

BEYOND NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

2016 IS CRUCIAL FOR A NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE WORLD

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



TOWARD A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD



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The 25th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the twentieth anniversaries of the opening for signature of the treaty to ban all kinds of nuclear tests as well as of the unanimous advisory by the world’s highest court are three significant hallmarks of the year 2016. “These historical dates are an important occasion for pooling the efforts of all countries to promote a nuclear-free world,” said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on March 2 during a meeting in Astana with the heads of foreign diplomatic missions accredited in the republic. ➡ 04-06

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THE HAGUE (IDN) - Aided by a team of eminent international lawyers and backed by staunch proponents of ‘nuclear zero’, the tiny but resolute Pacific Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) wants the International Court of Justice (ICJ), principal judicial organ of the United Nations, to hold the nine nuclear weapons states – U.S., Russia, UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea – accountable to their disarmament commitments. These are the first contentious cases about nuclear disarmament to be brought before the world’s highest court, said Rick Wayman, Director of Programs at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation. ➡ 07-09

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Last year’s NPT Review Conference closed without bridging the chasm between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states. It was deeply regrettable that no consensus was reached at this significant juncture marking the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hope still remains, however, thanks to a number of important developments. These include: the growing number of countries endorsing the Humanitarian Pledge, a commitment to work together for the resolution of the nuclear arms issue; the adoption in December 2015 by the UN General Assembly of several ambitious re-solutions calling for a breakthrough; and rising calls from civil society for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons. ➡ 14-15

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Nuclear Weapons Challenge the World's Highest Court

By Ramesh Jaura



Nuclear weapon test Bravo (yield 15 Mt) on Bikini Atoll. The test was part of the Operation Castle. The Bravo event was an experimental thermonuclear device surface event. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

BERLIN | THE HAGUE (IDN) - After ten days of public hearings involving teams of eminent international lawyers – some backed by staunch proponents of ‘nuclear zero’ and others clinging to the doctrine of ‘nuclear deterrence’ – the world’s highest court is faced with a challenging task of far-reaching significance.

Not the least because this year marks the twentieth anniversaries of the 1996 ‘advisory opinion’ by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the opening for signature of the CTBT, the treaty banning all nuclear tests everywhere – nuclear tests that are at the heart of nuclear proliferation.

Explaining the core subject for ICJ’s deliberation, a famous Dutch lawyer Phon van den Biesen said, “from a legal perspective”, the issues presented by the three legal cases “are ordinary ones, but a positive outcome will, spectacularly, change the world”.

This is because there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. “Their use could render meaningless in an instant all of humankind’s efforts to resolve global problems,” warns Buddhist philosopher, educator, author, and anti-nuclear activist, Daisaku Ikeda. He is President of the Tokyo-based lay Buddhist organisation Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

In his 2016 annual Peace Proposal, Ikeda declared: “If nuclear weapons were to be used in a hostile exchange in any corner of the world, the impact – whether in terms of the number of lives lost or the number of people who would suffer aftereffects – staggers the imagination.”

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In fact, recent research warns of the devastating impact of even a geographically limited nuclear exchange on the global ecology; the impact on the world's climate would undermine food production, resulting in a "nuclear famine".

Explaining the motivation of the Pacific Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to turn to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), former Foreign Minister Tony de Brum said: "I have seen with my very own eyes nuclear devastation and know with conviction that nuclear weapons must never again be visited upon humanity. Nuclear weapons are a senseless threat to survival and there are basic norms that compel those who possess them to pursue and achieve their elimination."

The RMI is home to the Bikini Atoll nuclear testing grounds. Along with Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, which suffered atomic bombings in 1945, the RMI is one among few non-nuclear-armed states in the world to see the devastation caused by nuclear weapons at close range.

The U.S. carried out 67 nuclear explosive tests between 1946 and 1958, including the infamous Castle Bravo test, which, at 15 megatons, involved the most powerful U.S. nuclear device ever to see atmospheric testing.

According to reports, the size of the Castle Bravo test on March 1, 1954 far exceeded expectations, causing widespread radioactive contamination. The fallout spread traces of radioactive material as far as Australia, India and Japan, and even the United States and parts of Europe. Though organized as a secret test, Castle Bravo quickly became an international incident, prompting calls for a ban on the atmospheric testing of thermonuclear devices.

The RMI claims that the nuclear-armed nations are in breach of nuclear disarmament obligations under existing international law. This applies to the P5 (permanent members of the UN Security Council: U.S., Russia, UK, France and China) that are signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as well as to the four non-NPT signatories (Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea) under customary international law.

Accordingly, the Marshall Islands had filed lawsuits against all nine nuclear weapons countries in April 2014. But the U.S., Russia, China, France, Israel and North Korea do not accept the "compulsory jurisdiction" of the ICJ and ignored the cases brought against them. Only India, Pakistan and UK accepted.

Prior to the start of the oral proceedings on March 8, Pakistan, which had duly participated in the written proceedings, informed the Court that it would not participate in the hearings, because, in particular, it "[did] not feel that [such] participation [would] add anything to what ha[d] already been submitted through its Counter-Memorial" – responding to the Marshall Islands charges.

Subsequently, though only India and the United Kingdom took part in the oral public hearings, all three strongly object to the "admissibility and jurisdiction" of the ICJ in the case filed by the RMI.

UK argues that in common with the other NPT parties, it acknowledges its obligation under Article VI of the treaty and work towards disarmament. India insists that the NPT is discriminatory, de facto allowing the P5 modernize their nuclear weapons.

Phon van den Biesen, Co-Agent for the RMI and attorney at law in Amsterdam, who was leading the Marshall Islands' international Legal Team, said: "We are, basically, asking the Court to tell the respondent states (India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom) to live up to their obligations under international law."

In particular, the RMI is asking the ICJ to follow up on its earlier findings in the Advisory Opinion it delivered in 1996 on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. At the time the Court considered that the continued international debate on the legality of these deadly weapons threatens the stability of the international order.

It added that "the long-promised complete nuclear disarmament appears to be the most appropriate means" to put an end to that untenable situation. (para. 98, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/95/7495.pdf>)

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The minimum the international lawyers supporting the RMI expect of the ICJ is to reiterate the ICJ's 1996 advisory opinion: "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

In his 2009 five-point proposal, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also urged "all NPT parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon-states, to fulfil their obligation under the treaty to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament".

The public hearings at the ICJ were preceded by the Open Ended Working Group's first meeting in February 22-26 in Geneva, which did not succeed in breaking the stalemate on nuclear weapons disarmament. The next two sessions are scheduled for May and August.

Whether the 15 ICJ judges, along with judge-ad-hoc Mohammed Bedjaoui, would by then have deliberated on jurisdiction and admissibility issues raised in the written and oral pleadings, is far from certain.

Concluding public hearings – comprising rather complicated legal aspects and profound political implications – on the question of jurisdiction, the United Nations' principal judicial organ ICJ announced on March 16: "The Court's judgment on the question of jurisdiction will be delivered at a public sitting, the date of which will be announced in due course."

A close observer of the ICJ public hearings, Kazuo Ishiwatari, Vice Executive Director of the Peace and Global Issues at SGI said: "We need to raise public awareness about nuclear weapons and the consequences of their use . . . Access to knowledge empowers people to work more effectively for a world without nuclear weapons. Ultimately, we need to see that our choice is between systems of national security premised on the suffering and sacrifice of ordinary citizens and ways of thinking and acting that prioritize human security." [IDN-InDepthNews – 17 March 2016]

2016 Crucial for Promoting a Nuclear Weapons Free World

By Jamshed Baruh

BERLIN | NEW YORK (IDN) - The 25th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site and the twentieth anniversaries of the opening for signature of the treaty to ban all kinds of nuclear tests as well as of the unanimous advisory by the world's highest court are three significant hallmarks of the year 2016.

"These historical dates are an important occasion for pooling the efforts of all countries to promote a nuclear-free world," said Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev on March 2 during a meeting in Astana with the heads of foreign diplomatic missions accredited in the republic.

The Semipalatinsk Test Site (STS or Semipalatinsk-21), also known as "The Polygon", was the primary testing venue for the then Soviet Union's nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union conducted 456 nuclear tests at Semipalatinsk from 1949 until 1989 with little regard for their effect on the local people or environment. The full impact of radiation exposure was hidden for many years by Soviet authorities and has only come to light since the test site closed in 1991.

From 1996 to 2012, a secret joint operation of Kazakh, Russian, and American nuclear scientists and engineers secured the waste plutonium in the tunnels of the mountains.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was negotiated during the 1990s in Geneva and was opened for signature in 1996. One hundred and eighty-three countries have signed the Treaty, of which 164 have also ratified it, including three of the nuclear weapon States: France, Russia and the United Kingdom.

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Photo: Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, Kazakhstan view 1. Credit: aboutkazakhstan.com | voxpopuli.kz

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. India, North Korea and Pakistan have yet to sign the CTBT.

Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) in Vienna is leaving no stones unturned so that the CTBT might enter into force and become a law that is binding on all parties, including North Korea, the only country that has conducted four nuclear tests – in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016 – and every one of these in defiance of the international community.

In fact, Kazakhstan and Japan have been working together to facilitate entry into force of the treaty banning nuclear explosions “by everyone, everywhere: on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground”.

Twenty years have elapsed since 1996 when the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a unanimous advisory the but little progress has been made toward achieving the desired objective.

“There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control,” the principal judicial organ of the United Nations declared.

The fact that this has not happened, prompted the Pacific Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) approach the ICJ in The Hague, Netherlands, to hold the nine nuclear weapons states – U.S., Russia, UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea – accountable to their disarmament commitments.

In what are the first contentious cases about nuclear disarmament to be brought before the world's highest court, the Marshall Islands filed lawsuits against all nine nuclear weapons countries in April 2014. But the U.S., Russia, China, France, Israel and North Korea do not accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ and are ignoring the cases brought against them. Only India, Pakistan and UK accept.

The ICJ concludes on March 16 a series of public hearings that started on March 7 with a view to determining whether it has the authority to adjudicate the matter. Indications are that the Court will take several months to announce its decision.

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The public hearings at the ICJ were preceded by the Open Ended Working Group's first meeting in February 22-26, 2016 in Geneva, which did not succeed in breaking the stalemate on nuclear weapons disarmament. The nuclear armed states did not participate in the deliberations, though several countries relying on nuclear weapons joined. These included many NATO countries as well as Japan, South Korea and Australia.

Against this backdrop, Kazakh President Nazarbayev said the leading nuclear-weapon states should be the first to set an example in nuclear arms reduction.

The Russian news agency TASS said: "Speaking about the reduction of nuclear weapons tests, not the possession of nuclear weapons, which is correct at a time when the world is gripped by terrorism, the nuclear-weapon countries, the 'nuclear five' should, in the first instance, set an example in this matter. Otherwise, it may turn out that we will possess [nuclear weapons] and upgrade them, while prohibiting others [to do the same]. That would be wrong."

Nazarbayev noted that otherwise "the 20 nuclear threshold states would want to have nuclear weapons to defend their countries" calling this "a very dangerous trend." "I think all nations of the world should be united to work together in this direction," he said.

According to TASS, Nazarbayev recalled that Kazakhstan had "consistently contributed to strengthening the non-proliferation regime". The country had supported the international negotiation process on Iran's nuclear program making a practical contribution to it, including to the implementation of the Joint Plan of Action.

"In December Kazakhstan transported 60 tons of natural uranium to Iran in compensation for the removal of low-enriched uranium from this country," said the Kazakh President, adding: "We are convinced that this will ensure the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime, the enforcement of the legitimate rights of states to develop peaceful nuclear energy and non-discriminatory access to nuclear fuel."

It is because of such initiatives that 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 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.

The 2016 Nuclear Security Summit will be held March 31-April 1, 2016 in Washington, D.C. According to a [statement](#) by the White House press secretary, "the Summit will continue discussion on the evolving threat and highlight steps that can be taken together to minimize the use of highly-enriched uranium, secure vulnerable materials, counter nuclear smuggling and deter, detect, and disrupt attempts at nuclear terrorism".

The statement added: "The United States seeks a strengthened global nuclear security architecture that is comprehensive, is based on international standards, builds confidence in nations' nuclear security implementation, and results in declining global stocks of nuclear weapons-usable materials. We cannot afford to wait for an act of nuclear terrorism before working together to collectively raise our standards for nuclear security." [IDN-InDepthNews – 14 March 2016]

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World's Highest Court Addresses Nuclear Disarmament

By Ramesh Jaura



Photo: ICJ

THE HAGUE (IDN) - Aided by a team of eminent international lawyers and backed by staunch proponents of ‘nuclear zero’, the tiny but resolute Pacific Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) wants the International Court of Justice (ICJ), principal judicial organ of the United Nations, to hold the nine nuclear weapons states – U.S., Russia, UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea – accountable to their disarmament commitments.

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The RMI claims that the nuclear-armed nations are in breach of nuclear disarmament obligations under existing international law. This applies to the P5 (permanent members of the UN Security Council: U.S., Russia, UK, France and China) that are signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as well as to the four non-NPT signatories (Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea) under customary international law.

In his 2009 five-point proposal, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had urged “all NPT parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon-states, to fulfil their obligation under the treaty to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament”.

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The public hearings at the ICJ were preceded by the Open Ended Working Group's first meeting in February 22-26, 2016 in Geneva, which did not succeed in breaking the stalemate on nuclear weapons disarmament.

"We are, basically, asking the Court to tell the respondent states to live up to their obligations under international law and to conduct negotiations leading to the required result: nuclear disarmament in all its aspects," said Phon van den Biesen, Co-Agent for the RMI and attorney at law in Amsterdam, who is leading the International Legal Team.

In particular, the RMI is asking the ICJ to follow up on its earlier findings in the Advisory Opinion it delivered in 1996 on the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons. At the time the Court considered that the continued international debate on the legality of these deadly weapons threatens the stability of the international order.

It added that "the long-promised complete nuclear disarmament appears to be the most appropriate means" to put an end to that untenable situation. (para. 98, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/95/7495.pdf>)

The ICJ concludes on March 16 a series of public hearings that started on March 7 with a view to determining whether it has the authority to adjudicate the matter. Indications are that the Court will take several months to announce its decision.

"From a legal perspective, the issues presented by these cases are ordinary ones, but a positive outcome will, spectacularly, change the world," said van den Biesen.

UK, India and Pakistan strongly object to the "admissibility and jurisdiction" of the ICJ in the case filed by the RMI. UK argues that in common with the other NPT parties, it acknowledges its obligation under Article VI of the treaty and work towards disarmament. India insists that the NPT is discriminatory, de facto allowing the P5 modernize their nuclear weapons.

The minimum the international lawyers supporting the RMI's former Foreign Minister Tony de Brum, expect of the ICJ is to reiterate the ICJ's non-binding 1996 advisory opinion on nuclear weapons, which said that states are legally obliged "to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control".

The RMI is home to the Bikini Atoll nuclear testing grounds. Along with Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan, which suffered atomic bombings in 1945, the RMI is one among few non-nuclear-armed states in the world to see the devastation of nuclear weapons at close range.

According to the United States embassy in the Marshall Islands, the U.S. government carried out 67 nuclear explosive tests between 1946 and 1958, including the infamous Castle Bravo test, which, at 15 megatons, involved the most powerful U.S. nuclear device ever to see atmospheric testing, writes Ankit Panda.

The size of the Castle Bravo test on March 1, 1954 far exceeded expectations, causing widespread radioactive contamination. The fallout spread traces of radioactive material as far as Australia, India and Japan, and even the United States and parts of Europe. Though organized as a secret test, Castle Bravo quickly became an international incident, prompting calls for a ban on the atmospheric testing of thermonuclear devices.

The RMI's former Foreign Minister Tony de Brum narrated his experience witnessing U.S. nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands as a child: "The entire sky turned blood red," he said, adding that islands were "vaporized" by nuclear weapons testing.

"Our people have suffered the catastrophic and irreparable damage of these weapons and we vow to fight so that no one else on earth will ever again experience these atrocities," he added.

Despite the lawsuits, the Marshall Islands and the United States maintain good diplomatic relations under their 1983 Compact of Free Association, which grants the United States responsibility for the islands' security and defence needs.

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Explaining the RMI's motivation to turn to the ICJ, Tony de Brum said: "I have seen with my very own eyes nuclear devastation and know with conviction that nuclear weapons must never again be visited upon humanity. Nuclear weapons are a senseless threat to survival and there are basic norms that compel those who possess them to pursue and achieve their elimination. This is the subject of legal action by my country at the International Court of Justice."

Kazuo Ishiwatari, Vice Executive Director of the Peace and Global Issues at Soka Gakkai International (SGI) said: "We need to raise public awareness about nuclear weapons and the consequences of their use . . . Access to knowledge empowers people to work more effectively for a world without nuclear weapons. Ultimately, we need to see that our choice is between systems of national security premised on the suffering and sacrifice of ordinary citizens and ways of thinking and acting that prioritize human security."

Explaining the rationale, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda declared in his 2016 annual Peace Proposal: "If nuclear weapons were to be used in a hostile exchange in any corner of the world, the impact – whether in terms of the number of lives lost or the number of people who would suffer aftereffects – staggers the imagination."

Because in the world today, there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons. Their use could render meaningless in an instant all of humankind's efforts to resolve global problems.

"Taking the example of the refugee crisis," wrote Ikeda, "the consequences of a nuclear explosion would cross national borders, in all likelihood creating a humanitarian crisis of far greater proportion than the current 60 million refugees. Hundreds of millions of people might find themselves fleeing for safety."

In fact, recent research warns of the devastating impact of even a geographically limited nuclear exchange on the global ecology; the impact on the world's climate would undermine food production, resulting in a "nuclear famine". [IDN-InDepthNews – 13 March 2016]

Youth Campaign for a Legally Binding Global Ban on Nuclear Tests

By Jamshed Baruah

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – When the 15-member UN Security Council (UNSC) met at an emergency session on February 7, a non-working Sunday afternoon, to discuss the most recent defiance by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the outcome was predictable.

After "urgent consultations", the UNSC "strongly condemned" DPRK for launching a rocket which could lead to the future development of intercontinental ballistic missile technologies.

But the Council stopped short of penalizing a country that continues to defy the world body despite several previous resolutions – and a rash of U.S. economic sanctions.

The UNSC met less than 48 hours after the rocket launch which the United States described as a "major provocation, threatening not only the security of the Korean peninsula, but also of the region and the United States as well".

Since any move to impose additional sanctions on DPRK would have triggered a veto from one of its closest allies, China, the U.S. opted for condemnation rather than punitive action.

Tariq Rauf, Director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN that China has continued to nurture DPRK after the breakup of the USSR.

Currently, DPRK is the only other state with old school official Communist/Socialist party in charge – and a collapse of DPRK would portend badly for China, he added.

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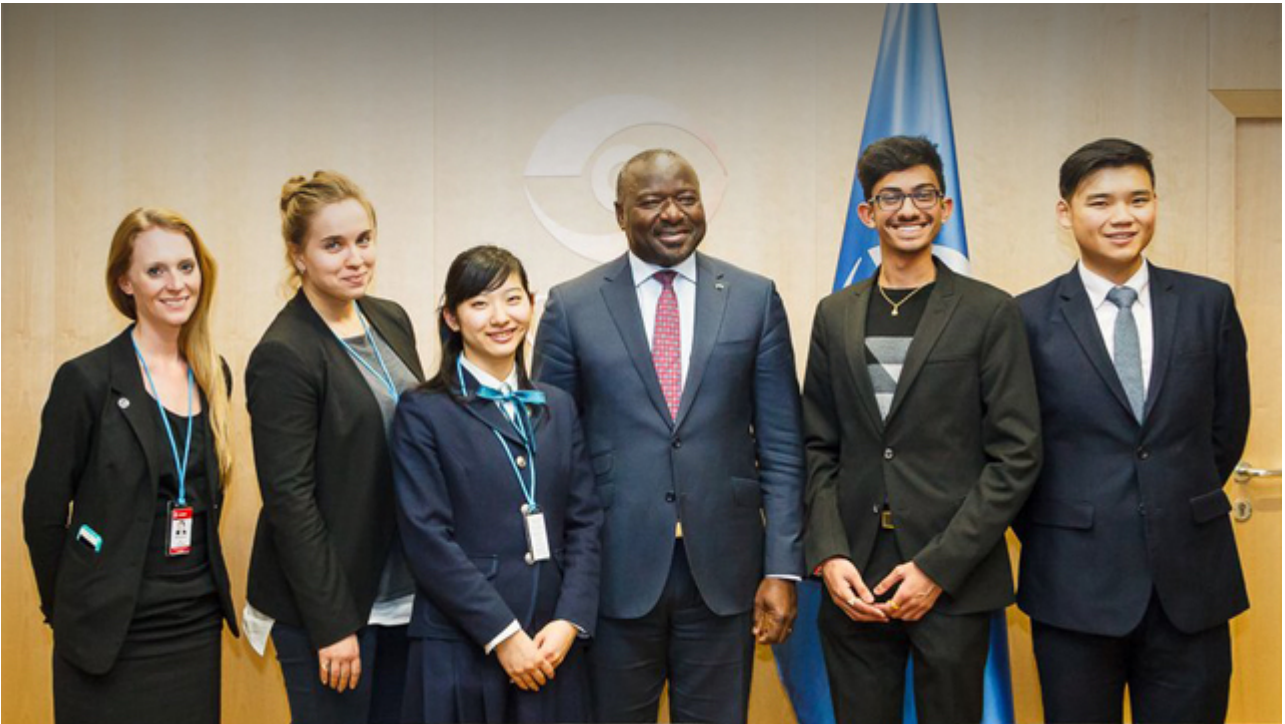


Photo: (from left) Sarah Bidgood, Anastasia Shavrova, Shizuka Kuramitsu, Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo, Sahil Shah, and Nelson Zhao. Credit: CTBTO

And more importantly, he pointed out, China does not want to take on the burden of a collapsed DPRK – even as DPRK’s actions continue to upset Japan, South Korea and the U.S.

The situation is more complicated, he said, because the declining influence of China over current DPRK leaders is also a greater loss of face for China.

Despite a politically mild statement, the UNSC reserved the right to take more drastic measures at a later date.

The members of the Security Council restated their intent to “develop significant measures” in a new Security Council resolution in response to the fourth nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on January 6, 2016, in grave violation of the DPRK’s international obligations.

But that threat still remains on hold.

The members of the Security Council also said they have previously expressed their determination to take “further significant measures” in the event of another DPRK launch.

“In line with this commitment and the gravity of this most recent violation, the members of the Security Council will adopt expeditiously a new Security Council resolution with such measures in response to these dangerous and serious violations.”

Rauf said adopting additional Security Council resolutions is a losing proposition – these resolutions have not made any dent on DPRK’s nuclear and ballistic missile activities and UN sanctions have disproportionately impacted the civilian population.

“A popular saying goes that doing the same thing repeatedly with the same negative results is a sure sign of madness,” he said. The Security Council would do well to heed this saying. Rauf argued the way forward is not yet mo-

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re resolutions against DPRK but to start a negotiation track that addresses the security concerns of both DPRK's neighbours and the DPRK.

There can be no military solution, no solution based on increasing economic and political pressure.

The only viable way to addressing this situation is engagement, just like Iran's nuclear file was resolved through diplomatic means after it had created facts on the ground – nearly 20,000 centrifuges and more than 2 tonnes of enriched uranium, despite “crippling sanctions.”

Similarly DPRK also is creating facts on the ground: four nuclear tests since 2006, flight-tests of ballistic missiles and Space Launch Vehicles (SLVs).

The diplomatic track for DPRK should address the security concerns of all sides, seek verified restraints on DPRK's nuclear and missile/SLV programmes, elements of a peace treaty between South and North Korea, nuclear security assurances by the U.S. to Japan and South Korea, and military forces and expenditures of DPRK, South Korea and Japan.

He said previously flawed policies led to DPRK crossing the Rubicon by becoming the ninth country to test and deploy nuclear weapons – an entirely preventable outcome.

“There is no time to waste,” Rauf warned.

In a statement released February 6, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said the U.S. reaffirms its “ironclad commitment to the defense of our allies”, including the Republic of Korea and Japan.

“We will continue to work with our partners and members of the UN Security Council on significant measures to hold the DPRK to account.”

Now is the time to do so in a firm and united way, said Kerry, “with measures that make clear the determination of the international community to address the pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities by the DPRK and this most recent destabilizing and unacceptable challenge to our common peace and security”.

Rauf pointed out that UNSC Resolution 1718 was adopted by consensus on 1 October 14 2006, under Chapter VII, Article 41, of the UN Charter, which makes it mandatory for the DPRK to "not conduct any further nuclear test or launch of a ballistic missile", "suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programme" and "abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner".

The Security Council also adopted Resolution 1874 on June 12, 2009, Resolution 2087 on January 22, 2013, and Resolution 2094 on March 7, 2013.

He said several States, including Japan, South Korea and the U.S. have condemned DPRK for not observing the Security Council's resolutions – and it is likely a new resolution will be introduced in the aftermath of the SLV launch and the January 6, 2016 nuclear test by DPRK. [IDN-InDepthNews – 8 February 2016]

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New Sanctions on North Korea May Prove Counterproductive

By Rodney Reynolds



Security Council unanimously adopts resolution imposing additional sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). UN Photo/Mark Garten

UNITED NATIONS (IDN) – After nearly two months of closed-door negotiations, the 15 member UN Security Council (UNSC) decided to impose new sanctions on North Korea penalizing Pyongyang for its fourth nuclear test conducted on January 6.

The resolution, adopted unanimously by the UNSC, imposed some of the toughest sanctions on North Korea calling on all UN member states to inspect cargo destined for – and coming from – Pyongyang, in all airport and sea ports.

The sanctions include restrictions on the export of coal, iron, iron ore or other minerals, while prohibiting the supply of aviation fuel, including rocket fuel. The resolution also mandates member states to expel North Korean diplomats involved in illicit trafficking.

But how far the sanctions will be implemented is left to be seen – particularly by China which is a close ally of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Both China and Russia voted in favour of the resolution.

So far, North Korea has conducted four nuclear tests – in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016 – and every one of them in defiance of the international community

After the vote, U.S. President Barack Obama said: “Today, the international community, speaking with one voice, has sent Pyongyang a simple message: North Korea must abandon these dangerous programmes and choose a better path for its people.”

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But Tariq Rauf, Director, Disarmament, Arms Control & Nonproliferation Programme at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN the latest UN Security Council Resolution 2270 (2016) “is ill advised and counterproductive in achieving behaviour change by the North Korean leadership by imposing even stricter sanctions.”

Rather, the resolution may well propel the DPRK to be even more defiant in continuing with its nuclear and rocket/missile programmes, he noted. He pointed out that sanctions alone have never been successful in reversing States' nuclear weapon programmes.

“It is highly regrettable that no policy of engagement is offered by the Security Council, China and the United States,” said Rauf, the former Head of Verification & Security Policy Coordination at the Office of the Director General at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) during 2002-2011, where he handled the DPRK nuclear file.

Rauf said China's support for this resolution reflects its unhappiness with the DPRK but also is indicative of its diplomatic vulnerabilities in the face of a declining economy.

Furthermore, China's expansionist activities in the South China Sea including constructing artificial islands hosting military bases is more important and given the hostility and reaction to this policy from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the U.S., China's support for the new DPRK resolution is a smart move to deflect attention, he argued.

Just after the resolution was adopted, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a former Foreign Minister of South Korea, said the unanimous action by the Security Council “has sent a clear message that the DPRK must return to full compliance with its international obligations”.

He urged the DPRK to abide by the resolution and called upon all Member States to ensure its implementation. “This firm response by the Security Council should put an end to the cycle of provocation and lead to the resumption of dialogue in accordance with the unified view of the international community,” said Ban.

The Secretary-General reaffirmed his commitment to working with all sides to reduce tensions and achieve the verifiable de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. He also reiterated the critical role of international assistance in safeguarding the lives of millions in the country.

At the same time, he renewed his call on the DPRK to do more for the lives of its people. Genuine improvement in human rights is a necessary basis for long-term security and stability.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power said DPRK's obsessive pursuit of weapons of mass destruction not only causes profound suffering for the people of North Korea, but also poses an extraordinary and growing threat to peace and security in the peninsula, the region, and the world.

She said with each nuclear test and launch using ballistic missile technology, the DPRK improves its capability to carry out a nuclear missile attack not only in the region, but also a continent away. “That means having the ability to strike most of the countries sitting on this Council. Think about that.”

“North Korea is the only country in the entire world that has conducted a nuclear test in the 21st century. In fact, it has conducted not one nuclear test, but four – in 2006, 2009, 2013, and now, 2016.”

It is also the only UN Member State that routinely threatens other countries with nuclear annihilation, including multiple members of this Council on different occasions, Power said.

On the sanctions, she pointed out under the latest resolution, cargo going into and coming out of North Korea will be treated as suspicious, and countries will be required to inspect it, whether it goes by air, land, or sea. This is hugely significant.

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North Korea used to be able to import aviation fuel, which included rocket fuel used to launch proscribed ballistic missiles. Not anymore, Power said. The resolution adopted today bans all imports of aviation fuel, including rocket fuel.

For years, she pointed out, the DPRK deployed arms dealers, smugglers, financiers, and other enablers of its illicit weapons programs and claimed that they were diplomats and government representatives around the world.

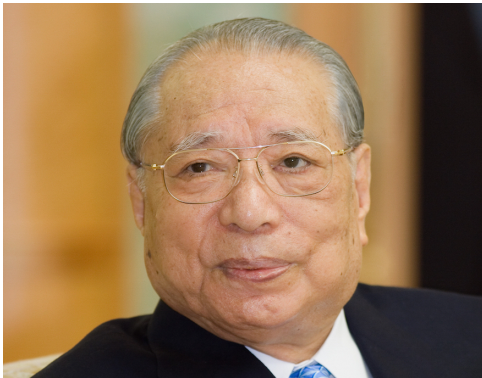
Abusing diplomatic protections, these individuals cut illicit deals, set up shell companies, and procured banned items to aid North Korea's weapons program. "The resolution adopted today obligates countries to expel any North Korean who carries out these acts, including DPRK diplomats."

Despite previous financial sanctions that constrained North Korea's access to the international financial system, North Korean banks were still able to do business on foreign territory, allowing the government to fund its illicit programs.

Under the new resolution, states around the world will have to shut down DPRK financial institutions in their territory. [IDN-InDepthNews – 3 March 2016]

The Beginning of the End for Nuclear Weapons?

By Daisaku Ikeda



TOKYO (IDN | INPS) - Last year's NPT Review Conference closed without bridging the chasm between the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states. It was deeply regrettable that no consensus was reached at this significant juncture marking the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hope still remains, however, thanks to a number of important developments. These include: the growing number of countries endorsing the Humanitarian Pledge, a commitment to work together for the resolution of the nuclear arms issue; the adoption in December 2015 by the UN General Assembly of several ambitious resolutions calling for a breakthrough; and rising calls from civil society for the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons.

tion of nuclear weapons.

Last year, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution setting up an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) to engage in substantive deliberations in pursuit of concrete and effective legal measures to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. The resolution stated that the OEWG would convene "with the participation and contribution of international organizations and civil society representatives" and that participants should make their best efforts to reach general agreement.

I strongly hope that the OEWG, which held substantial discussions during its first meeting in Geneva February 22-26, will continue to engage in constructive deliberations at its next sessions scheduled for May and August to identify effective measures necessary for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons, something which must be the joint undertaking of all UN member states.

Twenty years have passed since the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons. This states: "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." Photo: Dr Daisaku Ikeda. Credit: Seikyo Shimbun

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However, good faith negotiations involving all the nuclear-weapon states have not even begun. This is an intolerable state of affairs. Leveraging the deliberations at the OEWG sessions, we must build global momentum for a treaty outlawing nuclear weapons.

In the world today, there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons that cost more than US\$100 billion per year to maintain. Their use could render meaningless in an instant all of humankind's efforts to resolve global problems such as poverty, hunger and climate change. If even one were to be detonated anywhere in the world, the impact would be beyond imagining.

What then is the point of national security guaranteed by nuclear weapons, the use of which would inevitably produce catastrophic consequences and result in immense suffering and sacrifice throughout the world? What exactly is protected by a security regime premised on the possibility of inflicting irreparable damage and devastation on vast numbers of people? Is this not a system in which the true objective of national security—protecting people and their lives—has in fact been forsaken?

Unfortunately, the nuclear-weapon states and their allies adhere to the idea that they have no choice but to maintain a nuclear deterrent as long as these weapons exist. They might believe that possessing a nuclear deterrent puts them in control. Yet in reality, the dangers of an accidental detonation or launch multiply in proportion to the number of nuclear weapons and states possessing them.

Seen from this perspective, the nuclear weapons possessed by a state actually hold the fate of not only that country but of all humankind in their grasp.

Hidden in the depths of a security regime based on nuclear weapons is the toxic way of thinking that permeates contemporary civilization: the pursuit of one's own objectives by any means; of one's own security and national interest at the expense of the people of other countries; and of one's own immediate goals in disregard of the impact on future generations. I believe that resolving the nuclear weapons issue means challenging and overcoming this way of thinking.

At the 2015 NPT Review Conference, members of the Soka Gakkai International joined with individuals from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faith traditions in submitting a Joint Statement of faith communities' concerns about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

It reads in part: "Nuclear weapons are incompatible with the values upheld by our respective faith traditions – the right of people to live in security and dignity; the commands of conscience and justice; the duty to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard the planet for future generations. . ."

This statement resonates with the Humanitarian Pledge that was submitted to the 2015 NPT Review Conference. Well over half the UN member states – 126 countries – have now added their voices to the Humanitarian Pledge's call to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders in initiatives designed to stigmatize, prohibit and ultimately eliminate nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons are the product of a bygone age. By continuing to pour economic and human resources into maintaining these weapons, we risk permanently entrenching the grotesque inequalities of our world.

Joining our voices to those of countries supporting the Humanitarian Pledge, civil society must build broader global momentum for peace and humane values, so that the deliberations that have started in Geneva mark the beginning of the end of the nuclear age.

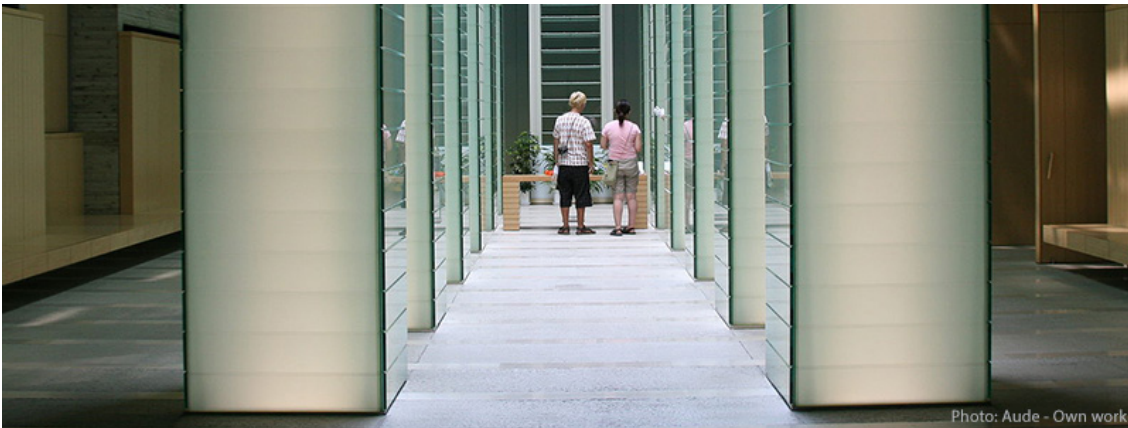
*Daisaku Ikeda (1928-) is president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist association and founder of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research. He has been a long-term advocate of nuclear weapons abolition; a constant theme in his annual peace proposals for over 30 years. His 2016 proposal is at <http://www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/resources/works/props/2016-peace-proposal.html> [IDN-InDepthNews – 2 March 2016]

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