

Parliamentarians and NATO Policy

Senator Francesco Martone
PNND Council Member - Italy



Senator Francesco Martone

There is this year an unprecedented array of opportunities to revamp the political debate on nuclear disarmament.

This is so despite an appearance that the political landscape does not bode well for the cause. The Non-proliferation regime looks seriously crippled; the

disarmament architecture is damaged by unilateral initiatives of the US administration; nuclear deterrence and nuclear doctrines seem to have regained ground in many capitals of nuclear powers, actual and to-be; and the heated debate on the missile shield hides a strategy that still retains first strike capability as the cornerstone of planning.

In addition is the risk of fissile material falling into the hands of terrorist groups. However, there is a much stronger global impetus towards abandoning the possible use of nuclear weapons, and building new security paradigms.

The year ahead offers two important opportunities. One being the review of the NATO Strategic Concept, that is about to begin, the other is the 2008 NPT Preparatory Conference. In both cases the role of Parliamentarians can go much beyond that of mere spectators or agents of accountability. Parliamentarians can play a significant role of political guidance, and strengthen their cooperation with peace movements at the national and global level. This is inscribed in the DNA of PNND and also represents a key criterion for work in Italy.

Most of this work is currently focused on the nuclear sharing agreements and to highlight the in-consistency between the presence of 90 US bombs in the country and the NPT including the reaffirmed commitments of

The presence of United States conventional and nuclear forces in Europe remains vital to the security of Europe... Nuclear weapons make a unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression against the Alliance incalculable and unacceptable. Thus, they remain essential to preserve peace.
NATO Strategic Concept, Paragraphs 42 and 46

the Italian government to support nuclear disarmament. The actions that Italian PNND members have taken include a resolution on nuclear sharing and the NPT which was tabled in both the Senate and Chamber of Deputies; various questions on the role of Italian representatives in the NATO Nuclear Planning Committee; and questions asking the government to disclose documents on nuclear strategy while urging a coherent review of military doctrines with a view to exclude the possible use of nuclear weapons.

Work of parliamentarians could extend this by seeking disclosure of the chain of command and political guidance, the details of national governments' participation in the NATO nuclear planning committee, and pave the way for a strong political commitment to review and dismiss the NATO nuclear doctrine. This could lead to the rejection of nuclear sharing and thus strengthen the disarmament component of the NPT.

“A much bigger role might be given to Parliaments and notably to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.”

Therefore, the opportunity of the upcoming NATO strategic concept review should not be missed. For the first time it appears that a much bigger role might be given to parliaments and notably to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. The latter, however, should not substitute action at the national parliament level and interaction with NGOs and peace movements. Thus, a nation-wide campaign to establish Italy as nuclear free, and to forbid deployment of nuclear weapons in the country is about to be launched. A specific draft bill will be tabled in Parliament and a major public outreach campaign will be waged to accompany the political debate.

This strategy is based on the belief that by coupling traditional advocacy and accountability tools with cross-fertilization with other political actors, parliamentarians can become important instruments of political change. This can be supported through networking with parliamentarians in other countries. PNND can play a valuable role in facilitating such networking and information sharing.

Note: PNND will be actively engaged in the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Berlin, May 23-27, 2008. For more information contact alyn@pnnd.org



A meeting of NATO