

'NO' VOTE TO UN NUKE PROHIBITION IMPERILS AUSTRALIAS SECURITY

Written by John Hallam
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HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT
PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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A 'NO' vote to L41, the UN General Assembly resolution to start a negotiating process to prohibit nuclear weapons, would be directly contrary to Australia's core security interests and place our very existence at risk. This is especially the case given the extreme tensions currently between the US and Russia.

Australian diplomats have argued that security considerations must be taken into account in proceeding with practical measures toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. Indeed this is so. In fact, pressing security considerations, nay, survival considerations, demand both the elimination of nuclear weapons 'yesterday', and wholehearted Australian support for the Austrian-backed L41 resolution that sets in train a process to bring about the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

The idea that the current global tensions demand a 'going slow' or a halt to the elimination of nuclear weapon systems – themselves at the very core of those tensions – is not merely delusional but is dangerous in the extreme.

'Extended Deterrence', as well as Australia's involvement in US nuclear command and control functions at Pine Gap, endangers Australia rather than making it safer. It makes us a high-priority nuclear target, that will be struck in the very first minutes of a nuclear exchange. In addition it endangers Australian cities, making a multi-million body count from, say, Sydney, as Garden Island is targeted, entirely plausible.

This possibility disappears completely if nuclear weapons themselves disappear. It would be significantly diminished by a diplomacy that did not align us so closely with groups such as NATO.

This is particularly pertinent in situations (such as now) of great international tension between the US and Russia, as well as China, when moving to eliminate nuclear weapons move from the 'feelgood' category to the survival category.

Australia has identified itself in the UN with a group of governments who call themselves 'progressive'. The 'progressive' nuclear agenda contains many items whose accomplishment is vitally important for the avoidance of an accidental apocalypse, and whose achievement is of some urgency.

Unfortunately, the hallmark of the 'progressive' group has been stagnation not progress: Almost no progress is being made on critical, existentially important, items such as lowering the

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alert status of nuclear weapon systems, and no-first-use. When No First Use was contemplated by the Obama administration, no 'progressive' group member told the US it supported the idea, and some said they opposed it although it is supposedly a vital part of the 'progressive' agenda. NFU and de-alerting, should have been unanimously supported.

Australia and countries like it, who have close security ties with the US should:

--Vote and lobby vigorously in favor of L41

--Make the strongest representations to their great and powerful ally in favor of existentially important nuclear risk reduction measures.

--Use diplomatic demarches to their great and powerful ally (as it has done to them) demanding that it support L41.

--Make it clear that in any 'step by step' 'progressive' approach, steps have actually got to be taken and real progress has actually got to be made.

If we fail to do this, the risk (hopefully only a risk at this point), is that we all end up either being vaporized or freezing in the dark of a nuclear winter.

The stakes just couldn't be higher.

John Hallam

m 61-4-6987-4984

h61-2-9810-2598

w61-2-9319-4296

johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au

jhjohnhallam@gmail.com