

Letter Faxed to Prime Minister Gillard, Tony Abbot, JSCOT, 27June2011

Written by John Hallam

Thursday, 30 June 2011 19:28 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 February 2015 22:26

The below has been faxed yesterday to Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Opposition leader Tony Abbott, Foreign minister Kevin Rudd, opposition 'whips', and all members of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties.

You are urged to send similar letters to Prime Minister Gillard on:

02-6273-4100

Please stress:

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-- the urgency of abolishing nuclear weapons, as an immediate and pressing priority and not a 'someday' faraway aim

--the immediate, pressing, urgency of lowering the operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems in order to 'take the apocalypse off the agenda'.

--the urgency of proceeding as quickly as possible to a universal nuclear weapons convention that outlaws nuclear weapons forever and creates a monitoring framework that will make their acquisition impossible forever.

John Hallam

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT NSW NUCLEAR FLASHPOINTS PROJECT

PRIME MINISTER JULIA GILLARD
OPPOSITION LEADER TONY ABBOTT
FOREIGN MINISTER KEVIN RUDD

PARLIAMENTARY RESOLUTION ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Dear Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Tony Abbot and Kevin Rudd,

_ We would like to express our support for what we hope will be a completely bipartisan, and hopefully completely unanimous, resolution in the Australian Parliament in favour of nuclear disarmament and a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

We understand that this resolution is a follow-up to recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties in September 2009.(JSCOT)

It is important in framing this resolution, to have regard for ALL of the recommendations of the JSCOT Committee, as these were made on a bipartisan basis, and as they set out, together with the recommendations of the ICNND, a path to the actual achievement of the goal of a nuclear - weapons - free world, that will be embraced by the Australian Parliament.

We note that amongst other recommendations the JSCOT Committee urged the Australian government to make clear in international fora, its support for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Australia should do this as a high priority, and should make its support clear by voting for an NWC in the General Assembly.

This echoes the language used in the final declaration of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in which the governments party to the NPT commit themselves to the achievement of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. A number of governments and groups of governments have made specific commitments to work for the achievement of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and that goal is a 'norm' in the international community. Australia will be far from sticking its neck out in working actively for the achievement of an NWC, not as something to be achieved in some distant future, but as an immediate and pressing priority.

Another matter on which Australia must work as an immediate and pressing priority is of course, the lowering of operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems. The US and Russia continue in spite of START-III (or 'New START'), to maintain some 2000 nuclear warheads each in a status in which they can be launched in less than two minutes. Blue-Ribbon commissions from the Canberra Commission in 1996, to the Blix Commission in 2006, have urged that the operational readiness of these systems be decreased. The Evans-Kawaguchi Commission expatiates at great length on the subject, noting that accidental nuclear war as a result of miscalculation and/or malfunction 'is not a fantasy but a terrifying possibility'. Australia already supports and sponsors a number of UN resolutions on this subject.

The most recent studies on the climatic effects of large-scale nuclear weapons use indicate that the use of the on-alert portions of the US and Russian nuclear arsenals would still, in 2011 not 1986, (!!), result not only in immediate casualties ranging from the hundreds of millions into the billions, but would result in the possible extinction of most complex land - based living things. Even today, the right sequence of mishaps could still result in the termination of civilisation and much else.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists some years ago (2008) ran an article entitled 'minimising the probability of human extinction'. In that articles very consequential 'to do' list, item number one was to lower the operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems, while item number two was to abolish nuclear weapons. Prominent amongst the many other items was of course, tackling climate change.

JSCOT and ICNND of course, make many recommendations other than lowering operational readiness and working actively to create a Nuclear Weapons Convention. All are important, and the obvious other ones are to negotiate an FMCT and to achieve universal signature and ratification of the CTBT. Both these and other JSCOT recommendations are important.

Specifically on the matter of the CTBT, we believe that the Australian Government needs to be creative in looking, together with other governments, at ways to circumvent the entry-into-force logjam. We have suggested in the past both to the Australian government and to other governments that one way to do this might be to create a group of governments that call themselves 'Friends of the CTBT', who declare that, for them, the CTBT has entered into force. Another possibility might be to have a General Assembly resolution that simply declares that the CTBT is in force from hereon in. Doubtless other mechanisms to break the entry-into-force logjam might be looked at.

Above all however, the Australian Government needs to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons, not as a distant goal to be achieved in some utopian future, but as an urgent survival imperative for humans. It is an imperative as urgent and more urgent, than climate change. The thousands of warheads still on high alert mean that, in the words of Arundhati Roy, it is STILL, scandalously, possible for 'the world to end in an afternoon'. Actually the process takes about 40 minutes.

A bipartisan parliamentary resolution committing Australia to work for a nuclear-weapons-free world and a Nuclear Weapons Convention will be an important step that helps to take the world back from the brink. It is vital that the resolution incorporates commitment to an NWC and to lowering operational readiness, and that Australia puts the highest diplomatic priority on abolition as a human survival issue.

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Nuclear Flashpoints

02- 9810-2598 0416-500-793

foesy4@ihug.com.au, johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au,