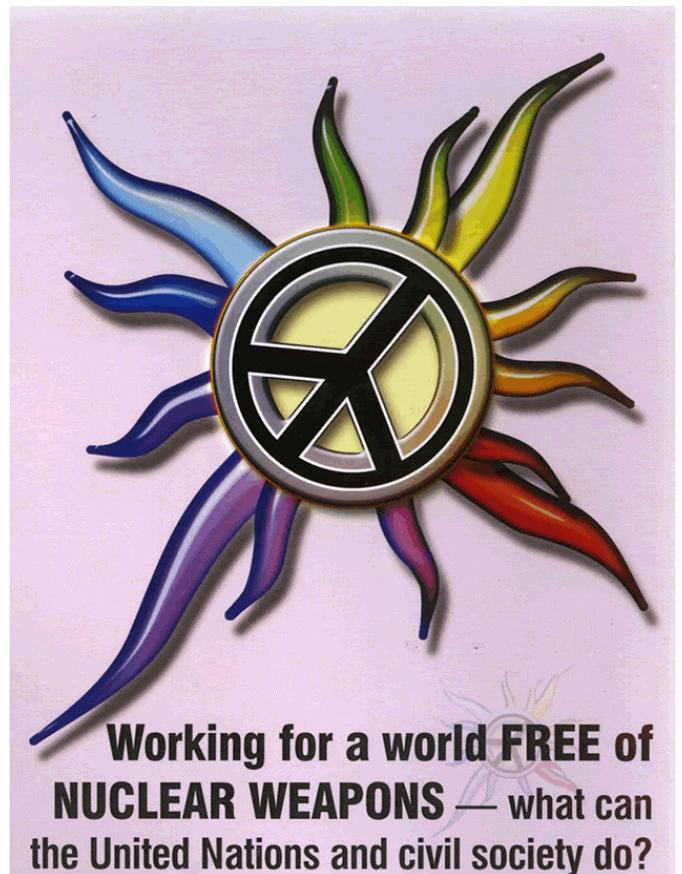


## **CND Southern Region**

### **AGM & Public Meeting**

Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009  
St. Lawrence Parish Room  
Colebrook Street

**Speaker:**  
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## **Introduction**

Thank you Michael Waugh and Southern Region CND for inviting me here today to speak on an important and timely topic on 'working for a world free of nuclear weapons – what can the United Nations and civil society do?' It is timely because of next year's 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It is an important event in which we hope to push forward the nuclear disarmament agenda.

It's amazing how much good work is being done by your branch on a ongoing basis. It is a privilege to be among peace campaigners. You are thinkers and change makers, the driving force for social change in our world. Some of us have stood side by side in marches and demonstrations taking a stand and making our point.

Today we will be exploring something different to what we are used to, which is getting rid of Trident UK nuclear submarine system and the 160 or so nuclear weapons the UK possess. It is not because it is not important to get rid of our own nuclear weapons. but in a wider world, there are bigger nuclear proliferation problems which also need to be addressed. For these, we will need to take steps which can lead towards a world free of nuclear weapons by proposing viable solutions to eradicate the problems of the threat posed by nuclear arms.

## **Threats posed by nuclear weapons**

There are 30,000 nuclear warheads in the possession of the declared nuclear weapon states USA, Russia, France, UK and China (the P5 states) with their arsenals on hair-trigger alert. On top of that there is worldwide proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology which is being deployed by countries such as India, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea and Israel. When so much military hardware is available around the world terrorists can easily create mayhem by indiscriminate mass killing and destruction. Political violence, organised crime and inciting fear in the civilian population are becoming the hallmark of new terrorism. The war on terror has offered a whole set of justifications for countries to increase their arsenals and push the budget on military spending, which is currently running at \$1.3 trillion.

The development of mini nukes and bunker buster bombs by US and its doctrine of pre-emption which has replaced arm control and collective security has made the world a far less secure and stable place. It also gives wrong signals to other countries as they feel vulnerable to attack.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty has been completely ignored by the major nuclear powers because under its provisions the nuclear powers have pledged themselves to negotiate nuclear disarmament and never to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear state – a pledge that has been ignored, with direct threats that they might be used if a nuclear state felt endangered.

Twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the terrifying hallmark of which was the nuclear arms race and the doctrine of mutual assured destruction continue to exist. Their existence poses the greatest threat to the human race and the planetary environment.

In this presentation, I will argue that nuclear weapons have no utility and that any security issues they are purported to solve would only be made worse by their use.

There is no serious problem on which military action may be needed which cannot be solved

through the use of peaceful dialogue. Most disturbing is that possession of nuclear weapons is proliferating, which enlarges the possibility that they may be acquired by non-State groups.

However, especially in the P5 states, the view is common that nuclear weapons from the first wave of proliferation somehow are tolerable, while such weapons in the hands of additional states are viewed as dangerous.

So long as any state has nuclear weapons, others will want them. So long as any such weapons remain, there is a risk that they will one day be used, by design or accident. And any such use would be catastrophic. Nuclear accidents, effects of radiation and damage to the environment pose grave threats to our world

Nuclear, biological and chemical arms are the most inhumane of all weapons. They are rightly called weapons of mass destruction and weapons of terror. Designed to terrify as well as destroy, they can, in the hands of either states or non-state actors, cause destruction on a vastly greater scale than any conventional weapons, and their impact is far more indiscriminate and long-lasting.

### **Five steps the United Nations can take for a nuclear free world**

The role of the United Nations in promoting nuclear disarmament follows the three pillars of NPT:

- Disarmament
- Non-proliferation
- Peaceful use of nuclear energy

As weapons of mass destruction and disarmament form one of the gravest challenges facing the world, a world free of nuclear weapons is a global public good of the highest order. Despite a longstanding taboo against using nuclear weapons, disarmament remains only an aspiration. So, is a taboo alone on the use of such weapons sufficient?

States make the key decisions where nuclear weapons are concerned. But the UN has important roles to play. It provides a central forum in which states can agree on norms to serve their common interests. It analyses, educate, and advocates in the pursuit of agreed goals.

Most states have chosen to forgo nuclear weapons, and have complied with their commitments under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Yet some states view such weapons as a status symbol, and some view them as offering the ultimate deterrent against nuclear attack, which largely accounts for the estimated 30,000 that still exist.

Unfortunately, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is contagious, making non-proliferation more difficult and raising new risks that nuclear weapons will be used.

The world remains concerned about nuclear activities in North Korea and Iran, and there is widespread support for efforts to address these concerns by peaceful means.

There are also concerns that a "nuclear renaissance" is looming, with nuclear energy seen as a clean energy alternative at a time of intensifying efforts to combat climate change. The main worry is that this will lead to the production and use of more nuclear materials that may be used for proliferation and terrorist threats.

The obstacles to disarmament are formidable. But the costs and risks of its alternatives never get the attention they deserve. Consider the enormous opportunity cost of huge military budgets. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, global military expenditures last year exceeded \$1.3 trillion. Ten years ago, the Brookings Institution published a study that estimated the total costs of nuclear weapons in the United States alone to be over \$5.8 trillion, including future cleanup costs. By any definition, this is a huge investment that could have had many other productive uses.

Concerns over nuclear weapons' costs and inherent dangers have led to a global outpouring of ideas to breathe new life into nuclear disarmament. We have seen the WMD commission led by Hans Blix, the New Agenda Coalition, and Norway's Seven Nation Initiative. Australia and Japan have launched the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. Civil society groups and nuclear-weapon states have also made proposals, such as the Hoover Plan, spearheaded by Henry Kissinger. There is further ray of hope with the new American administration, under Barack Obama, who has pledged to show the world that America believes in its existing commitments under the NPT to work to ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons.

### Five steps

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, put forward a five-point proposal.

First, to urge all NPT parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon states, to fulfill their obligation under the treaty to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament. They could agree on a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments. Or they could consider negotiating a nuclear-weapons convention, backed by a strong verification system, as has long been proposed at the UN. A draft has been circulated to all UN members of such a convention, which offers a good point of departure.

The nuclear powers should actively engage with other states on this issue at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the world's single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum. The world would also welcome a resumption of bilateral negotiations between the US and Russia aimed at deep and verifiable reductions of their arsenals.

Governments should also invest more in verification research and development. The United Kingdom's proposal to host a conference of nuclear-weapon states on verification is a concrete step in the right direction.

Second, the security council's permanent members should begin discussions on security issues in the nuclear disarmament process. They could unambiguously assure non-nuclear-weapon states that they will not be subject to the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. The council could also convene a summit on nuclear disarmament. Non-NPT states should freeze their own nuclear-weapon capabilities and make their own disarmament commitments.

Third, unilateral moratoria on nuclear tests and the production of fissile materials can go only so far. We need new efforts to bring the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty into force, and for the conference on disarmament to begin negotiations on a fissile material treaty immediately, without preconditions.

There should be efforts made to support the creation of the Central Asian and African nuclear-weapon-free zones which should also strongly support efforts to establish such a zone in the

Middle East. And all NPT parties need to conclude their safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and voluntarily to adopt the strengthened safeguards under the Additional Protocol.

Fourth, the nuclear-weapon states often circulate descriptions of what they are doing to pursue these goals. But these accounts seldom reach the public. The nuclear-weapon states should send such material to the UN Secretariat, and to encourage its wider dissemination. The lack of an authoritative estimate of the total number of nuclear weapons attests to the need for greater transparency.

Finally, a number of complementary measures are needed. These include eliminating other types of WMD; new efforts against WMD terrorism; limits on the production and trade in conventional arms; and new weapons bans, including of missiles and space weapons.

If there is real, verified progress on disarmament, the ability to eliminate the nuclear threat will grow exponentially. As we progressively eliminate the world's deadliest weapons and their components, we will make it harder to execute WMD terrorist attacks.

These proposals offer a fresh start not only on disarmament, on strengthening our system of international peace and security but also leading to nuclear free world.

These can be enhanced by following the Article VI of the NPT which obliges its signatories "*to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control*".

### **What can civil society do?**

13 Practical Steps for Disarmament (see end of the speech)

*Here is a list of action points – things that we can all do to oppose nuclear weapons and promote a nuclear weapons world:*

- Before anything – study the problem.
- Write to your MP and to key decision makers and put pressure on government ministers.
- Ask your MP to sign the parliamentary motions.
- Write letters to world leaders and the editor of newspapers.
- Educate the public and organise a forum.
- Plan a demonstration.
- Hold a meeting or run a workshop.
- Call a radio talk show.
- Contact your local interfaith group to discuss the issue.
- Make paper cranes to send to decision makers (they have become a symbol of disarmament).
- Find out the nonviolent initiatives such as Faslane 365.
- Attend a "Dialogue with decision-makers" workshop.
- Get involved in your local CND group.
- Promote complete and general disarmament by distributing information about 13 Practical Steps taken from the final document of 2000 Review Conference of the (NPT) Nuclear-non Proliferation Treaty. (see appendices to lecture).

- Contact one of the organisations working on nuclear disarmament.

## **Conclusion**

The only sustainable long-term solution will require the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and weapon-usable nuclear materials. Although there is still a chance to prevent proliferation by limiting the available sources and increasing physical safety and security, the United Kingdom and the other nuclear powers have to recognize that their own weapons and policies are part of the problem and hinder international efforts to devalue nuclear weapons and reduce proliferation incentives. Now is the time to begin phasing out nuclear weapons, starting with a decision not to replace Trident. Contrary to myth, giving up nuclear weapons will not happen overnight or leave the United Kingdom naked and vulnerable. It is high time to recognize their irrelevance and start planning for a safely managed transition to a more relevant security approach, with a more appropriate allocation of defence resources.

For total and general disarmament, education should be enhanced for a culture of peace, nonviolence and reconciliation. By eliminating root causes of war we can eliminate the need for nuclear weapons leading to lasting peace. The world today spends billions preparing for war. Should we not spend a billion or two preparing for peace. The reduction of defense budgets and demilitarisation should be applied to fund the economic aid and conflict resolution.

I will close with a paragraph from Nobel Laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, director of IAEA:

*“Imagine what would happen if the nations of the world spent as much on development as on building the machines of war. Imagine a world where every human being would live in freedom and dignity. Imagine a world in which we would shed the same tears when a child dies in Darfur or Vancouver. Imagine a world where we would settle our differences through diplomacy and dialogue and not through bombs or bullets. Imagine if the only nuclear weapons remaining were the relics in our museums. Imagine the legacy we could leave to our children. Imagine that such a world is within our grasp.”*

If we can follow his wisdom and all the outline initiatives we have discussed today, then we have a fair chance of creating a world free of nuclear weapons.

**Thank you very much for listening.**

## **Notes**

The following publications were consulted and excerpts have been taken from them during the writing of this article:

- 1) Ban Ki Moon, “Five steps to a nuclear-free world” (Guardian, UK) 23 November 2008
- 2) Penn State Live, Ambassador to address U.S. foreign policy, nuclear disarmament, 6 February 2009. <http://live.psu.edu/story/37444>
- 3) Vijay Mehta, “Should Britain be building new nuclear weapons? What are its implications and what is the peace movement’s strategy?” 1 June 2006

## **Biography: Vijay Mehta**

Vijay Mehta is president of VM Centre for Peace, Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity, Chair of Action for UN Renewal, and co-Chair of World Disarmament Campaign. He is an author and global activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment. Some of his notable books are The Fortune Forum Summit: For a Sustainable Future, Arms No More, and The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century. He is also a member of the national CND Council.

He along with his daughter Renu Mehta founder of Fortune Forum charity ([www.fortuneforum.org](http://www.fortuneforum.org)) held two summits in London in 2006 and 2007. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. The keynote speakers for the first and second summit were Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajjak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

He has written a book called 'Climate Change 365,' which will be soon available to download free of charge in electronic form from the website [www.climatechange365.eu](http://www.climatechange365.eu).

## **13 Practical steps**

### **EXCERPTED FROM THE FINAL DOCUMENT OF THE 2000 NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE**

The Conference agrees on the following practical steps for the systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and paragraphs 3 and 4 (c) of the 1995

Decision on "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament":

1. The importance and urgency of signatures and ratifications, without delay and without conditions and in accordance with constitutional processes, to achieve the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.
2. A moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions pending entry into force of that Treaty.
3. The necessity of negotiations in the Conference on / Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with the statement of the Special Coordinator in 1995 and the mandate contained therein, taking into consideration both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. The Conference on Disarmament is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty with a view to their conclusion within five years.
4. The necessity of establishing in the Conference on Disarmament an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate establishment of such a body.

5. The principle of irreversibility to apply to nuclear disarmament, nuclear and other related arms control and reduction measures.
6. An unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under Article VI.
7. The early entry into force and full implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III as soon as possible while preserving and strengthening the ABM Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability and as a basis for further reductions of strategic offensive weapons, in accordance with its provisions.
8. The completion and implementation of the Trilateral Initiative between the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the International Atomic Energy Agency.
9. Steps by all the nuclear-weapon States leading to nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all:
  - \* Further efforts by the nuclear-weapon States to reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally.
  - \* Increased transparency by the nuclear-weapon States with regard to the nuclear weapons capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to Article VI and as a voluntary confidence-building measure to support further progress on nuclear disarmament.
  - \* The further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, based on unilateral initiatives and as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process.
  - \* Concrete agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems.
  - \* A diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination.
  - \* The engagement as soon as appropriate of all the nuclear-weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons.
10. Arrangements by all nuclear-weapon States to place, as soon as practicable, fissile material designated by each of them as no longer required for military purposes under IAEA or other relevant international verification and arrangements for the disposition of such material for peaceful purposes, to ensure that such material remains permanently outside of military programmes.
11. Reaffirmation that the ultimate objective of the efforts of States in the disarmament process is general and complete disarmament under effective international control.
12. Regular reports, within the framework of the NPT strengthened review process, by all States parties on the implementation of Article VI and paragraph 4 (c) of the 1995 Decision on "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament", and recalling the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996.
13. The further development of the verification capabilities that will be required to provide assurance of compliance with nuclear disarmament agreements for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapon-free world.