

**Pugwash, Parliamentarians, Political Will:
Advancing the Agenda for Abolition**

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**Opening Address to Parliamentarians for Nuclear
Non-Proliferation and Disarmament
International Conference and Council Meeting**

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On behalf of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament and its sponsors, the Middle Powers Initiative and the Global Security Institute, I welcome you warmly to this conference. Our co-host is the Pugwash Peace Exchange, which brings an energetic new approach to projecting forward the ideals first formulated by the Pugwash movement in the historic Thinkers' Lodge. To host key legislators from around the world is a special privilege for us. Our staff will do everything possible to make your stay here pleasant and comfortable. As a Canadian, I take great pride in the village of Pugwash, which is not only an adornment of Nova Scotia but a true "gem" of Canada.

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The litany of what has gone wrong since 2001 in the long struggle to rid the world of nuclear weapons is long indeed. I do not wish to open this conference on a note of pessimism, let alone despair. At the same time, I do not ignore the obstacles in our path. Neither do I wish to debate whether the glass is half full or half empty. For me, the only sane course for humanity is to keep pouring water into the glass. Of course, a few good ideas for parliamentarians to use would help the water to rise. That's why we're here.

I want to begin by emphasizing a new momentum for the abolition of nuclear weapons that is now occurring.

- The vast majority of states in the world support the total elimination of nuclear weapons.
- Most U.S. and Russian citizens support a world free of these weapons.
- More than 2,200 mayors in some 130 countries throughout the world support the Mayors for Peace 2020 Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons by the year 2020.
- More than half the world, virtually the entire southern hemisphere, is covered by nuclear weapons-free zones.
- Former high-level U.S. policy makers, including former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, former Secretary of Defense William Perry and former chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee Sam Nunn, have spoken out in favor of a world free of nuclear weapons.
- Leading scientists, including the late Nobel Laureate Joseph Rotblat, who issued his first call to the world from this very village, have called upon scientists in all countries to cease working on nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.
- U.K Minister of Defense Des Browne has proposed a conference of the five principal nuclear weapons states to address the technical challenges of verifying nuclear disarmament.
- The U.S. has recently removed all its nuclear weapons from the

United Kingdom, ending a 54-year atomic presence in the nation.

As David Krieger, President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and a co-sponsor of MPI, notes: “While these signs of hope hold promise, far more needs to be done to establish a taboo against the possession, threat and use of nuclear weapons.”

This conference will examine the new opportunities presented by the growing understanding that a two-class world in which some nations hold their nuclear weapons indefinitely while proscribing their acquisition by all other states is not sustainable. More and more states are coming to the realization that unless the Non-Proliferation Treaty is fully implemented, it will wither away. Not the least of the new opportunities is the new political leadership coming to power in key countries.

The growing Network of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament is well placed to stimulate more focused work by governments. In fact, parliamentarians, through their access to the decision-making processes, play a catalytic role. Working with civil society, parliamentarians can effectively press governments to fulfil their legal and moral responsibilities to eliminate nuclear weapons. This conference is aimed at providing more information from nuclear disarmament experts,

sharing initiatives and strategies for the new political period opening up, and most of all instilling confidence.

We have not been short of international commissions which have examined the nuclear weapons dilemma in great detail and made valuable recommendations. But what we need most of all is a strategy to lead directly to a nuclear weapons-free world. Political strategy to get to the goal is imperative. The Middle Powers Initiative, through its parliamentary wing, the PNND, looks to you to formulate and press strategies for governments to adopt.

In considering the political strategies for nuclear disarmament, let us remember that this is not a left-right divide let alone a partisan issue. Nuclear disarmament is a human rights issue. Human rights are universal and inherent in all human beings. All political parties need to address the nuclear weapons threat from a global perspective and remember their responsibilities to all of humanity.

A new moment has arrived. The world wants an end to the spectre of nuclear warfare. Let us show that parliamentarians are listening and acting.

