

**SUN 6 AUG (HIROSHIMA DAY)**

## **PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT**

### **GOVT URGED TO JOIN NUCLEAR WEAPONS BAN, REDUCE NUCLEAR DANGERS**

On the eve of 6bAugust, Hiroshima Day, People for Nuclear Disarmament and the Human Survival Project, have urged the Government to support, sign, and ratify the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty recently negotiated at the United Nations in New York. PND's and the Human Survival Project's United Nations nuclear disarmament lobbyist John Hallam attended the three-week negotiation leading to the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty, from 15 June to 8 July. The negotiating process is itself the result of a series of meetings that took place in Oslo, Nayarit (Mexico) and Vienna in preceding years, in which the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use, and the rising risks of such use, were discussed. According to PND and Human Survival Project's John Hallam: “Hiroshima Day (6Aug) and Nagasaki Day (9 Aug) take place this year against a background of on the one hand, rising risks of nuclear weapons use either between the DPRK and the USA, or between NATO and Russia.”

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Frightening though a possible DPRK-US nuclear conflict might be, with a possible body count in the millions, it would be dwarfed by a possible NATO-Russia nuclear confrontation, which could break out with conflict in the Baltic States, Ukraine, or maybe Syria. A NATO-Russia conflict, involving a number of thousands of large nuclear warheads, is most certainly a possibility – hopefully a remote one, but nonetheless a real

one. Such a conflict would basically end what we call 'civilization' and kill between hundreds of millions and billions in one or two horrible hours. And it could happen (in fact most likely would happen) through accident or miscalculation – there have already been almost a dozen occasions on which the world has nearly been ended through computer, sensor, or human error or miscalculation.”

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122 governments participated in the negotiation over 15 June-8 July, of the text of a legal instrument that will prohibit nuclear weapons. The prohibition and elimination of these weapons is literally a matter of human survival – as long as we have large number of nuclear weapons on high alert, ready to be launched with a few keystrokes, its inevitable that one day they will be used.”

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Its highly unfortunate that Australia did not participate in this negotiating process, instead arguing that a ban is a distraction from a step by step agenda and that it undermines the Nuclear Nonproliferation treaty. This is nonsense and the opposite is true – the ban is an essential compliment to the NPT Article VI process, and is indeed, a fulfillment of the requirements of that process.”

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Australia should do a U-Turn in its nuclear disarmament policy over the last few years and should commit to wholehearted support of the prohibition treaty, which it should be signing and ratifying.”

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If however, Australia is fair dinkum about what it calls the 'step by step' approach, which it contrasts with the ban treaty, then there are some steps it should take that are literally of existential importance for civilization.”

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These relate to nuclear risk reduction. The current risk of nuclear conflict, with the Doomsday Clock at two and a half minutes to 'midnight', midnight being the nuclear destruction of civilization, is as high as it has ever been, including during the most perilous parts of the Cold War. There is an urgent – an existential – need to reduce nuclear risks, and risk reduction falls squarely into what the Australian Government calls the 'step by step' approach that it claims to like so much. The Australian government should go in to bat for urgent risk reduction measures including de-alerting (we support the resolution on Operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems that regularly goes through the UN General Assembly and that came from PND's lobbying work over a number of years. However, there are a number of other de-alerting resolutions that we fail to support for reasons that always seem quite insubstantial. We should support them.), No – First use (considered by the Obama administration in its last days), and improved military to military communication. In addition, we should have a complete moratorium on provocative military exercises, especially in Poland and the Balkans, involving potentially nuclear – armed forces.”

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Even if the Government can't bring itself to do what Blind Freddie would do namely sign and ratify the Nuclear Prohibition Treaty and get others to do likewise, it can most certainly bring itself to support measures that might make the difference between human survival and obliteration during a nuclear crisis. The Government has often called for 'common-sense' in nuclear disarmament. Let us have some.”

PND and the Human Survival Project recently wrote to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, urging these very things. Letter below.

John Hallam

## **Govt Urged to Join Nuke Weapons Ban, Reduce Nuclear Dangers**

Written by John Hallam

Saturday, 05 August 2017 18:39 - Last Updated Saturday, 05 August 2017 18:42

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## **PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

## **HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT**

John Hallam

UN Nuclear Weapons Campaigner,

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## **ATTN JULIE BISHOP, FOREIGN MINISTER**

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RE: NUCLEAR WEAPONS BAN TREATY

REDUCING NUCLEAR RISKS

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI DAY

## **Dear Foreign Minister Julie Bishop:**

Another letter from me urging you and your Government – in fact, urging any Australian Government and indeed Governments worldwide

– to sign and ratify the Nuclear Ban/Prohibition Treaty should be no surprise.

What is surprising is rather your Governments persistent recycling of arguments against that treaty that are utterly discredited and that surely, you and your department must know in your heart of hearts to be completely incorrect. Notably, the Ban Treaty does not undermine, but reinforces, the NPT. Nor does the Ban Treaty 'ignore' strategic reality: It is precisely a rational response to that ugly reality.

I urge, indeed would beg, you to ditch this opposition to a legal instrument that can only strengthen legal and moral norms against the use, threat of use, possession, and development of nuclear arms, and to embrace it. The Government should announce that it has seen the light and will sign, ratify, and promote this treaty that makes nuclear weapons illegal. It should urge other countries in similar strategic positions such as Japan (and NATO) to do likewise. It should urge NATO to make the needful changes to its security doctrines to eliminate any role for nuclear weapons.

The argument will doubtless be made that this somehow 'ignores strategic reality'. This is nonsense. It is precisely strategic reality and the growing risk of nuclear confrontation, both between the US and the DPRK and, terrifyingly, between NATO and Russia, that makes the elimination of nuclear weapons from strategic doctrines a matter not of warm and fuzzy feelgood 'vibes', but a matter of hard survival. If we don't do this we risk becoming toast.

The idea that some form of 'extended deterrence' does anything other than paint huge targets on parts of central Australia and potentially on Australian cities is nonsense. The nuclear weapons connection does not enhance our security: it holds us at risk.

If Australia signed and ratified the Ban Treaty at the earliest possible opportunity – next 20Sept in the UN General Assembly in New York – it would immensely enhance our security. Our persistent and irrational opposition risks that security.

I wish I could find words that would cut through an opposition that I and others in the disarmament movement view as not merely irrational, but, as the international security situation itself deteriorates as in the short to medium term it surely will, - that we see as potentially imperiling the very survival of millions of city-dwelling Australians.

There is however, much more to be done apart from backing the Ban Treaty.

As you are doubtless aware, in Sept 2018, there is to be a High Level Meeting on nuclear disarmament. This is a process completely separate both from the Ban Treaty and also independent of the NPT process, though it in no way competes with either.

It is moreover, a forum in which incremental steps can be taken, as also under the NPT process. As you will know, this author has nothing against the step by step approach which your Government says it favors – as long as one step, then another, actually gets to be taken, and followed by other steps.

The incremental measures that most need to be raised at the High level Meeting right now (not excluding other measures) are Risk reduction measures.

The need to reduce the risk of an 'accidental apocalypse' has hardly

been greater than now, with the 'Doomsday Clock' at two and a half minutes to 'midnight', where 'midnight' is the large-scale use of nuclear weapons that ends 'civilization' and much much more than that.

Risk reduction measures and the need for them have been discussed in a number of UN forums both convened by myself and by the Swiss and other Governments.

They are basically 'unexciting', 'commonsense' things like:

--Lowering the alert status of nuclear weapon systems as urged by the Operational Readiness resolution (which Australia votes for) and by the Indian Reducing Nuclear Dangers resolution, which Australia opposes, but ought to support.

--No First Use. Its clear that if everyone adopted No First Use of nuclear weapons (and no one mistakenly thought someone else had gone first), nuclear weapons would never in fact be used. Which would save civilization and much much more, from destruction.

--Improved military to military communications. This means existing 'hotlines' which are currently being downgraded or abandoned (incredible folly), but also the idea of a Joint Data Exchange Centre (JDEC) to be located in Moscow. That idea has been around since 1998, and has been reaffirmed by US and Russian Governments four if not five times. But it has never been implemented.

There are a number of other ideas for risk reduction including the ending of military exercises (esp in the Baltic States) that involve potentially or actually nuclear – armed forces.

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The risks of nuclear weapons use are as great as they have ever been. Involvement in extended deterrence relationships does not protect Australia from those risks rather it exposes us to them. Action to reduce those risks and Australian Government advocacy for such risk reduction steps, will rather, help to reduce those risks globally and to reduce Australia's exposure to them. In advocating for such steps Australia thus serves both the global security interest and our own security interest.

On the eve of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemorations of 2017, Australia's responsibility to its own citizens and to the world to reduce nuclear risks, and to act to eliminate nuclear weapons is as pressing as it has ever been and the deteriorating geopolitical situation merely makes that more urgent.

Please prove to us that you are able to take a leadership role in furthering what is after all, a survival priority.

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