

ABOLITION 2000 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 16 SEPTEMBER 2011

Annex IV: Lunchtime Public Forum: Obstacles and Opportunities for Nuclear Abolition Co-hosted with the World Conference of Churches

[Note: these are raw notes, which have not been checked fully for accuracy. If you have questions, want more information or want to get involved, please contact the presenters.]

Panelists: Akira Kawasaki, Regina Hagen, Alice Slater, Tim Wright, Jackie Cabasso, Alyn Ware
Moderator: Mayra Gomez

Regina Hagen: Missiles and Missile Defenses

- There is vertical and horizontal proliferation of missiles, just as there is for nuclear weapons
- Modernization is undertaken by governments, to improve their missiles if they need to, particularly in terms of range (an important issue for countries such as Pakistan and India)
- Different improvement currently underway:
 - o Range - some countries have very aggressive missile programs, covered as space programs – similar requirements in terms of range and ability to carry a payload
 - o Accuracy of missiles is a reason given for the improvements, newer missile countries are working hard on their targeting
 - o Maneuverability is also important, as missiles will have to evade missile defense programs (Russians use this as a reason for improvement)
 - o Stealth of missiles, so they aren't detectable
- No restrictions on missiles, save some minor elements – restricting resources from countries that do not have missiles yet
- Astonishingly high number of countries are also working on missile defense – a lot of countries work with the United States on this
 - o Includes China (shot down an aging weather station, using missile defense technology)
 - o India, Israel, Italy, Germany, France, and the UAE
 - o The main country working on this is the United States
 - o NATO, in Lisbon, signaled that it will push deployment of missile defense in Europe, around Europe, on the sea and on the land – all very close to the Russian border (which is truly concerning for Russia and China)
- Could work towards a missile test moratorium, a missile ban, a missile treaty, or a space weapons bans – most of this is already foreseen in the Nuclear Weapons Convention

Jackie Cabasso: Modernization (of nuclear weapons and delivery systems)

- Modernization processes currently undertaken by nuclear states is one of the largest obstacles to the nuclear disarmament movement
- The disarmament movement has now come to mean fewer, but better, weapons in the post-Cold War era
- Modernization is being conducted in the name of deterrence – which makes deterrence the true problem at the heart of the obstacles to disarmament/abolition
- De-legitimizing deterrence is one of the most important steps to be taken in the path to nuclear abolition
- The START treaty has basically been turned into the 'Modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems treaty'
- \$233 billion to be spent on modernization in the US over the next 10 years (at least)

- Will certainly also increase the strength of the pro-nuclear lobby in the US (and has already)

Alice Slater: The inextricable link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons

- Before Fukushima, there were over 400 nuclear power plants across the world, with about 60 under construction – and that disaster is worse than Chernobyl, as we don't even really know how many reactors were involved and what the long-term impact will be
- Every nuclear power plant is a nuclear weapons factory – this is how the nuclear weapon states create their weapons
- More than 30 countries want to develop their own nuclear energy plants
- Huge amount of mis-information and lack of information about nuclear power put out by the nuclear industry
- WHO can't put out a study or a report on health and radiation, unless it is vetted and approved by the IAEA – and part of their mandate is to promote the “safe use” of nuclear power
- The “good news” is that the world is taking a second look at nuclear energy – there are European countries that have pledged to phase out nuclear power
- There is more than enough sustainable energy – geothermal, tidal, solar, wind, etc – to feed the planet's energy needs, without any nuclear power or burning fossil fuels
- Report up on the Abolition 2000 website on sustainable energy
- IRENA is an important organization created through Abolition 2000 that needs support and funds

Alyn Ware: Nuclear Weapons Convention

- Challenge: Abolition 2000 was started in 1995 with a key focus on initiating negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention by 2000. Although this hasn't been achieved, it was important that this was put into the public forum, as it has served as inspiration and a reason to open up discussion on the abolition of nuclear weapons
- New Zealand has seen a radical change of consciousness – used to be very pro-nuclear weapons, and now supports a nuclear weapons convention
- That change of consciousness is happening internationally as well
 - The number of votes in favour of initiating a framework to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention at the UN is increasing – last year, by 10 votes!
 - The UN Secretary General came forward with his 5 Point Plan, and the support that he has received around the world has emboldened him to visit Nagasaki, etc, and to show that he is behind the global movement for a nuclear-free world
- Different ways for countries to take action at the national level – they can pass resolutions supporting Ban Ki-Moon's plan
- Examples of successes with other treaties – landmines, chemical weapons, etc – helps move the NWC forward
 - Helps to make the argument that you don't need to wait for every country to agree before starting to negotiate the treaty
- Consciousness – in New Zealand, ages ago, there was a campaign to put flags with images of the Earth in every classroom to encourage people to think more globally. Now, with the world already so inter-connected, young people already think globally – capitalizing on this is where we can gain the momentum to move a NWC forward

Tim Wright: International Humanitarian Law

- One of the most powerful words we can use to describe nuclear weapons is “illegal”

- Nuclear weapons are illegal, and anyone who uses them is a criminal
- Nuclear weapons and international humanitarian law are completely incompatible, and they make the notion of an international rule of law seem ridiculous
 - o Many elements central to IHL are violated by nuclear weapons
 - Can't distinguish between civilians and military
 - Not a proportional response
 - Etc.
- What can we do? 5 suggestions
 - o Try to engage our national Red Cross societies – in Australia, they have developed a statement about the illegality of nuclear weapons, and will try to bring it forward in Geneva. Speak with your local Red Cross societies, if they have an international legal officer, and encourage them to fulfill their role in safeguarding international law by working against nuclear weapons
 - o Engage with human rights law groups – one of the items raised in the ICJ ruling was that the use of nuclear weapons violates more than just IHL; also violates international human rights, which means the issue could be brought to human rights commissions.
 - o Engage with law schools, approach them to see if the illegality of nuclear weapons is being taught in the curriculum – if not, give a guest lecture!
 - o Use the law to challenge nuclear investments
 - o Find out your government's view on this – many countries have international legal manuals used to guide military operations and joint operations.
- Let's remind our leaders that the International Criminal Court now exists, and if they were to use nuclear weapons, they could find themselves in the docket.

Akira Kawasaki: Regional Prohibitions of Nuclear Weapons

- Nuclear weapons free zones – the creation of such zones is very important in terms of a regional path to ensuring a nuclear weapons free world
- These are regional treaties, conducted between the countries in that particular zone, which helps to facilitate the peace process and ensure that nuclear weapon countries provide assurances that nuclear weapons won't be used
- There are five regional treaties of such zones at the moment
- There are discussions about creating a NWFZ in the middle east, which was provided for in the 1995 NPT conference
 - o No concrete actions had been taken up to this point
 - o But now, there has been a conference scheduled for 2012 on a middle east NWFZ
- Civil society is starting to get engaged in this issue, and in particular, the creation of a zone in middle east
 - o There have been some preparatory conferences held by civil society to get ready for the Horizon 2012 conference

Question and Answer

- NWFZ are a bit of a piecemeal solution, but the next step would be a nuclear weapons free zone. Can we encourage the countries that are part of NWFZs to work together as a block, and then advocate for a nuclear weapons free world – i.e. a nuclear weapons convention?
 - o Countries tend to give the excuse that they need to solve regional security problems, which is why zones are a good method now. Should make countries more open to a convention eventually.
- Does NWFZ include civil nuclear facilities?

- No, not yet.
- Why shouldn't we ask ourselves – isn't it time for Abolition 2000 to say that nuclear free zones must include weapons and civil nuclear installations?
 - NWFZ are different from the question of civil nuclear power, but in some discussions, such as the one in the Middle East, there are questions if prohibitions/suspensions on the nuclear fuel cycle – development and enrichment.

Certainly, something to think about – doesn't mean government are going to do it, but its part raising consciousness. From an abolitionist perspective, if you are really going to get rid of nuclear weapons, you need to get rid of nuclear power.