

First Canadian Peace Organization Report on the NPT Review Conference

Written by

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The NPT Conference meets at a time when the Treaty faces pressures from potential proliferators and the compliance record of several non-nuclear weapons states is in question. At the same time, the nuclear weapons states retain their arsenals, the policies to use them, and programs to upgrade them.

Despite these challenges, the member states parties have not yet agreed to an agenda for the meeting to enable them to commence substantive work. This prevents the conference from moving to the work of the main committees, where more detailed substantive work takes place. In the meantime, platitudes and declarations are all we're hearing. Report 1: Canada's Opening Statement

The meeting of governments for the seventh Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) commenced May 2 in New York. But on Sunday May 1st, some 40,000 citizens joined in a march to Central Park, calling for abolition of nuclear weapons and no more nuclear excuses for war.

This Review Conference is characterized by the strong presence of non-governmental participants, with 1752 individual NGO representatives accredited for the conference, including a large Japanese delegation with many Hibakusha, and mayors from countries all over the world as part of the Mayors for Peace delegation. There are 12 representatives of Canadian NGOs in attendance, from the Canadian Peace Alliance, Voice of Women for Peace, Physicians for Global Survival, Project Ploughshares, Lawyers for Social Responsibility, York University, the Middle Powers Initiative, and Ploughshares Calgary. The Canadian government delegation includes Ernie Regehr of Project Ploughshares as Expert Advisor, and Bev DeLong of Lawyers for Social Responsibility as NGO representative (in weeks three and four). The Hon. Douglas Roche serves on the delegation of the Holy See.

The Review Conference has opened with a general debate featuring statements by states parties, with many Ministers of Foreign Affairs delivering statements on behalf of their governments. Canada's statement was delivered by Jim Wright, Assistant Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs on Monday afternoon. The statement is available at:

<http://reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/RevCon05/GDstatements/Canada.pdf>

The Canadian statement outlined Canada's approach to the Review Conference, and its hopes for a 'successful' outcome. This strategy prioritizes a substantive and balanced outcome, an end to complacency about the current state of affairs, and concrete measures to advance each of the three Treaty objectives: non-proliferation, disarmament and for non-nuclear weapons states in compliance with Treaty obligations, access to nuclear energy for

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peaceful purposes.

Canada reiterated its regular calls for an end to the deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament and a return to work there; the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, particularly by those states whose ratifications are conditions of entry into force; and compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards including the Additional Protocol for strengthened safeguards. These measures are all included in the text of the 2000 Final Document, and Canada called for progress on already agreed obligations.

In addition, Canada put forward several proposals to address the crisis of credibility in the Treaty. At the core of this proposal is a series of measures to deal with the Treaty's 'institutional deficit', or the limitations inherent in its structure. Canada proposed an annual one week Meeting of States Parties to provide a regular policy forum and an ability to call emergency meetings when necessary, requiring a standing bureau to call such meetings.

Two additional elements of this accountability agenda were put forward, including the submission of regular reports by all states parties, and the participation by all levels of civil society in Treaty reviews. Canada's particular interpretation of the reporting mandate holds that states report on ALL articles of the Treaty, "Based on the intertwined nature of the three pillars and our conviction that all States Parties are responsible for promoting the implementation of the entire Treaty." Transparency is described by Canada as an "essential contribution to confidence-building, and we need to restore confidence in the NPT community."

The States Parties are meeting at a time when the NPT faces pressures from potential proliferators and the compliance record of several non-nuclear weapons states is in question, while the nuclear weapons states retain nuclear weapons, the policies to use them, and programs to upgrade them. Despite these challenges, the states parties have not yet agreed to an agenda for the meeting to enable them to commence substantive work. Absence of agreement on an agenda, prevents the conference from moving to the work of the main committees, where more detailed substantive work takes place. In the meantime, platitudes and declarations are all we're hearing.