

More Important than who is Prime Minister

Written by John Hallam
Tuesday, 28 August 2018 12:06 -

Dear Senator Marise Payne,

I am sending this to you in your capacity as the new minister for Foreign Affairs, not Defence.

As you are no doubt aware, the risk of nuclear war is currently estimated to be as great as it has ever been.

This is surely an issue that makes the issue of who is or isn't PM here in Australia pale into utter insignificance. Nuclear risk reduction is literally a life and death issue for civilisation and the world.

It is however an issue in which Australia can make a difference.

I do hope you can give this potentially civilisation-ending (and even species-ending) issue the close and sustained attention it deserves.

John Hallam

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
www.pndnsw.org.au

HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT
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WHY AUSTRALIA (AND 29 OTHER COUNTRIES INCLUDING ESPECIALLY NUCLEAR WEAPON STATES) OUGHT TO:

- TAKE URGENT ACTION TO REDUCE NUCLEAR WAR RISKS
- SUPPORT A HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
- SIGN THE TPNW.

AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER JULIE BISHOP
GOVERNMENTS OF 29 COUNTRIES
ALL AUSTRALIAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dear Senator Payne, Foreign ministers of the 29 countries that have joined with Australia in opposition to the TPNW, and members of the Australian Parliament:

SUMMARY

I seek to persuade every one of you that you should:

--As a matter of the utmost urgency, and whether or not you are able to support the TPNW (see below), to press for immediate-term measures to reduce the spiraling risks of actual nuclear conflict whether by design, by miscalculation, by malware, or by malfunction. Australian parliamentarians should press whomever their Government/foreign minister turns out to be in

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the next fraught weeks, to press for short term nuclear risk reduction measures whatever stand we have on the TPNW.

--To support the High Level Conference initially planned for May 2018 and indefinitely postponed days before it was to have been opened. The High Level Conference would have provided/will provide a forum in which inclusive discussions – discussions that can and must include the nuclear weapons states and nuclear capable states and from which no one is excluded – can take place, not merely on the TPNW, but on the whole broad gamut of measures and agendas (notably the 'progressive agenda') that conduce toward nuclear disarmament and to nuclear risk reduction, and that do so both at an expert level and at the highest levels of responsibility. In addition, bilateral discussions could also take place over the extension of NewSTART, and a successor treaty, and broader Russian/US arms control, disarmament, and risk reduction measures. If the High Level Conference is to take place it will require action at the upcoming UN First Committee, with a resolution specifying a new date.

--Reverse your opposition to the TPNW, sign it, ratify it, and vigorously persuade other governments also to do so. This applies especially to nuclear weapons states. In this context I note the adoption of resolutions in favor of the TPNW and of nuclear disarmament generally, by the City Council of Los Angeles and by the legislature of California. I urge Australian parliamentarians to support the TPNW and Australia's signature and ratification thereof. (Most of you already do so). I urge the 29 Governments who have seen fit to oppose the TPNW to reverse their opposition and to vigorously support it. Doing so will necessitate ditching dangerous doctrines of extended deterrence that make nuclear targets of all of you. By doing so you will improve, not decrease your security situation, and improve, not risk, strategic stability.

MAIN ARGUMENT

These matters are urgent because:

--Nuclear risk is once more at an elevated level, equivalent to where it was during the Cuban Missile Crisis or the terrifying US-Russian standoff of the early 1980s. This puts a high priority both on risk reduction measures, and on multilateral and bilateral (US-Russia) disarmament measures.

The most public indicator of increased risk is of course the current position of the hands of the Doomsday Clock, currently at 2 minutes to midnight. This is 'equal first' in terms of the risk of a potentially civilization- ending, potentially even species-ending, 'apocalypse', along with the position of the hands in 1953-54, when serious consideration was being given to first – strikes against the Soviet Union, and as both the Soviet Union and the USA exploded their first H-Bombs. In the extraordinarily risky year of 1983, the year the world nearly ended twice, within 6 weeks (September and November '83), the clock-hands were at 3 mins to midnight. The Doomsday clock people ('Mere' rooms-full of nobel prizewinning nuclear weapons experts and physicists) are not the only ones to have issued warnings in the last 12 months – Mikhail Gorbachev, the former commanders of both Russian and US nuclear forces, and Pope Francis have issued such warnings.

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--There is a growing stalemate, and even the possibility of going into reverse, in nuclear arms-control and the entire nuclear disarmament process. It is in part sheer frustration with the lack of progress on agendas such as the 'progressive agenda', notable indeed for its failure to progress, that has led governments that do not have nuclear weapons and who do not depend on them for their security, to move ahead with the TPNW as an 'unblock-er'.

This stalemate in arms control measures also places a high priority on both the extension/renewal of NewSTART, and on negotiation of further arms reduction measures as well as risk reduction measures.

--There is a growing consciousness that the elimination of nuclear weapons is not a 'feelgood' 'sometime' remote agenda item to be fulfilled some far-off century, but is a pressing existential necessity. The simple existence of these weapons is an immediate and pressing security threat to every government. Every year for which they are operational is a spin of an American, Chinese, Russian, Indian and Pakistani roulette wheel. When will there be a shot? With what consequences?

Signing and ratifying the TPNW is not by any means the only thing that needs to be done to eliminate nuclear weapons. There is the entire 'progressive' agenda including as it does existentially critical risk reduction measures, which notably fails to progress. Signature of the TPNW, especially by NATO and nuclear weapon states, is however a critical unblocking move. The TPNW can and must be signed not only by its current constituency, Governments that are not dependent on nuclear weapons for their security, but – even more importantly – by Governments that ARE so dependent, (Governments dependent on 'extended deterrence' such as Australia and the 29 other Governments on whose behalf it has issued statements), and by nuclear weapon states themselves.

A 'turn around' by Australia, or by any one (and preferably by ALL) of the 29 states that have foolishly put themselves on record as opposing the TPNW would go far to push the nuclear weapon states themselves – whose publics also largely support abolition – to eliminate their arsenals, or at least to take steps away from a renewed nuclear arms race, and the brink of the abyss.

A recent report issued by Wilton Park [Adapting deterrence strategies to a changing security environment] notes that:

“The Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has significant support in many NATO countries despite the formal political opposition to the treaty by all NATO member governments. In support of the Ban, the NGO community is engaged in a campaign to pressure and shame NATO members, especially those involved in the sharing arrangements. This reinforces divisions within the Alliance. Conspicuously, this comes at a time when Russia is pursuing many different means to divide the allies politically. An additional complication today is that the anti-nuclear movement has taken a clear anti-Trump component.”

Indeed so. Publics Europe-wide quite rightly favor the elimination of nuclear weapons and not extended deterrence, and the failure to 'adequately defend' various forms of extended deterrence comes from a well – founded understanding that these doctrines cannot survive

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honest public discussion. They must be abandoned, and in doing so we will be more, and not less, safe. Failure to abandon them will make us less, and not more, safe. Doubtless the NGO community will continue its campaign to 'pressure and shame' NATO members until reality-based policies are adopted.

The alternative to the above is the possibility of resumed nuclear arms racing between the US, Russia, China and the DPRK and between India and Pakistan, and a continuation of elevated levels of risk. Still worse would be mutually escalatory, deterrence-based behaviours like those of 2014, 15, and 16 in eastern Europe. If that is to be what happens we can be delivered from catastrophe only by divine intervention. European publics are quite correct to view deterrence-based policies as in effect, suicidal. They are. Reality-based policies are exactly the ones Wilton Park is most afraid of – ones based around risk reduction and disarmament and not deterrence.

This also underlines the importance of immediate-term risk reduction measures such as 'de-alerting', no-first-use undertakings (NFU), better military-to-military communication (or resumed military-to-military communication), final establishment of the Joint Data Exchange facility (JDEC) in Moscow first agreed on in 1998 after the 'near miss' of 1995, and the avoidance of the back-to-back, mirror-imaged, nuclear-armed exercises that both NATO and Russia engaged in during the standoff of 2014.

To Parliamentarians, these matters may seem 'wonkish' and technical. Nuclear weapons may seem a remote contingency. They are not – they are an immediate, clear and present danger to Australia, (via our extended deterrence relationship with the US), to all European countries whether or not they themselves possess their own nuclear weapons, and via the effects of nuclear winter, to every country wherever it is. These seemingly abstruse matters are in fact life-and-death.

Risk reduction measures can of course be vigorously advocated and lobbied for even if a Government does not wish to sign the TPNW. At the same time such measures make policies of nuclear abolition a little further down the track, much easier. However signature and ratification of the TPNW either by a middle – sized power currently in an extended deterrence relationship (or, even better, by a nuclear weapons state) sends powerful signals of exactly the kind that most need to be sent.

It is often argued, completely incorrectly, that the signature and ratification of the TPNW in some inexplicable way, either 'undermines' the NPT, or 'undermines' the necessary progress via ratification of the CTBT, negotiation of an FMCT, risk reduction, and further US-Russia negotiated arms reductions, in the 'progressive' agenda.

Not only are these criticisms devoid of substance, but in fact the very reverse is true.

The 'progressive' agenda is characterized by its complete lack of progress including on many vital items such as risk reduction. A circuit breaker is urgently called for. The TPNW could be that circuit breaker, as it irrevocably stigmatizes the use threat of use and the possession of nuclear weapons and as, notwithstanding the erroneous and misleading statements of the

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nuclear weapons states, it does and must establish or help establish or reinforce new norms of customary law. If you wish for real and substantial progress on the progressive agenda, please sign and ratify the TPNW. If your advocacy of the progressive agenda is in fact precisely to prevent real progress, (including real progress on the progressive agenda) then do not sign it. But do not use the 'progressive agenda' as an excuse not to sign.

It is also argued that the TPNW 'problematizes' extended deterrence both for Australia and the 29 other Governments.

This is a 'feature' rather than a 'bug'. If we are serious about the existential threat that nuclear weapons pose, we can and must 'problematize' (and eliminate) extended deterrence, recognizing that a measure that was supposed to enhance security itself paradoxically but not all that surprisingly becomes the primary threat to the very security it was supposed to reinforce. We are, absolutely, better off without extended deterrence whether we are Australia, or whether we are Poland, Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania.(if we are there, then the presence of either tactical nukes or of missile defence installations merely ensures we are targeted and therefore, toast, or establishes a nuclear 'tripwire' that once more ensures prompt escalation whereby we all get to be toast.) The brutal truth is that extended deterrence paints nuclear targets on all our national backsides. We are absolutely better off without it.

I have below critiqued various statements made by the Australian Government and by representatives of the 29 anti-TPNW governments. All employ the same misleading arguments. However, even if I fail to dent your opposition to the TPNW, you should still make strenuous efforts to implement the risk reduction measures I suggest.

I plead with all of you (Australian Government, the 29 anti-TPNW governments, and Parliamentarians all) to see that not one of these arguments has any validity and indeed that even to make them at all casts doubt on the sincerity of your adherence to Art VI of the NPT and thus to the very NPT framework you claim to defend. This is even more the case in the absence of meaningful risk reduction measures.

The TPNW reinforces and does not undermine the NPT framework. Failure to sign and ratify it, coupled with failure to progress in other areas especially risk reduction DOES undermine the NPT, and leaves civilization and humans in immediate peril.

Please:

- Press for immediate and urgent nuclear risk reduction measures.
- Support a High Level Conference with an open agenda, on nuclear disarmament.
- Sign and ratify the TPNW. Vigorously lobby others to do likewise.

John Hallam

UN Nuclear Disarmament Campaigner

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Human Survival Project

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APPENDIX

Comments by me on Statements by Australian representatives at UN nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation meetings (NPT and First Committee) and related documents with whose thinking Australia and other governments critical of the TPNW may be associated.

Sen. Bernardi (NPT 2016) -

“Pursuing a separate treaty to make nuclear weapons illegal without the participation of those possessing nuclear weapons would risk undermining the security afforded by the NPT. It would also ignore current global security realities. By way of specific examples, a treaty banning nuclear weapons would neither convince a state like North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program, nor help prevent nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists.”

R (JH) - No, the TPNW in no way risks undermining the security afforded by the NPT, rather it is another instrument that gives added legal weight, sorely needed, to ArtVI of the NPT. It is hard to even understand why anyone would try to argue that it would undermine the NPT, and one has difficulty to even believe that this is said with any sincerity: Rather, the signature, ratification, and support, of the TPNW CANNOT undermine the NPT ArtVI and can ONLY strengthen it. This is so clear that failure to do so casts doubt on the sincerity of other claims that Australia does indeed support nuclear disarmament at all.

“ Nor should we relent in our pursuit of the critical steps which must be in place to secure nuclear disarmament. Notably, entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a priority. The nuclear test moratorium needs strengthening to prevent slipping back to a time of nuclear tests. The CTBT is more than a practical commitment not to test nuclear weapons; it is symbolic of a broader undertaking to prevent the further development of them. Australia calls on nuclear weapon possessors and other Annex II countries that have not yet ratified to do so.”

R (JH) – Australia's support for the CTBT is indeed worthy of praise and should be vigorously pursued. It is reassuring that we still say we support nuclear disarmament, though one might ask just how substantial and real our support really is. However, if we really do support nuclear disarmament, Australia should be above all pressuring its 'great and powerful' friends to facilitate CTBT-EIF. Only then can our efforts to get countries such as the DPRK to do so have any credibility. Slippage back to wider nuclear testing would truly be a global security catastrophe.

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Amb. Quinn 2016:

“Australia is committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, pursued in an effective, determined and pragmatic way. For Australia, reaching global zero is not only consistent with clear international obligations under Article VI of the NPT, but is also a key requirement for making the world a safer place.”

R (JH) – Indeed so. I welcome our commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons but wonder if DFAT has truly grasped the life-and-death significance of this goal, the way in which it 'trumps' all other security considerations, and the requirements for immediate and urgent action both to achieve it and to reduce the short term dangers of nuclear conflict, now considered to be as great or greater than they have ever been. Statements elsewhere that the TPNW 'de-legitimizes extended deterrence' (surely a recommendation not a problem - a feature, not a bug) suggest that some quarters simply fail to grasp the need for both risk reduction and elimination measures both to 'trump' other security considerations and for them to be regarded as in and of themselves, the very topmost security consideration. Support for nuclear disarmament more broadly de-legitimizes 'extended deterrence', Support for nuclear disarmament as a matter of some urgency is a human survival imperative.

“A Ban Treaty would not rid us of one nuclear weapon. It would not change the realities we all face in a nuclear-armed DPRK, or tensions among major powers. And without the involvement of States possessing nuclear weapons, the practical value of negotiating a Ban Treaty is a questionable exercise. Far from giving expression to Article VI commitments, we believe a Ban Treaty would do the opposite, creating parallel obligations, and thus ambiguity and potential confusion.”

To argue that the Ban Treaty creates parallel obligations and 'ambiguity and potential confusion' is mystifying and ridiculous. It reflects negatively on the credibility of those who would make such statements. This statement is truly in the realm of '2 + 2 = 5' and 'pigs can fly'. Signature and ratification of the Ban Treaty would in fact eliminate ambiguity and confusion and would reinforce Art VI obligations precisely as it is intended to do. While the TPNW may not be absolutely perfect – it was after all the product of a process of intense negotiations which this author attended – it underlines in black, and clarifies, the obligations contained in Art VI, making it clear that signatories of the NPT including nuclear weapon states cannot legitimately continue to possess nuclear weapons. This is precisely why it is being resisted and this is precisely why it is worthy of support.

“.....Indeed, we do not see the logic of a ban treaty for non-nuclear weapons states. Australia, as a party to the NPT and the Treaty of Rarotonga and has already twice - made legally binding commitments not to acquire or possess nuclear explosive devices. One is a commitment to which 191 states are party including the NWS, and the other is a regional commitment with our South Pacific neighbors.”

Once more, its hard to know if even those who utter such statements can possibly believe them! If Australia has made two commitments already not to obtain nuclear weapons, its hard to understand (impossible to understand, really) in what way another such commitment, a

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commitment to an instrument that arguably helps to establish customary law, would be 'illogical'. On the contrary it is entirely consistent. ON the other hand this statement DOES underline the importance of the Ban Treaty FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATES. States such as Australia, NATO states and the 29 for whom Australia has sometimes spoken are in the advantageous position of having relatively intimate relations with nuclear weapons states, with whom they should be able to form a bridge as envisioned in the Japanese Governments report by eminent persons.(quoted below)

The most that can be argued is that it might be 'unnecessary', but clearly if there is significant support for such a treaty it is NOT viewed as unnecessary, but rather highly necessary. One does not sign treaties because one likes the letterhead. One can only assume that the real reasons lie elsewhere, in the throwaway statement quoted earlier that the TPNW 'DE-legitimizes' 'extended deterrence'. Should Australia (and the 29 other governments with whom it has associated itself) actually sign and ratify the Ban Treaty as we think they should, there will doubtless be furious arguments to the effects that the Ban Treaty does NOT DE-legitimize extended deterrence! It is precisely these states that most ought to sign the TPNW.

In fact if it does do so, this is 'a feature not a bug'. If it DE-legitimizes extended deterrence that is a great and wonderful thing to be regarded as a plus not a minus for Australia's security, which extended deterrence threatens, by making Australia into a target for DPRK, Russian, and Chinese warheads.

“ Logical and indispensable next steps are the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), addressing the technical problems of verifying nuclear disarmament, and beginning negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).”

Indeed so. Entry into force of the CTBT and negotiation of an FMCT would be great and wonderful things if they had the slightest chance of actually taking place. Australia should by no means slacken its efforts in this direction, and much much more could and should be done to achieve these goals. However Australian security is under immediate threat, via 'extended deterrence', by the immediate and short – term likelihood of nuclear conflict. Extended deterrence merely exacerbates that risk to every Australian. The same applies in spades to other members of the group of 29 countries that Australia has from time to time spoken on behalf of. Both risk reduction measures as contemplated above and withdrawal from 'extended deterrence' are required to assure security.

Amb. Gillian Bird (2017)

“ We must renew our pursuit of the essential building blocks of nuclear disarmament, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the negotiation of a legally binding and effectively verifiable ban on the production of fissile material and progressing nuclear verification including through the upcoming Group of Government Experts' meeting which we hope to join.”

R-(JH) – once more, agreed. These are worthy and important objectives to pursue. However

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the somewhat leisurely pursuit of what is at best a far- off prospect (Unless Australia is prepared to take much, much, more radical action than we seem prepared to take), is not a response in any way equal to the awful gravity of current risks of nuclear war. But let us do what is really really required for CTBT EIF.

Amb. John Quinn (2017)

“ A key element of the "Progressive Approach" is that effective, sustainable disarmament must take into account the international security environment. The current situation with North Korea highlights this ground truth. North Korea's illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programs pose a grave and increasing threat to regional as well as global security, and a serious challenge to the NPT.”

R (JH) – IN what way do you 'take into account' the 'current security environment'? - and what comes first – the security environment, or responses (which may not be appropriate responses) to that environment that in fact feed back to CREATE (and worsen) that very environment?

The elimination of nuclear weapons – and the renunciation of extended deterrence – may not work miracles, but they would at least feed back into that security environment in a way that is more likely to produce peaceful outcomes than weaponized responses that are more likely to worsen, not improve, that security environment. Reliance on extended deterrence is the path most likely to end with the incineration of Australian, European, Asian, (and other people's) cities. A wise approach to Australian security and to the security of all the 29 countries with whom we have made common cause would be to ditch it as escalatory and as a security liability, not a security advantage.

“ Only by addressing both the security and humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons can we take the incremental but necessary steps that will enhance security for all and provide the best chance of reaching a world without nuclear weapons.”

R-(JH) – Indeed so. It is precisely the existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to Australian (and global) security that demands we take a 'New Zealand approach' to our security, ditching extended deterrence, and becoming a promoter of risk reduction and a broad disarmament agenda including the TPNW. At the same time we can and must continue to promote the elements of the so called 'progressive approach', (esp risk reduction) while insisting on real progress.

“ Australia advocates the ‘Progressive Approach’ to progress disarmament through these and other concrete, realistic steps. We also work to build bridges and find agreement through the cross-regional Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. Foreign Ministers of NPDI member countries held a very productive meeting during leaders’ week in New York last month.”

R-(JH) – No disagreement here. But if we wish to make the 'progressive approach' actually 'progress' we should be signing and ratifying the TPNW, as well as vastly increasing the tempo of our work on elements of the progressive approach. We need to work on all elements of both nuclear disarmament and risk reduction as if our existence depends on it, because it does

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indeed do so. Lowering the risk of nuclear conflict and achieving elimination of nuclear weapons must become the number one security priority and be pursued and prioritized as such. Any other approach jeopardizes Australia's (and the world's) very survival.

“Australia shares the widespread commitment to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, that objective is ill served by the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty. That treaty has deepened divisions, undermined some past progress and created damaging ambiguities as well as unhelpfully creating a rival forum for further work on nuclear disarmament.”

R-(JH) – there is no evidence for this whatsoever. Some countries deludedly place other short term security objectives in front of preventing nuclear conflict and achieving a nuclear weapons free world. Those who do this (Notably the '29'), far from improving their security, risk being toast and spread that risk to the world as a whole. Australia should lead away from this. Far from creating ambiguity the TPNW, coupled with risk reduction measures, removes it, and underlines and absolute existential necessity to fulfill ArtVI of the NPT.

“A key problem for Australia is that the Treaty seeks to de-legitimize extended deterrence. The Ban Treaty will not advance nuclear disarmament or security. In Australia's view our shared focus should instead centre on our common interests in supporting and strengthening the NPT.”

R-(JH) - On the contrary the TPNW supports and strengthens the NPT. Arguments to the contrary are counterfactual and absurd, and merely put in doubt the bona – fides of those so arguing. Signature and ratification of the TPNW coupled with aggressive policies to reduce short term nuclear risk is the best possible way to strengthen and support the NPT, and the best possible way to promote genuine strategic stability.

2017 NPT conf (Delivered by....????)

“ On disarmament, we must prioritize essential concrete steps such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and further progress towards a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. Another such step is the development of robust techniques for verifying nuclear disarmament and the dismantling of nuclear weapons. We should also seek to make progress on increasing transparency by improving arrangements for reporting by NPT nuclear weapon states on details of their nuclear arsenals.”

R-(JH) – Once more these are worthy objectives that are in no way threatened by the TPNW. However they do suggest a leisurely approach to nuclear disarmament that threatens Australian (and human) survival. What appears from this para is a 'gentle' approach in which everything can only take place in a rigidly prescribed sequence (though there is no reason for this to be so) and in which there is no sense of the life and death urgency that this issue appropriately generates. In addition, nuclear disarmament and risk reduction is subordinated to other security interests when in fact those security interests must be subordinated to nuclear disarmament and risk reduction. The hierarchy of importance is precisely upside-down.

“ Australia believes the only realistic path to achieving tangible nuclear disarmament outcomes is to work with common purpose among all NPT states parties to progress Article VI

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commitments in an inclusive way, not through processes that will heighten divisions. Our path must include addressing the security concerns that lead states to develop and maintain nuclear weapons; engage the countries with nuclear arsenals to persuade them to eliminate those arsenals; and undertake the practical steps we all agreed upon in the 2010 NPT Action Plan.”

R-(JH) – Addressing security concerns itself means addressing the possession of nuclear weapons and the nuclear postures, not merely by states such as the DPRK, but by the US and Russia, the UK and France, China, India-Pakistan, and Israel. These are primary (life-and-death) security concerns in and of themselves, and other security considerations must be subordinated to them. To turn this argument on its head – the best way to address those security concerns is precisely to eliminate nuclear weapons as a matter of urgency and as a national security priority. Failure to properly prioritize nuclear elimination and risk reduction is currently the greatest threat to Australian and to global security. But to say we must wait until other non-nuclear security concerns are solved before we tackle nuclear ones is to have things precisely upside-down.

Undertaking the practical steps agreed on in 2010 is once more, a worthy objective, which would be furthered by immediate action on risk reduction (itself included in those practical steps) and by signature, ratification, and vigorous lobbying on behalf of, the TPNW. Without an appropriate sense of urgency and without a correct hierarchy of security goals (planetary physical survival first), we cannot possibly see our way clear to implementation of the 2010 goals.

Amb. John Quinn-

“ Australia's position on the negotiations currently underway for a treaty banning nuclear weapons has been consistent and clear. We do not support such an approach for reasons of principle and practicality. It is axiomatic that States will only get rid of their nuclear arsenals when they feel it is safe to do so. Laying the ground work to eliminate such weapons requires much greater trust, more effective verification processes and assurance that capabilities for developing new weapons are not being used for that purpose.”

R-(JH) – Principle and practicality as well as a truly realistic as distinct from a delusional and upside-down approach to Australia's and global security should on the contrary lead us to prioritize both nuclear risk reduction measures and the signature, ratification, and encouragement of others to sign and ratify, the TPNW. I think I have now canvassed the arguments about this adequately above.

“...Logical and indispensable next steps are the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In the meantime, we must continue every effort to strengthen the normative value of the Treaty and encourage completion of the monitoring system.”

R-(JH)- If we think the normative value of the CTBT is real, and worth reinforcing, (which indeed it is) we should apply the same logic to the TPNW. As noted previously, a resumption of nuclear testing by Governments other than the DPRK would be a global proliferation/arms racing catastrophe. If however we lobby our great and powerful friends (and our great and powerful not-so-friends) to sign and ratify the CTBT, we ought also to do so on behalf of the

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CTBT and above all on behalf of urgent risk reduction measures – especially as these are all part of the 'progressive approach' that so far has (tragically) not progressed.

“ All efforts to promote negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) should also be nurtured. In this respect, Australia is pleased to be represented on the High Level Experts Panel on an FMCT, following up our active representation in the GGE. We will be pleased to support all efforts under the capable leadership of the Canadian Chair, Heidi Hulan, to sustain momentum on this critical track of disarmament. We also encourage the designation by nuclear-weapons States of fissile material no longer required for military purposes and the development of legally binding verification arrangements, within the context of the IAEA, to ensure the irreversible removal of such fissile material.”

R-(JH) - Once more this is worthy, but implies a leisurely approach to nuclear disarmament/risk reduction that neither Australia nor the world can afford. Important as they are, ratification of the CTBT and negotiation of an FMCT – neither of which is showing the slightest progress right now – will not deliver the world from the imminent risk of a civilization-destroying nuclear war.

Australia's and the world's real security needs demand signature/ratification of the TPNW and its aggressive promotion especially to nuclear weapons states themselves and NWS allies. The current approach as exemplified in so many statements we have made is precisely upside down to that which is truly needed simply to ensure that Australian cities are not nuclear targets.

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“...But we urge nuclear weapons states themselves to take the lead in demonstrating concrete results on nuclear disarmament. The current focus could usefully be on strategic stability, deescalation and risk reduction, laying the ground for future reductions in nuclear weapon holdings. We were pleased with the useful exchanges on nuclear risk reduction in the UN Disarmament Commission which completed its first year of the new cycle last week. As Chair of the UNDC, we think an outcome on risk reduction would be a positive contribution to the 2020 NPT Review Conference.”

JH – Hallelujah, Amen!

Yes, absolutely, strategic stability, de-escalation, and risk reduction and laying the ground for future reductions in nuclear weapons holdings are critical to global stability. Australia should continue to prioritize an outcome on risk reduction involving some combination of NFU, improved mil-to-mil communication, lowered operational readiness, avoidance of provocative or potentially provocative or destabilizing military exercises and postures (including conventional postures that might lead to escalation), establishment of JDEC, as the critical item(s) that ensure we don't all end up toast. This in no way excludes activities that lead to actual elimination of nuclear weapons from strategic doctrines, in fact it lays the groundwork for just that. In the meantime concrete steps on risk reduction, weapons numbers (and arms control measures) confidence – building, and avoidance of a potential nuclear arms race are going to be critical. Australia should continue these efforts on risk reduction and seek to involve as many other Governments as possible.

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“ The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a fundamental element of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and we note the continuing importance of making substantive progress in working towards and supporting entry into force of the CTBT. We look forward to commencing a conversation on provisional application of substantive CTBT provisions with states parties.”

Indeed so! I have expounded above on the importance of the CTBT and its ratification and EIF, and the importance of not lapsing back into an era of renewed nuclear testing. The risk of doing so is entirely real.

“I take the floor on behalf of Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey.”

“We are firmly committed to this goal and believe it is best pursued through a progressive approach that takes pragmatic and effective steps, which move us toward achieving and maintaining Global Zero in a safe and secure manner.”

“This requires consideration of the international security environment on prospects for progress, without losing sight of the broader concerns about the risks posed by nuclear weapons. Indeed, the NPT has always been an instrument that has sought to balance ambitious aims with geopolitical realities.”

“ No progress on nuclear disarmament is possible without the direct involvement of those possessing nuclear weapons. It is essential that we engage nuclear weapons states who have special responsibilities in this area, in ways, which build the trust necessary for further reductions in their arsenals. This is only possible through the constructive and sustained engagement, across regions, of all States Parties.”

R-(JH) – While I agree that ultimately, engagement of the NWS is the only way that nuclear abolition will actually be achieved (and for that matter, immediate risk reduction measures also), I do NOT agree that the widespread signature and ratification of the TPNW makes this less likely to happen. Certainly there will be immediate – term huffing and puffing as there has already been. But if sustained and constructive engagement is to take place, there has to be something solid to engage WITH. And a global legally binding consensus that also binds or seeks to bind non signatories, is the solid rock that is absolutely indispensable for such an engagement ever to take place.

Closing Statement to NPT 2018 Prep-com

“ We were pleased to see references to a progressive and . . . pragmatic approach to disarmament, with in many practical examples referenced in the document, including confidence-building, risk reduction, a fissile material cutoff treaty, transparency, reporting, and entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty.”

All the above items are of course worthy and in some cases (confidence building and risk reduction) of life and death significance. I suspect that those who framed this statement may not

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have realized (I hope I am wrong) just HOW important those references are. Once more, and to the point of weariness, they in no way exclude or are excluded by, and would all be enhanced by, a commitment to the TPNW, not to mention giving real importance to risk reduction measures. A preparedness to ditch or at least to downgrade, extended deterrence would be useful here.

From 'Progressive Approach' Paper:

“ 2. As we commence the 2020 Treaty review cycle, we need to reaffirm the centrality of the Treaty and to focus on a “progressive approach” to the implementation of the consensus 2010 action plan and the 13 practical steps to disarmament agreed at the 2000 Review Conference. We must also maintain our focus on challenges to the critical role of the Treaty in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Any process that can effectively lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons will by necessity be an inclusive one. We must continue our efforts to ensure the participation of States with nuclear weapons in initiatives by engaging in dialogue that will guide us progressively towards the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.”

“...We must take into account the prevailing international security environment. Only by addressing both the security and the humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons can we take the incremental but necessary steps that will enhance security for all and provide the best chance of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. The only way to achieve the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is through effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. This will only be achieved through the constructive engagement of all relevant parties.”

R-(JH) - Once more and to the point of weariness, the TPNW is precisely the solid rock that is indispensable for the dialogue referred to to take place. There has to be a solid abolitionist position – and leverage – to do dialogue WITH. Again to the point of weariness and repetition, the progressive approach, containing as it does many critical and some life-and death, issues, is vital and progress MUST be made on it. But current approaches have not resulted in progress on the progressive approach(PA). Far from repeating the mantra that the TPNW 'undercuts' the PA, the TPNW must be used as the essential leverage, the solid rock, from which heavy lifting is done on the progressive approach. The TPNW, far from undermining the PA, may be its only hope.

“...Progress in multilateral nuclear disarmament also requires the promotion of practical and effective confidence-building measures. Trust must be built through the demonstrated implementation of concrete disarmament measures by nuclear-weapon States, as well as a commitment to non-proliferation by all non-nuclear-weapon States and continuing support for the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which ensure confidence in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In addition, the central role of IAEA in assisting Member States to ensure the highest levels of safety and security is essential to facilitating the peaceful use of nuclear energy.”

R-(JH) - As above. Emphasis on practicality and effectiveness is all well and good, but a little ambition – and a sense of the life and death importance of the issue – is in order, as is an

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appropriate hierarchy of priorities. This issue trumps all others and cannot be allowed to be trumped by any. It cannot be trumped by 'national security' considerations because it is THE national and global security consideration of all considerations. Nothing, but nothing, is more important than this. And there must be leverage, a 'solid rock' from which the NWS can be levered into taking the measures that we all know are essential for the survival of civilization and humans as a species. The TPNW has some hope of supplying that leverage.

From the Japanese 'Group of Eminent Persons' Paper:

“...There are fundamental differences within and between states regarding the utility of nuclear deterrence. The existence of these differences needs to be accepted and addressed constructively if they are then to be reconciled in a way that will make the elimination of nuclear arsenals possible. Proponents and opponents of nuclear deterrence must persist in bridging their differences. Although nuclear deterrence may arguably enhance stability in certain environments, it is a dangerous long-term basis for global security and therefore all states should seek a better long-term solution.”

R-(JH) – Completely agreed. However note the sentence (bolded) that follows, stating that deterrence is 'a dangerous long-term basis' for global security. This applies in spades to so called 'extended deterrence'. And it absolutely follows from this that risk reduction measures are essential, and must lead to abolition.

We would also agree with (28) of the same report according to which:

“.....“Bridge builders” should launch honest dialogue that:

a) Seeks to design a disarmament process or framework with effective measures and benchmarks;

b) Aims to establish common ground for all states by setting an agenda comprised of hard questions that:

--address the right of self-defense, which under extreme circumstances of national survival could envisage the possibility of limited threat of use or use of nuclear weapons, mindful of international humanitarian law, taking into account the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and protection of civilians, non-combatants and the environment; and

--ensure that human security is considered in designing a world free of nuclear weapons, while preserving international peace and security; and c) Seeks solutions to the ultimate dilemma facing nuclear disarmament: how to guarantee the security of all states by ensuring compliance with the obligations under such a regime, including timely enforcement when other measures fail to achieve compliance.”

R-(JH) - The objectives outlined here are laudable. In particular this is so with respect to the appeal for honest dialogue. However I would caution that this approach (and so much of the above approach) once more fails to take into account the awful gravity of the threat that nuclear weapons (and deterrence itself) pose even in the short term. The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons arguably can NEVER be legal even under the most extreme situations of national

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emergency, and it is practically impossible to envisage a situation in which even the most limited use would not escalate to global apocalypse. The use of nuclear weapons can never be mindful of humanitarian law precisely because as a matter of physics, inherent in the very nature of such weapons, the protection of non combatants, civilians and the environment is simply out of the question. To pose the question above as if this were within the realms of physical possibility and not out of fantasyland is itself intellectually dishonest, and undercuts the appeal for honest dialogue.

Deterrence may (or may not, if we are unlucky) 'buy time' at least until something goes wrong but it does so by risking everyone and everything in an absolutely final way, if something does go wrong. That this prospect is entirely credible – indeed that our very survival this far is extraordinary and inexplicable – is easily demonstrated by a look at the all too many occasions on which the world has truly teetered on the brink of apocalypse, generally being drawn back from that brink by the commonsense but often irregular actions of a Colonel Stan Petrov, an Archipov, or the commander of a group of minuteman missiles, or of an airforce base.

Above all the entire thrust of so much of what is quoted above leads one to say that the risk posed by nuclear weapons and by extended deterrence is simply not taken seriously, and that what is in fact a security liability (to every one of the 29 governments with whom Australia has associated itself) is seen as an asset. This perverse reversal of what is an asset and what is a liability permeates the entire security dialogue, whether it is as applied to the so called 'joint facilities' at Pine Gap or missile defense installations in Poland or Romania.