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New Study Says Next Generation Remains Oblivious To Nuclear Dangers

By Rodney Reynolds



UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – For over 70 years since the disastrous bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, peace activists have continued their relentless global campaign for a world without nuclear weapons.

The United Nations, which has remained engaged in a longstanding debate, continues to adopt scores of resolutions every year on nuclear disarmament.

And in December, not surprisingly, the 193-member General Assembly wrapped up its 2015 sessions adopting 57 draft resolutions on arms control and disarmament – 23 of which were on nuclear weapons.

Still the goal of a nuclear-free world is a distance political mirage – at least for the present generation.

A new study released last week by the British American Security Information Council (BASIC), a Washington-based think tank, has attempted to reframe the narrative on nuclear weapons.

How is nuclear disarmament being viewed by the next generation of policy makers who will inherit thousands of nuclear weapons – particularly when the policy on nuclear weapons is all-too-often constrained by the legacy of past generations?

The study, which sums up the findings from a 14-month long project, is expected “to serve as a point of departure in developing innovative ideas and engaging more people within the next generation of policy shapers in the interests of furthering nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.”

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“Innovative thinking is needed to overcome deeply entrenched attitudes and slow progress in the shared responsibility to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation measures and achieve global security through nuclear disarmament,” the Report argues.

The project explored three questions: First, what are the biggest influences in the cycle of nuclear weapons decision-making and where might we be able to shift the conversation?

Second, where and how might the nuclear debate be more closely integrated with other policy issues and movements that attract attention?

Third, how and why might nuclear weapons issues resonate more strongly with emerging policy makers, the public and media?

The study was the result of a series of workshops in the U.S. and UK with next generation participants aimed at mapping the challenges, mechanisms for engagement, potential new dimensions in the debate and its relationship to other issues, including the relationships between nuclear weapons and climate change.

When the issue comes out in the public, it rarely involves considered arguments, but rather features as a shallow, symbolic proxy to label particular positions as naïve or hawkish.

The study calls for new voices into the discussion, and test out the means to inspire the next generation of policy makers.

Tariq Rauf, Director, Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN the BASIC Report highlights how thinking and discourse on nuclear weapons have morphed into the mundane over the years, and has fallen off the list of principal dangers to the world.

Driven by the need to go beyond the deeply entrenched attitudes and stasis in achieving global security through nuclear disarmament, the Report was motivated by trying to make future nuclear weapons policy more relevant to the security and concerns of the next generation that will inherit thousands of nuclear weapons and thousands of tonnes of nuclear weapon-usable materials, he noted.

Rauf said one significant finding of the Report is that the younger people in the UK and the U.S. are not overly concerned by the nuclear weapons of their respective countries, but are worried about further nuclear proliferation and to terrorist groups.

“This new generation is blissfully unaware and thus unconcerned about nuclear weapon arsenals – as nuclear weapons have no relevance to their make-believe worlds of Twitter or Facebook – but they will be in for a rude awakening, should unfortunately, a nuclear detonation occur whether by accident or by non-State actor actions,” said Rauf, a former Senior Adviser to the chair of the 2014 Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

He also pointed out that whatever little discourse there is on nuclear weapons in the mainstream media, is driven by fear mongering about adversaries but ignores the nuclear weapons, policies and spending at home.

An important recommendation of the Report is to bring education and information about nuclear weapons early in the education of youngsters, starting in school, he added.

In this regard, said Rauf, it is useful to pay attention to the views of those with firsthand experience with nuclear weapons policy, such as William J. Perry, former US Defence Secretary, as recounted in his recent memoir, “My Journey at the Nuclear Brink”, and movies such as “Dr Strangelove”, “Fail Safe” and “The Man Who Saved the World”.

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“The BASIC Report is an important contribution to finding ways to engage the new generation on issues of nuclear weapons and existential global security,” said Rauf, a former head (2002-2011) of the Verification and Security Policy Coordination Office at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna.

The methods used in the BASIC project included the participation of focus groups; roundtable events and expert dialogues; polling of European youth aged 14-30 about their attitudes towards nuclear weapons; digital engagement; and face-to-face networking with members of the next generation.

Some of the important findings of the study include: nuclear weapons are not seen as strongly relevant to the (U.S./UK) next generation – except in terms of an uncertain future caused by the leakage of nuclear weapons to revisionist states and non-state actors.

“Not only are they out of sight and mind, divorced from human interest stories, difficult to relate to every-day experience but also they are not seen as particularly influential even in the political and military spheres.”

When previous generations would have attached great utility and fear to these weapons -- establishing elaborate deterrence relationships based on fear -- the next generation sees them as largely irrelevant to outcomes, the study concludes. [IDN-InDepthNews – 19 January 2016]

Security Council Joins The U.S. And EU In Removing Sanctions Against Iran

By J Nastranis



NEW YORK | VIENNA (IDN) - While the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the lifting of sanctions on Iran, the Security Council announced on January 17 that it has removed Iranian Bank Sepah and its international subsidiary from a sanctions list. The initiative followed the announcement previous day of a UN report confirming that Iran has completed necessary preparatory steps to start the implementation of a plan of action aiming to resolve the nuclear issue.

In separate moves, the U.S. President Barack Obama revoked a 20-year system of sanctions against Iran and Federica Mogherini, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and a Council member of the Par-

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liamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), announced the lifting of EU economic blockade against Tehran on January 16.

The UN report was submitted to the 15-nation Security Council after UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors on the ground verified that Iran has carried out all measures required under what is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to enable “Implementation Day” to occur.

In July 2015, Iran and a group of six countries – China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom and United States – reached the JCPOA through resolution 2231 (2015), entrusting the IAEA with verifying and monitoring Iran's commitments. Under the plan, Iran pledged never under any circumstances to seek, develop or acquire nuclear weapons, and the UN Security Council is to consider ending sanctions imposed for its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) violations.

The resolution noted that the JCPOA will “terminate all provisions of previous UN Security Council resolutions on the Iranian nuclear issue [...] simultaneously with the IAEA-verified implementation of agreed nuclear-related measures by Iran.”

Bank Sepah had been under a Council-mandated asset freeze since 2007. It provides support for the Aerospace Industries Organisation (AIO) and subordinates, including Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group (SHIG) and Shahid Bagheri Industrial Group (SBIG). “This is a significant milestone that reflects the good faith effort by all parties to fulfil their agreed commitments,” said Ban in a statement issued by his Spokesperson.

The report was submitted to the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors and to the United Nations Security Council, after Agency inspectors on the ground verified that Iran has carried out all measures required under what is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the E3+3 and Iran.

“The Secretary-General commends the dedication and determination shown on all sides,” the statement indicated. “He encourages the parties to continue to implement the JCPOA in the months and years ahead.” The UN chief further underlined that this achievement demonstrates that international proliferation concerns are best addressed through dialogue and patient diplomacy.

“The Secretary-General hopes the success of this agreement contributes to greater regional and international cooperation for peace, security and stability in the region and beyond,” the statement added. Meanwhile, IAEA's Director General, Yukiya Amano, said “Implementation Day” paves the way to begin verifying and monitoring Iran's nuclear-related commitments under the agreement.

“Relations between Iran and the IAEA now enter a new phase,” he said in a statement. “It is an important day for the international community. I congratulate all those who helped make it a reality, especially the group of countries known as the E3/EU+3, Iran and the IAEA Board.”

In line with its commitments, Iran will now start to provisionally implement the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA, which Amano said “increases the Agency's ability to monitor nuclear activities in Iran and to verify that they are peaceful”.

“We have come a long way since the IAEA first started considering the Iran nuclear issue in 2003,” he noted. “A lot of work has gone into getting us here, and implementation of this agreement will require a similar effort. For our part, we are ready to get on with the job.”

Separately, UN Chief welcomed reports today of the release of a number of Americans who had been detained in Iran, including Washington Post journalist Jason Rezaian, and of a number of Iranians held by the United States following an agreement between the two Governments. [IDN-InDepthNews – 17 January 2016]

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Multilateral Diplomacy Triumphs As Sanctions Against Iran Are Lifted

By Jaya Ramachandran

VIENNA (IDN) - Political will and multilateral diplomacy marked a milestone as U.S. President Barack Obama revoked a 20-year system of sanctions against Iran and Federica Mogherini, the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and a Council member of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), announced the lifting of EU economic blockade against Tehran on January 16.



The move followed confirmation from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that Iran has complied with the terms of July 2015 landmark deal – the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) – which provides restrictions and international verification of Iran’s nuclear energy program to ensure it is only able to be used for peaceful purposes. The decision to lift the sanctions was formally adopted by all 28 member states of the European Union (EU).

“As Iran has fulfilled its commitments, today, multilateral and national economic and financial sanctions related to Iran's nuclear programme are lifted in accordance with the JCPOA.” Mogherini said.

The EU and E3+3 countries, consisting of the People’s Republic of China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK and the U.S., and Iran will also cooperate in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, in the framework of the JCPOA, she added.

"This achievement clearly demonstrates that with political will, perseverance, and through multilateral diplomacy, we can solve the most difficult issues and find practical solutions that are effectively implemented," Mogherini said in a joint statement, which was subsequently read out by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in Persian.

“UN sanctions related to Iran’s nuclear programme are lifted. United Nations Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed the JCPOA, will from now onwards, together with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), be the sole international legal framework related to Iran’s nuclear activities, terminating provisions of resolutions 1696 (2006), 1737 (2007), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008), 1835 (2008), 1929 (2010) and 2224 (2015),” the statement added.

A total of 92 Iranians and 466 companies or groups, including the Iranian central bank, were affected by the EU sanctions. The lifting of U.S. economic sanctions on Iran unlocks access to \$100 billion in frozen overseas assets and unleashes new opportunities for its battered economy.

Iranian Transport Minister Abbas Akhondi, for example, said beginning of January that his country had reached a deal with the European consortium Airbus to buy 114 passenger planes as soon as the sanctions were lifted.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, at a press conference highlighting the implementation of the Iran deal, said that the threat of a nuclear weapon has been reduced and diplomacy has shown to be successful. "Today marks the first day of a safer world," Kerry declared in Vienna. "This evening, we are really reminded once again of diplomacy's power to tackle significant challenges."

The U.S also sees the deal as a useful first step toward cooperation with Iran on other key issues such as ending the Syrian conflict and other Middle East crises. As such it is a foreign policy triumph for U.S. President Barack Obama.

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ma. The U.S. and Iran used the occasion of ‘Iran nuclear deal implementation day’ to announce a swap of prisoners. Four Americans imprisoned in Iran were exchanged for seven Iranians held or charged in the United States.

Four Americans — Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, former U.S. Marine Amir Hekmati, pastor Saeed Abedini and Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari — have been flown from Iran to Switzerland on a Swiss plane and then brought to a U.S. military hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, for medical treatment.

In return, the U.S. committed to either pardon or drop charges against seven Iranians — six of them dual citizens — accused or convicted of violating U.S. sanctions. The U.S. will also drop Interpol “red notices” — essentially arrest warrants — on a handful of sought Iranian fugitives.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry linked the trust built between Iran and the United States over the past two years of talks to the possibility of securing the prisoner swap.

According to the Press TV, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani responded to the announcement by hailing the Iranian nation in a tweet for the “glorious victory.”

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi said that Iran gained its “right” through support from the Iranian nation and Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Many world leaders and politicians respond to the implementation of Iran’s historic nuclear deal with world powers.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also hailed the agreement implementation.

“This achievement demonstrates that international proliferation concerns are best addressed through dialogue and patient diplomacy,” said Ban’s spokesman in a statement. “This is a significant milestone that reflects the good faith effort by all parties to fulfill their agreed commitments,” he added.

In a statement released by the IAEA, the agency’s Director General Yukiyo Amano said that “Relations between Iran and the IAEA now enter a new phase. It is an important day for the international community. I congratulate all those who helped make it a reality.”

British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond released a statement saying that “Years of patient and persistent diplomacy, and difficult technical work, have borne fruit as we now implement the deal.”

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius also welcomed the deal, calling it an “important step for peace and security implementation.”

“At a time when the region is seeing immense challenges and strong tensions, I hope that the spirit of cooperation that marked the conclusion of the deal can also be brought to all the other regional issues,” he said.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier also greeted the announcement as a “historic success for diplomacy.” He added that the diplomatic victory could lead to success “in defusing other urgent crises and conflicts in the region, especially regarding the civil war in Syria.”

Leading US Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton praised Obama for implementing the nuclear agreement, yet claiming that concerns still remain. “Iran is still violating UN Security Council resolutions with its ballistic missile program, which should be met with new sanctions designations and firm resolve,” Clinton said.

However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu repeated Tel Aviv’s anti-Iran rhetoric, saying, “Even after signing the nuclear deal, Iran has not relinquished its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons.” Netanyahu added that Israel would “follow the implementation of the deal and warn of any violation.” [IDN-InDepthNews – 17 January 2016]

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North Korea's Defiance Underlines The Urgency To Eradicate All Nuclear Weapons

By Somar Wijayadasa*



Model of a Unha-9 rocket on display at a floral exhibition in Pyongyang, 30 August 2013
Credit: Steve Herman – VOA - Wikimedia Commons

NEW YORK (IDN) - North Korea defied world powers, on January 6, by announcing that it had successfully tested a miniaturized hydrogen nuclear device – in contravention of the international norm against nuclear testing.

The miniaturizing allows the device to be placed on a missile thereby significantly increasing its strike capabilities not only against Japan and South Korea but also against the United States.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: "This test, once again, violates numerous Security Council resolutions despite the united call by the international community to cease such activities."

North Korea has been under UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions since it first tested an atomic device in 2006. As in the past, the UNSC unanimously condemned this reprehensible act, which destabilizes regional security.

*Somar Wijayadasa was a UNESCO delegate to the UN General Assembly for ten consecutive years from 1985-1995, and was Representative of UNAIDS at the United Nations from 1995-2000.

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North Korea said that it would not give up its nuclear program as long as the United States maintained what it called "its stance of aggression". It vowed not to use its nuclear weapons unless its sovereignty was infringed.

Being a presidential election year, Republican presidential candidates took the opportunity to blame President Barack Obama that his foreign policy for North Korea's nuclear arms activities has failed.

Among the critics, Senator Marco Rubio said that "North Korea is run by a lunatic who has been expanding his nuclear arsenal while President Obama has stood idly by", and that this is "the latest example of the failed Obama-Clinton foreign policy".

Republican front-runner candidate Donald Trump urged "China to rein in its ally or face repercussions on trade", and Governor Chris Christie cited a weak response from Obama and Clinton to North Korea's previous nuclear tests, and said that "they have just not acted strongly at all around the world".

Do these statements imply that the Obama administration failed to bomb the hell out of North Korea?

The Republican presidential candidates unfairly criticize Obama's foreign policy forgetting the fact the United States and the United Nations have repeatedly enforced sanctions against belligerent North Korea.

Sanctions are not the panacea for all ills but they proved effective in the case of Iran. After decades of economic sanctions, Iran, the United States and five other world powers reached a landmark agreement that will prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

It is hypocritical to blame others knowing well that no world power has any right to attack and destroy another country simply because it developed its nuclear military capabilities in order to defend itself from external threats.

Any military strike by one country, based merely on its own judgment, against another sovereign country is a gross violation of international law and is certainly against the UN Charter which clearly states that the use of force is not legitimate unless authorized by the Security Council or in self-defence – that is, only after a direct attack.

Nuclear weapons are the most inhumane and dangerous weapons on earth which can annihilate whole cities, potentially killing millions, and destroying the natural environment and lives of future generations through its long-term catastrophic effects.

At the creation of the UN in 1945, the United States was the only nation in the world to own and use nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In 1970, the UN Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty was signed by 190 nations, including five nations that admitted to owning nuclear weapons: China, France, the now-defunct Soviet Union (Russia), United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Despite this treaty, India, Israel, Pakistan and North Korea became nuclear states. Together, they possess more than 15,000 nuclear weapons. USA and Russia maintain roughly 1,800 of their nuclear weapons on high-alert status – ready to be launched within minutes of a warning.

Since 1945, at least eight nations have detonated 2,053 nuclear test explosions around the world to proof-test new warhead designs and create increasingly sophisticated nuclear weapons. According to a report by Global Research, the United States is going to deploy 20 modernized B61-12 nuclear bombs in Germany, each 80 times more destructive than the one used on Hiroshima.

These would eventually replace the 180 B61s held in six bases in five countries – Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Turkey. In addition, France and the United Kingdom also maintain state-owned nuclear arsenals.

Following the United States decision to deploy these lethal nuclear weapons and NATO's expansion to Russia's borders, Russia immediately began to upgrade its air defence system and its strategic nuclear arsenal as a retaliatory and a precautionary measure.

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Russian President Vladimir Putin said that “Russia obviously retains the right if needed to deploy its nuclear weapons anywhere on its national territory, including on the Crimean Peninsula.”

In December 2015, Russia's Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu, said that, in 2014, its Military received 35 new intercontinental ballistic missiles, 243 aircraft, 90 air defence systems and 1,172 tanks and other armoured vehicles as part of an ambitious arms modernization effort.

Shoigu said that its Navy received two new nuclear-powered submarines equipped with intercontinental ballistic missiles, two general-purpose submarines and eight surface warships.

So, the nuclear arms race continues – preparing for mutual annihilation.

A Nuclear War (the exchange of nuclear weapons between two or more states) is still possible as the power hungry war-mongers do not care about the disastrous consequences that nuclear weapons can unleash on humanity – from mutual annihilation to the freezing of this earth.

Volumes have been written about the necessity, morality and consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. Though our world today is full of geo-political conflicts that cause constant sabre rattling, it is most unlikely that any sane world leader would resort to the use of deadly nuclear weapons.

However, a nuclear war could be triggered by a pure technical accident to an intentional strike by a deranged officer, a terrorist or a cyber attack –regardless of multiple mechanisms in place to avoid such a catastrophe.

The ONLY solution: a nuclear-weapon-free world

With conflicts and wars raging all over our world, all world leaders and peace loving citizens should focus on developing a new concept of international security under the auspices of the United Nations – to guide the world towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

American Presidents have spoken about the need to abolish nuclear weapons. For example, John Kennedy said that these nuclear weapons “must be abolished before they abolish us”; Ronald Reagan said “We must never stop at all until we see the day when nuclear arms have been banished from the face of the Earth”; and in a 2009 Prague speech, Barack Obama vowed “concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons”.

Since those lofty words, the United States has spent hundreds of billions of dollars to upgrade its nuclear weapons.

The UN General Assembly voted on December 8, 2015 to set up a working group that will develop “legal measures, legal provisions and norms” for achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

At the UN, 144 states declared that in the interests of humanity, nuclear weapons are never used again “under any circumstances”, and 132 states described nuclear weapons as “inherently immoral”.

Five of the nine nuclear-armed nations – China, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States and France – opposed this UN action spuriously claiming that “An instrument such as a ban” would “undermine the NPT [Non-Proliferation Treaty] regime”. A nonsensical excuse!

President Truman said, “The responsibility of the great states is to serve and not dominate the peoples of the world.”

It is time for people to act as the only guarantee against the spread and use of nuclear weapons is to eliminate them.
[IDN-InDepthNews – 8 January 2016]

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North Korea's Nuclear Test Escalates Military Tensions

By Rodney Reynolds



North Koreans bowing to the statues of Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – As military tensions continue to rise between two of the world's major nuclear powers – the United States and Russia – the United Nations remains strongly committed towards one of its longstanding goals: a world without nuclear weapons. But North Korea's announcement of its first hydrogen bomb – tested January 6 – is threatening to escalate the nuclear challenge even further.

The 193-member General Assembly wrapped up its 2015 sessions in December adopting 57 draft resolutions on arms control and disarmament – 23 of which were on nuclear weapons.

In one of the resolutions, urging all member states not to carry out nuclear weapon test explosions, there were 181 countries voting in favour, with only one vote (North Korea) against it.

In a statement released January 6, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the underground nuclear test announced by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on January 6 is deeply troubling.

"This test once again violates numerous Security Council resolutions despite the united call by the international community to cease such activities. It is also a grave contravention of the international norm against nuclear testing. "

He said this act is profoundly destabilising for regional security and seriously undermines international non-proliferation efforts. "I condemn it unequivocally. And I demand the DPRK cease any further nuclear activities and meet its obligations for verifiable denuclearization."

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"We are monitoring and assessing developments in close coordination with the concerned international organisations – including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization – and interested parties," Ban added.

Asked if these resolutions carry any political clout, Ray Acheson, Director of Reaching Critical Will, told IDN many General Assembly (GA) resolutions are repetitive and are more oriented towards reiterating common positions than advancing concrete progress.

However in 2015 the GA adopted several new, important texts, she added.

Acheson pointed out that 138 states voted in favour of an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament that will be open to all but blockable by none.

The states participating in this working group should use it to discuss elements for a new legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons. The support for this resolution clearly shows that states are ready to make tangible progress in this regard, Acheson said.

She said the resolutions on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, humanitarian pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, and ethical imperatives for a nuclear weapon free world were also adopted, not only by a majority, but by two-thirds of UN member states.

It would appear that a great number of states are ready to finally stand up to the nuclear-armed countries and their nuclear allies and take concerted action for nuclear disarmament, said Acheson who monitors and analyses international processes related to disarmament and arms control.

But even as anti-nuclear activists were warning of a rising nuclear threat, North Korea justified its detonation of the hydrogen bomb as "a self defensive measure to defend our right to live in the face of nuclear threats and blackmail by the United States and to guarantee the security of the Korean peninsula."

Responding to the North Korean test, Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), said escalating tensions between nuclear armed states is raising concerns about a new arms race. But unlike the Cold War, she said, this time it would involve a larger number of actors and unstable and volatile regions.

"The risk of use or accident involving nuclear weapons is on the rise," she warned.

In a statement released January 6, ICAN said nuclear weapons are irresponsible means of warfare and their use and possession is a ruthless act that must be condemned by the international community as a whole.

Condemnation must be followed by the development of an international prohibition on nuclear weapons similar to the bans on chemical and biological weapons.

In February 2016 member states will meet in Geneva to conduct talks to develop new law on nuclear weapons. "All responsible states should negotiate new law on nuclear weapons, take a clear stand against the possession and reliance on this weapon of mass destruction and develop an unambiguous prohibition of nuclear weapons" Fihn added.

Referring to the General Assembly resolutions adopted last month, Acheson told IDN that in voting for the resolution on the ethical imperatives for a nuclear weapon free world, 132 states agreed that nuclear weapons "undermine collective security, heighten the risk of nuclear catastrophe, aggravate international tension and make conflict more dangerous."

In voting for another resolution reflecting the humanitarian pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, 139 states called on all relevant stakeholders to "stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons in the light of their unacceptable humanitarian consequences and associated risks."

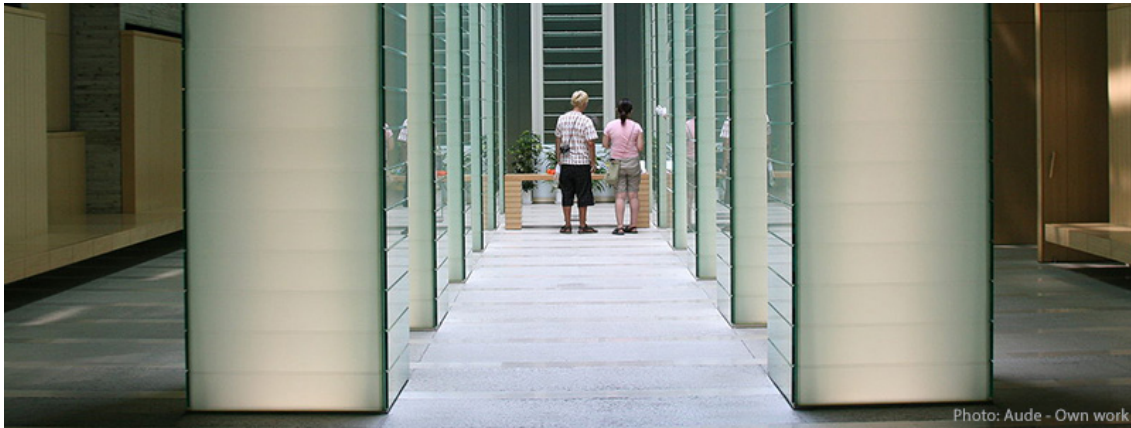
"These are important positions for states to take at the GA," she added. [IDN-InDepthNews – 6 January 2016]

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People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition

Initiated by Soka Gakkai International (SGI)



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