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_PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NSW NUCLEAR FLASHPOINTS PROJECT

NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION TREATY REVIEW CONFERENCE

NEEDED: A FAST TRACK TO ZERO NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference at the UN in New York has narrowly avoided complete disaster at the hands of the nuclear weapon states, who have threatened to gut every practical concrete step toward disarmament that the rest of the world wants. However, it has failed to come up with what the world really wants, namely a fast track to zero nuclear weapons.

According to People for Nuclear Disarmament Nuclear Flashpoint Project's John Hallam, who attended the conference from 9 to 16 May and held a workshop on operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems,

"It has never been clearer that what governments and peoples worldwide want and need with respect to nuclear weapons is a fast track to zero nuclear weapons, and the outlawing of those nuclear weapons by a nuclear weapons convention."

"While I was at the conference, I heard government after government warn that nuclear weapons are a threat to human existence - to the continuance of humans as a species. And I heard government after government take the cue of the UN Secretary - General himself, and urge the creation of a nuclear weapons convention, not as a distant long - term goal to be achieved in some faraway nirvana, but as an immediate and urgent goal that needs to happen yesterday."

"Yet the latter part of the conference has been characterised by the nuclear weapons states sniping at, and trying to eliminate, every commitment to concrete, practical, action that would take us toward that goal."

There have been quite a few heroes in what could have been a dismal scene: Amongst the heroes the governments of Switzerland, Chile, New Zealand, Austria, and Indonesia stand out, amongst many.

It's unfortunate that the Australian government, once it had launched the ICNND report early on in the conference, has been strangely silent on nuclear disarmament issues. Australia can do much, much, better than this. We promised to 'drive the debate' on a nuclear weapons convention. We have been silent., and left the talking on that to the Swiss, the Austrians, and the Secretary - General.

NPT Review Conference - Needed: A Fast track to Zero Nukes

Written by John Hallam

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And its more than unfortunate that the final document we have ended up with, though it could have been much, much, worse, represents a compromise too many with the nuclear weapons states. Much of the highly specific, practical, action - oriented language of earlier drafts has been removed by the nuclear weapon states and what is left has been watered down. The urgency of early drafts has been replaced by business as usual."

" Given the fact that existing nuclear arsenals are still entirely capable of terminating civilisation and the human species by sheer mindless computer error in less than an hour, we need an approach that recognises the gravity of the challenge. That gravity and urgency has been ducked by the nuclear weapons states at every turn."

"What the world needs - and what the Australian government should have driven the debate towards - is a fast track to zero culminating in a nuclear weapons convention as a matter of the utmost urgency."

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