

**Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and
Disarmament**

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

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

*New opportunities and the role of middle power countries in nuclear
non-proliferation and disarmament*

In his speech at Kyoto University in June this year, Australia's Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, made a very salient point: In the past decade the world has not paid adequate attention to nuclear weapons.

This is despite the nuclear weapon tests by India, Pakistan and North Korea; the nuclear ambition of Iran; and the exposure of a nuclear weapon black market

We have not seen the same focus on nuclear weapons that we saw at the height of the Cold War.

While there have been welcome reductions by nuclear-weapon states, there are still approximately 26,000 weapons in nuclear arsenals around the world

The human, environmental and economic consequences of the use – accidental or otherwise – of just one of these weapons are unthinkable.

Nuclear weapons remain. New states seek to acquire them and those in possession seek to modernise their capability.

For forty years the NPT has been the cornerstone of international efforts to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons

By any standard it has been a remarkably successful arms control treaty with 189 states parties (of which 184 are non-nuclear weapon states that have committed to not acquiring nuclear weapons)

It also binds the five official Nuclear Weapon States – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – to the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament - and it has limited the spread of nuclear

weapons to nine known or suspected weapons programs, when once it was projected that by the turn of the century there would more than twenty.

However, the NPT has in recent years begun to suffer significant strain

Iraq, North Korea and Iran have exposed serious flaws in the international non-proliferation regime that need to be remedied and some states do not believe that those with nuclear weapons are genuine about disarming in accordance with their obligations under Article Six of the treaty.

The failure of the 2005 Review Conference to provide an agreed outcome highlighted the deepening fissures within the NPT.

In response to these challenges there has been a loud call for the need for all states to re-commit to the ultimate goal of the NPT – a world free of nuclear weapons

In a Wall Street Journal article in early 2007, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger argued that nuclear

non-proliferation is the most important issue facing the world today.

The article was co-authored by another former US Secretary of State, George Schultz, as well as by a former US Secretary of Defence (William Perry) and Sam Nunn, a former chairman of the US Senate Armed Services Committee.

When policy makers of this calibre start suggesting that this is the most important issue the world currently faces, we all need to sit up and take notice.

And this sentiment, supported by governments and civil society alike, continues to grow and has provided the international community with an opportunity to re-examine the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes and shore up the divisions which are arresting their progress.

As a middle power Australia believes that we, and other middle powers, have a unique and important role to play in these regimes.

And indeed, history tells us that under a Labor Government, Australia can have success in curbing nuclear proliferation.

The South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty was an initiative of Labor.

As soon as it gained office in 1983, the Hawke Government began work to achieve consensus within the South Pacific on a nuclear free zone.

This multilateral agreement among the nations of the South Pacific, prohibits the testing, manufacture, and stationing of nuclear explosive devices, and the dumping of nuclear waste, within the zone.

The area covered reaches the west coast of Australia to the South American Nuclear Free Zone, from the equator to 60 degrees South (the northern boundary of the 1959 Antarctic Treaty).

In 1996, the United States, France and the United Kingdom also signed the treaty. China and C.I.S. had previously signed the treaty. This treaty is also known

as the Treaty of Rarotonga and entered into force on December 11, 1986.

In the mid 1990's, following increased nuclear tensions caused by French nuclear testing in the Pacific, the Labor Government in Australia, under the guidance of Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, was able to convene a most impressive panel of eminent persons and experts to discuss methods of controlling nuclear proliferation.

It became known as the Canberra Commission.

The Australian Government established the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in 1995 as an independent commission.

It was tasked with proposing practical steps towards a nuclear weapon free world including the related problem of maintaining stability and security during the transitional period and after this goal is achieved.

The Commission, with the vital secretariat support of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Defence, was able to recommend a number of practical measures to reduce the chances of

Deleted: a

imminent nuclear exchange while driving the agenda of disarmament.

The topics addressed by the Commission included horizontal proliferation (ie. more countries “going nuclear”) the possibility of nuclear terrorism and the need to eliminate ballistic missiles as a form of nuclear weapons delivery.

The findings of the Canberra Commission were critical to the drafting of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Canberra Commission report was to be launched on the floor of the United Nations General Assembly by then Prime Minister Paul Keating and the Government had begun lobbying for the endorsement of its recommendations.

Instead, Labor lost power and the Liberal Government simply presented the report to the relevant bodies.

UN Under-Secretary for Disarmament Affairs and former Canberra Commission panel member Jayantha Dhanapala said:

“The Canberra Commission report received lukewarm support from the Government that inherited it after Keating’s party suffered an election defeat and did not do more than absolutely necessary.”

The Canberra Commission set the benchmark for the international community’s efforts to deal with nuclear weapons. Sadly, too few of the Commission’s recommendations have been implemented

But this Government, the Labor Government, is now recommitted to playing a constructive and active role in negotiations on these issues.

Australia, as a middle power, is a strong supporter of multilateral approaches to disarmament and non-proliferation.

Results from multilateral fora, which take into account the concerns of all states, are critical to ensuring positive outcomes in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation

And as such, the Australian Government, led by Prime Minister Rudd, has announced that it is committed to a

new, more active role in multilateral affairs and the United Nations and reflecting this commitment, is Australia's decision to seek a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2013-14.

Australia's membership of the United Nations is a fundamental pillar of the Australian Government's foreign policy.

As a founding member of the UN, Australia has had a long and active engagement with the organization

We can even take some credit for the shape of the UN, given that the then Foreign Minister, Dr Evatt, played a leading role in the drafting of the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 60 years young this year.

Indeed Article 56 which pledges member states to support the UN in advancing social, economic and development goals is known as "the Australian pledge", as it owes its existence to Doc Evatt.

Australia has also over the years played a significant role in the UN, contributing for example to over 50 Peace Keeping Operations

And we believe that as an active middle power, Australia can help play an important role in helping address the security challenges which come before the UN.

We are committed, as the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have made clear, as Labor governments have long been, to helping influence and address the serious global challenges facing today's world.

Australia has had a role in negotiating the Chemical Weapons Convention; and to have the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty enter into force

As well, we have our on-going roles as chair of the Australia Group; as a Governor on the Board of the International Atomic Energy Agency; as a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group; and as a participant in the Proliferation Security Initiative

This year we will also be hosting the Missile Technology Control Regime plenary in Canberra.

And of course I have already mentioned the Canberra Commission –an initiative of the Australian Labor Party.

And, in this tradition, on 9 June Prime Minister Rudd announced that Australia would establish an International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

The Commission will re-examine the 1996 Canberra Commission and the 1999 Tokyo forum on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament to see how far we have come, how much work remains and develop a possible plan of action for the future.

We believe that the Commission offers a chance to remind the world that despite the end of the Cold War, the threat posed by nuclear weapons has not disappeared.

The objective of the Commission, therefore, is to reinvigorate the global effort against the proliferation of

nuclear weapons and to seek a recommitment to the ultimate objective of a nuclear-weapons-free world

Its aim is to shape a global consensus in the lead-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and avoid the stalemate of 2005.

The 2010 Review Conference provides an opportunity to ensure the treaty continues to provide a robust framework for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, to meet the proliferation challenges of today and combat any future challenges to the regime.

Australia will be consulting other governments and international organisations, and seeking the participation of senior international experts in this Commission.

Indeed Prime Minister Rudd says the model he has in mind is what the Government of Canada did some years ago with its International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty.

Founded by and co-chaired by former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans, the Government of Canada

provided the machinery for doing it. It convened the panel of global experts and it did the work.

And if you look at the work which has been achieved since then, you can see how it has worked its way into the foundation of international law and the UN system – and the work is ongoing.

That's the model - but it will be very difficult.

And while the composition of the Commission has not yet been determined, the Prime Minister has already announced that Gareth Evans will co-chair it.

Mr Evans was Australia's Foreign Minister during the convening of the Canberra Commission

He is the President of the International Crisis Group and has a long history of involvement in disarmament and non-proliferation, including as a commissioner on the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission chaired by Hans Blix.

And with him, announced only this week, I welcome news that former Japanese Environment and Foreign

Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi will co-chair the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

Ms Kawaguchi's extensive experience and political stature will be of great benefit to Commission and its objectives.

And Australia has already received expressions of support for the Commission from a variety of states, including Nuclear Weapon States such as the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as EU states and regional neighbours like Indonesia.

Beyond the Commission, Australia will advocate – as a middle power, as responsible actor and as an ally of the United States – for continued progress on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Australia sees entry-into-force of the Comprehensive-Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty as immediate disarmament priorities, and we call on the UN's Conference on Disarmament to end its decade-long stalemate and agree to a program of work.

In this context, Australia welcomes negotiations between Russia and the United States on a follow-on treaty to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and hopes that any successor will be completed before the treaty's expiration in 2009.

And we will continue to encourage reductions by Nuclear Weapon States in their arsenals.

We will also continue to use our positions in the International Atomic Energy Agency and Nuclear Suppliers Group to advocate for the strongest possible safeguards and export control regimes to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to constrain those who would seek to circumvent their commitments under the NPT and acquire nuclear weapons.

The International Atomic Energy Agency must be given the authority and cooperation necessary to undertake its mandate of determining that civil nuclear programs are entirely peaceful in nature

And we reiterate our call to Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA to resolve all the outstanding issues surrounding its nuclear history.

Australia is very concerned by news that Iran test-fired several medium and long-range missiles on 9 July.

According to press reports, Iran fired nine missiles, including the Shahab 3, which has a range of up to 2,000 kilometres.

This does nothing to reassure the international community that Iran is committed to regional peace and security and reinforces ongoing serious concerns about Iran's nuclear program.

Australia calls on Iran to refrain from conducting any further long-range missile tests, to suspend uranium enrichment as required by UN Security Council resolutions and cooperate fully with the IAEA.

Rather than conducting missile tests, Iran should cooperate with the international community, and accept

the P5+1's generous offer of political and economic incentives in exchange for Iran suspending enrichment.

The international community - all like-minded countries, and this certainly means Australia - needs to work together to resolve these challenges that so clearly affect us all.

We believe firmly that the 2010 Review Conference must deliver progress in non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as acknowledging that legitimate peaceful uses of nuclear energy are in the interests of all.

But we should never lose sight of the fact that our ultimate objective – and one that remains as relevant today as in 1968 – is a world free of nuclear weapons

This objective will never be realised without sustained and creative efforts by all nations to uphold and strengthen the NPT.

Australia is committed to using creative middle power diplomacy in pursuit of this goal.

That is the thinking behind Australia's International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

We have always been strong historically on the question of nuclear disarmament – and it is time for Australia to reconstitute our global disarmament and arms control credentials.

The challenge is there. We intend to have a go.