

**BUREAU OF PARLIAMENTARY STUDIES AND TRAINING
LECTURE SERIES FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT**

Global Conscience and the Human Right to Peace

**By Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.
Chairman, Middle Powers Initiative**

**BPST COMMITTEE HALL, FIRST FLOOR,
PARLIAMENT LIBRARY BUILDING**

**New Delhi
13 March 2008**

I have come once more to India, a land where I have learned so much, to testify to the dedication and perseverance of global civil society leaders to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

- The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War has launched an International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons to mobilize a groundswell of global support for the elimination of nuclear weapons.
- Mayors for Peace, headed by Mayor Tad Akiba of Hiroshima, now has 2125 Mayors signed up in 127 countries calling for a Nuclear Weapons Convention by 2020.
- The Article VI Forum, conducted by the Middle Powers Initiative, working with 30 like-minded countries, has identified seven priority actions to save the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010.
- A growing number of senior U.S. political and diplomatic figures have joined with George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn in calling for the political will to develop an international consensus to turn “the goal of a world without nuclear weapons into a practical enterprise among nations.”

There is a new burst of energy inspiring humanity finally to come to grips with the monster of nuclear weapons that threatens the very existence of life on the planet. For too long, nuclear weapons abolitionists have been relegated to the sidelines as if what we aspire to is only a dream. Today, the need to deal with nuclear dangers has moved to centre stage. We are back from the margins. When we discuss practical steps to eliminate nuclear weapons, we are in the forefront of the 21st century political drama. We are indeed relevant and we must be determined to make our voice heard.

The turn of history's wheel from shock at the first use of nuclear weapons, to passive acceptance of the doctrine of mutual assured destruction, to bewilderment at how to get rid of them, to a new determination to join practical steps, to a vision of a nuclear weapons-free world gives us hope. I do not mean a transitory sense of optimism, I mean a genuine hope based on the unfolding of events before our eyes that our work, laborious and often unthanked as it is, is actually building the foundation to support the architecture for true human security in the 21st century.

Our opponents still confront us, of course. The military-industrial complex extends its greedy tentacles into economies around the world. The forces of power, which claim, in what is surely the most gigantic lie in all of history, that nuclear weapons are essential to their security, are still in commanding positions. They still cling to the false proposition that it is sufficient to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons into the hands of the "wrong" states or terrorists without addressing their own disarmament obligations. The corporate media culture still manages to keep a global spotlight off the evil of all nuclear weapons. But all this pretense, this obfuscation, this duplicity is coming under new exposure.

Though their intellectual credibility is in tatters, though their legality is challenged, though their morality is in bankruptcy, the proponents of nuclear weapons will not easily give up. They will fight for retention because, in the end, nuclear weapons are all about power. But a rising tide of civil society, stimulating key non-nuclear governments to act in demanding an end to the two-class world, is itself providing a new political force.

No one can yet say which side – the proponents or the opponents of nuclear weapons – will win. But the mobilization of strength by those who truly understand that the extension of human rights is incompatible with the retention of nuclear weapons will undoubtedly have a profound effect on the future life of the planet. The very act of opposing the evil and the lie of nuclear weapons is a reflection of the global conscience that is becoming a characteristic of our time.

Opinion about the human condition is turning. This may be due to fear -- of a global catastrophe, caused either by terrorists, a nuclear war or the rising of the oceans from global warming. I believe that an awakened view of the need for a more harmonious planet is, indeed, taking hold. Both negative and positive influences shape conscience. What is clear is that an awakened global conscience is questioning, probing, challenging present world systems.

These systems have always been dominated by the rich and militarily powerful and, for the past 350 years, national interests have always prevailed. Now, globalization is breaking down national interests, and the lightning speed of mass global communication is empowering people all over the world. There is not yet a map to human security, at least that everyone can agree on. So there is much disorder, confusion and ranting. But there are also global strategies for disarmament, sustainable development, the protection of the environment and the advancement of human rights produced by the U.N.

These strategies are not yet being advocated sufficiently powerfully to overcome an unjust world economy, world disorder and the undermining of human rights and the rule of law. Perhaps the world will still have to endure genocidal civil wars in the Middle

East, more religious extremism, and a wave of nuclear proliferation. But the very forces of nature, business, communication and world politics are building up a single society. The chief characteristic of the society is its common humanity. Civilizations are struggling to live at peace in the single society.

The global conscience that is now identified in every civilization will help to move humanity forward. By moving forward, I mean reaching the day when it becomes cultural, not counter-cultural, to stand in the public square and demand an end to war, an end to nuclear weapons, an end to massive poverty, and demand that the full weight of government policies and finances be directed to building the conditions for peace. These thoughts are not just wishful thinking; they are firmly implanted in the minds of the millions of people who make up the burgeoning civil society movements.

Cynicism always seems to be in fashion. But cynics today cannot match the power of a critical mass of people across the planet awakened to a new understanding that civil society networking can prod governments to move forward on equitable policies for food distribution, clean water availability, decent sanitation, properly equipped medical clinics, and sufficiently funded education systems. Critical thinking can move the leaders of commerce to accept that sustainable business is good business and that protecting the environment is not a cost issue but a human survival issue.

Many are showing a new appreciation of the need for a strengthened international legal order, a reformed United Nations, and genuine participatory democracy. Many are clamouring for a world in which women are fully empowered and equally represented in decision-making processes. Many are working for an Alliance of Civilizations, in which the spiritual aspirations of believers are celebrated.

Global conscience keeps driving us forward to a world of greater care and mutual respect. Violence, war, greed still assault us. But the body of humanity, elevated in its spirit, mind and capacity to act, grows stronger. The stirring and movement of this body provides new hope for humanity.

* * *

When the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was recently re-set to five minutes to midnight, signifying increasing dangers in the world, nuclear weapons and climate change were specifically linked. The dangers posed by climate change are almost as dire as those posed by nuclear weapons, the scientists said. “The effects may be less dramatic in the short term than the destruction that could be wrought by nuclear explosions, but over the next three to four decades, climate change could cause irremediable harm to the habitats upon which human societies depend for survival.” Stephen Hawking, the British scientist, said; “We foresee great perils if governments and society do not take action now to render nuclear weapons obsolete and prevent further climate change.”

The U.S. Military Advisory Board, in a penetrating study of climate change and security, found that the predicted effects of climate change over the coming decades include extreme weather events, drought, flooding, sea level rise, retreating glaciers, habitat shifts, and the increased spread of life-threatening diseases. The consequences will likely foster political instability where societal demands exceed the capacity of governments to cope. “Climate change acts as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world.” The U.S. military experts now see climate change, national security and energy dependence as a related set of global challenges.

The spectre of climate change spawning a new era of conflicts around the world at a time of nuclear weapons proliferation is daunting. That is why it is now urgent to implement an integrated agenda addressing the pillars of human security – disarmament, development, environmental protection and the advancement of human rights.

A world facing rapidly advancing climate change and an extraordinary array of additional challenges – energy deficits, burgeoning pollution, acute water shortages, unrelenting hunger, grossly inadequate health services, and chronic armed conflict – should not also be burdened with the threat of nuclear annihilation. In the face of cumulative and deeply consequential environmental damage, the human community is awakening to the reality that the earth is a delicate, fragile home. Each generation has a sacred duty to nurture the planet and to care for its people. It is a duty that is utterly contrary to the maintenance of arsenals to assault, or even to threaten, the earth and its people with the almost limitless destructive power of nuclear weapons. Responsible stewardship of the earth requires no less than the permanent elimination of nuclear weapons.

IPPNW should be commended for promoting understanding of what is now called “nuclear famine,” a phenomenon in which even a limited, regional nuclear war would cause world-wide climate destruction and lead to global famine. During the Cold War, we heard about the dangers of “nuclear winter,” resulting from all-out nuclear warfare that would catastrophically disrupt the climate and make huge areas uninhabitable. While the threat of major nuclear conflict has receded, the post-Cold War doctrines positing “limited” nuclear warfare – as if killing only hundreds of thousands rather than millions is any less reprehensible – raise anew the spectre of firestorms and black smoke

inundating cities and disrupting food and health supplies on unimaginable scales. As Professor Owen B. Toon, a leader in this scientific research, has noted: “A small country is likely to direct its weapons against population centres to maximize damage and achieve the greatest advantages.”

A small decline in available food would jeopardize the lives of those whose daily caloric intake falls far below minimum requirements. A sudden decline in agricultural production could trigger massive famine. This in turn would lead to major epidemics of infectious diseases. Hoarding would lead to mayhem.

The point of the new studies is that even a “small-scale” regional nuclear war could produce as many fatalities as all of World War II, disrupt the global climate for a decade or more and impact nearly every person on Earth. Thus those who try to convince the public that new “low-yield” nuclear weapons such as “bunker-busters” are an acceptable means of warfare must be challenged. An IPPNW study concluded that even a very low-yield nuclear earth-penetrating weapon exploded in or near an urban environment would displace radioactive dirt and debris for several square kilometers.

The double threat to the climate – global warming caused by human activities and the jolting and devastating effect of nuclear warfare – must now be seen as inter-twined jeopardy. As inevitable disruptions occur to the economy due to climate change, international tensions will rise. Armed conflicts will increase. Tensions could escalate to a point where nuclear weapons will be used. This analysis increases the imperative of nuclear disarmament before the most serious effects of climate change are upon us.

We have a duty to share this knowledge in an effort to stimulate public action and more humane public policies. Physicians are instrumentally placed to inform civil

society and build public opinion to encourage governments to enact legislation and cooperate internationally. As Lord Rees of Ludlow, president of the Royal Society, said: “To confront these threats successfully and to avoid foreclosing humanity’s long-term potential, scientists need to channel their efforts wisely and engage with the political process nationally and internationally.”

* * *

I first saw India in 1963 when I traveled around the country absorbing what I call the soul of India. By this I mean the spirit of a people who broke free from colonialism and, with an expanding heart, showed that peace could be obtained despite the ravages of conflict. I am unabashedly a Gandhian in my belief that non-violence is the only way to lasting peace. I have returned to India many times over the years and my respect for this country’s stature in the world has grown.

I was here in 1984 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi accepted my invitation to join the Six-Nation Initiative, sponsored by Parliamentarians for Global Action, which pressed the superpowers to resume nuclear negotiations and stop nuclear testing. I met with Rajiv Gandhi to discuss how nuclear disarmament is a stepping-stone to common security and peace. I was present in the U.N. when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi brought this Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World to the Third Special Session on Disarmament. The plan called for successive steps to rid the world entirely of nuclear weapons by 2010. It urged the creation of an integrated multilateral verification system to ensure no new nuclear weapons are produced anywhere in the world.

Gandhi’s plan for elimination was carried forward by the Rajiv Gandhi Memorial Initiative, of which I was privileged to be a member. The Initiative called for threshold

nuclear-weapons states not to cross the threshold in return for a global process to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

Such a process would not only help achieve the twin objectives of the elimination and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in a fair, reasonable and balanced manner, it would also facilitate the world's return to the true spirit of the United Nations Charter. Indeed, the arrangements for comprehensive global security envisaged in the charter would be indispensable to ensuring that once a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world order is established, there is no slipping back into national nuclear-weapons arsenals.

As Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament, I regularly heard India argue at the U.N. and at the Conference on Disarmament that the present non-proliferation regime is discriminatory. Unfortunately, by their refusal to enter negotiations for elimination, the nuclear weapons states have given credence to India's assertion.

I returned to India in 1998 and spoke with India's leaders, urging them to occupy the high moral ground by refusing to test a nuclear weapon and thus lead the world by example. By then, it was too late to stop India's entry into the nuclear weapons club and also Pakistan's subsequent entry. The major nuclear powers bear a heavy responsibility for creating the Second Nuclear Age in which not only are nuclear weapons proliferating but they are now being maintained for war-fighting purposes.

But I have never lost heart that a nuclear weapons-free world is attainable. And I have certainly never lost hope that India will be in the forefront of making such a world possible.

India votes regularly at the U.N. for active plans to reduce nuclear dangers and conventions to prohibit not only the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances but also the development and stockpiling of nuclear weapons. India's Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee has reiterated India's focus on the goal of global nuclear disarmament.

Despite India's refusal to join the NPT on grounds of discrimination, Minister Mukherjee pointed out, "We have strictly abided by all the basic obligations enshrined in this treaty as they apply to nuclear weapons states."

Today, as a responsible nuclear weapon power, we are even more mindful of our duty to control the spread of WMD technologies and their delivery systems. We have signaled our willingness to be a part of the international consensus by adopting a comprehensive WMD Export Control legislation. We have also harmonized our export control lists with those prescribed by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group and Missile Technology Control Regime.

A debate now rages about the proposed U.S.-India deal permitting nuclear commerce with a non-NPT state possessing nuclear weapons. This issue must be resolved in such a way that the non-proliferation regime is not further weakened.

It is, then, with great respect and understanding of India's record of initiatives, votes and continued aspiration for global nuclear disarmament that I once more come to this great land. I think it would be presumptuous of me to designate how India should reach its goal. But I can affirm my own hope and support, and that of the Middle Powers Initiative, that India will work actively to forge a new consensus in reducing nuclear dangers and setting the world on a path to security without nuclear weapons.

I think it is reasonable for me to put some questions to the leadership of India:

- What is India's response to the remarkable editorials issued by senior U.S. figures, led by George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn reasserting "the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and practical measures towards achieving that goal...?"
- What is India's response to the call of the Weapons of Mass

Destruction Commission, headed by Hans Blix, that the U.N. General Assembly “should convene a World Summit on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction...?”

- What is India’s response to the call for it to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, especially in the event that the political re-alignment in the U.S. in 2009 brings about U.S. ratification.

- What is India’s response to the view that the U.S.-India nuclear trade deal be permitted only after a CTBT and Verified Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty have entered into force?

- What is India’s view about charging the U.N. Security Council, the legal guardian of security in the world, to implement the negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons as called for by the International Court of Justice?

* * *

It is not too much to say that India today is at a crossroads and holds the global future of nuclear weapons in its hands. The world will welcome India actively working with like-minded states for the advancement of human civilization by the abolition of nuclear weapons.