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Nuclear Disarmament and the European Parliament

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(*Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament*)

In many areas the European Parliament (EP) has become a rather powerful European institution. According to the Lisbon Treaty its rights and legislative role will be further considerably extended.

Nevertheless, the influence of the EP in the development, decision making and parliamentary control of the foreign and security policies of the European Union remains limited. This has problematic consequences but at the same time it probably contributes to the fact that the EP in some important cases is more open to address urgent, critical and more consistently important international issues as other parliaments could do.

Therefore I see a remarkable possibility for the international disarmament community to use the EP as a certain moral tool to change international debates on nuclear proliferation and disarmament.

After one decade of a rather passive position and a lack of real and specific discussions about disarmament, the European Parliament in general and a cross-party group of its members in particular have developed rather remarkable assessments and demands in that field.

You're well aware of the initiative of the PNND group in the European Parliament on the endorsement of the Nuclear Weapons Convention which has been started on the first of July 2008 and signed up to now by nearly 100 MEP's from practically all political groups represented in the EP. I am convinced that the number of signatures will be at least doubled and other respective work will be continued and intensified.

But even more encouraging is the fact that in many cases a majority of the EP has started to support far-reaching nuclear disarmament goals.

Let me summarize in eight points the main positions of the European Parliament as they have been expressed in recent times:

1) I guess that the European Parliament up to now is the only parliament which has positively referred to the PNND. In its resolution of the 14th of arch 2007 on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament it explicitly welcomed "the efforts of the global Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament".

2) In the same resolution the NPT is not only regarded as "the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation system" but also as "an important element in furthering the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general disarmament".

3) The European Parliament urges the member states of the European Union and the European Commission "to strengthen the NPT and to pursue an effective multilateralism".

4) The European Parliament affirmed (I quote) "that, for multilateral efforts to be effective, they must be set within a well developed vision of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world at the earliest possible date".

In its recent resolution on the implementation of the *European Security Strategy* and the *ESDP* in June this year the European Parliament stated, I quote, "that the 40th anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on 1 July 2008 must be seen as an opportunity for the EU to promote the need for nuclear disarmament in its *Strategy Against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, with a view that this includes the need for the

'recognised' nuclear weapons' powers to put forward disarmament initiatives, to make Europe a nuclear-weapon-free-zone, and to conclude a global convention banning nuclear weapons". Two weeks ago we even had negotiated a compromise on the resolution for the forthcoming UNGA referring to the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention as a possible basis for that goal. But unfortunately a small majority in the voting objected that sentence.

5) The European Parliament specifically, and on various occasions, advocated breaking the deadlock on establishing a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, to speed-up the signing and ratification of the CTBT by all states, a complete cessation of all nuclear weapons' testing activities pending the entry into force of the CTBT, and effective export and border controls as regards sensitive WMD-related materials.

6) The European Parliament demanded from the EU-US summit 2008 a number of nuclear disarmament initiatives based on the "13 practical steps" agreed in the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

7) Regarding the US plan to establish an anti-missile-system in Europe the majority of the EP stated critically that it "may hamper international disarmament efforts".

8) ... and finally, I would like to draw your attention to the position of the EP regarding the Iranian nuclear programme, which, of course, is seen as "a source of serious concern to the EU", and as a proliferation risk". But in its resolution from the 31 of January 2008 on Iran the European Parliament not only advocated a negotiated long-term solution and its support for the UNSC resolutions adopted under art. 41, Chapter VII of the UN Charter, it also firmly declared "that a solution to the present nuclear escalation is possible and that no military action should be taken into consideration" and called on the US Administration and all other actors involved "to renounce all rhetoric on military options and regime change policies against Iran", and secondly the EP advocated multilateral nuclear disarmament steps as part of a solution. Nevertheless, the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free-zone in the region has not got a majority in the European Parliament this time.

I sincerely hope that the picture I have drawn isn't too positive regarding the positions of the European Parliament. There are, of course, a lot of contradictions but I wanted to stress concisely the opportunities and not the shortcomings. But the main problem on the one hand and the main chance and responsibility of the EP on the other hand is the clear reality that these rather positive and critical positions of the European Parliamentarians contradict the concrete policies and decisions of the European Council and the Member States. For example the EU Strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (2003, endorsed Dec. 2006) or the programme for the French, Czech and Swedish presidencies of 13 June 2008 are weak and very general with respect to nuclear disarmament and limit the problem only to the issues of the NPT and Iran (the positive exemption is the commitment to the cessation of the production of fissionable material).

Four weeks ago the Enlarged Bureau of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the EP has decided to put forward a new initiative report on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, which will be drafted by a PNND member, Mrs Angelika Beer (Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance). I think this will give us the opportunity to strengthen the positive position of the European Parliament in this area. It'll be necessary to use it in order to positively change the political climate, to develop a co-operation with international and European NGOs and the public. I believe that the main deficit of our own engagement is the lack of working actively and publicly with the rather positive results of the European Parliament to build-up a

favourable environment for comprehensive nuclear disarmament as it has already achieved with regard to landmines and cluster munitions.