

Time To Stop The World Going Bang

Written by John Hallam

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Braving fears over swine 'flu, nuclear disarmament experts from leading Australian non-governmental organisations are heading to New York this week with Australian diplomats to present the case for nuclear disarmament at a vitally important UN meeting.

John Hallam, expert representative from PND (People for Nuclear Disarmament) and Professor Tilman Ruff, Australian Chair of ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons), are part of the official Australian Governmental delegation which will attend the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) meeting at UN Headquarters from 4 - 15 May this year. It will be attended by NGOs and diplomats from Australia and the world.

Leading nuclear disarmament groups ICAN and IPPNW will be represented by campaigners Dimity Hawkins and Ruth Mitchell.

PND's John Hallam has already seen his work on taking nuclear weapons off 'hair-trigger - alert' give rise to two resolutions in the UN General Assembly, sponsored by six governments and now supported by Australia.

Mr Hallam said that the inclusion of two NGO representatives as part of the official delegation to the UN means that ordinary people can have a voice in key global discussions on a pressing issue of human survival.

"I look forward to working with our diplomats to help rid the world of the greatest short-term threat to humans and other living things," John Hallam said.

'A major step toward a nuclear - weapons - free world is to take the several thousand weapons that are kept on 'hair-trigger alert', able to be launched in less than two minutes, off high alert. That would literally prevent the world from 'going bang' by accident. Given recent statements by Obama and Putin, this is clearly within reach. The keystone of a nuclear - weapons - free world is a nuclear weapons convention, which is the goal of the entire nuclear disarmament community in all this."

The invitation to PND and ICAN to join the official UN delegation follows other positive developments on nuclear disarmament policies introduced by the Rudd Government. Notably, it established the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), headed by Gareth Evans, which has also consulted and included community organisations in its deliberations.

The Australian Government has also changed votes on a number of key UN resolutions on nuclear disarmament at past NPT meetings.

This year's NPT meeting is the first for many years in which there is real hope that the world might abolish nuclear weapons," explained Mr Hallam. "The Australian Government needs to take full advantage of the new climate for abolition, and press Presidents Obama and Medvedev to keep their promises, take weapons off alert and move to a nuclear weapons convention that will outlaw nukes forever"

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"It is time to stop the world 'going Bang'"

John Hallam, People For Nuclear Disarmament, NSW, Australia.

Tim Wright, Peace Organisation of Australia.

Jo Vallentine, People for Nuclear Disarmament, WA, Australia.