

Written by John Hallam
Tuesday, 18 June 2013 14:28 -

JOHN HALLAM ATTENDENCE AT NPT PREPCOM IN GENEVA, 22 APRIL-3MAY2013

REPORT TO PND, CPACS.

Around 6 weeks ago, Peter King, with whom I jointly coordinate the Human Survival Project and I, attended the 'Second Preparatory Committee Meeting of the 2015 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference', otherwise just known as the 'NPT Prepcom', from 22 April to 3 May 2013 in Geneva.

Every five years, there is a Review Conference for the States Parties as they are known (ie signatories), of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the most widely signed and most nearly universal treaty ever.

Essentially, the purpose of Review Conferences (and Preparatory Committee Conferences) of the NPT is to plot a course to the fulfillment of article VI of the NPT, namely to the elimination of nuclear weapons, as well as to monitor the overall performance of, and adherence to, the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

Meetings – both prepcoms and review conferences – of the NPT, therefore cover both progress (or lack thereof) toward the article VI goal of zero nuclear weapons, and other goals of the NPT, namely nonproliferation and so called 'peaceful' nuclear power.

I have now attended every NPT meeting since 2008, which was, fittingly, also in Geneva. At all of them I have made a presentation of some kind on operational readiness of nuclear weapon systems/accidental nuclear war, in which I have led a global campaign since the year 2000. In previous years this has been either with Steven Starr of PSR, or with Colonel Valery Yarynich (now deceased), formerly of the Soviet Missile Forces.

This time, there was a kind of new start, as the Swiss Government has now taken the bit between its teeth on operational readiness, and I am now working with Prof. Peter King on the 'Human Survival Project', a joint CPACS/PND project, and we presented on 26th April in the 'NGO Room', on 'Nuclear Weapons and Human Survival'.

Making presentations were myself, Prof. Peter King of CPACS, Aaron Tovish of Mayors for peace, and David Krieger of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, of Santa Barbara, Calif.

Basically, we all asked 'What risk do nuclear weapons pose, short, medium, and long – term, to the survival of humans as a species?'.

All of us, unsurprisingly, concluded that nuclear weapons pose an unacceptable risk to human survival and accordingly should be abolished.

Written by John Hallam
Tuesday, 18 June 2013 14:28 -

No surprises there.

However, what all of us emphasized was/is the necessity, now underlined by the increasing salience of 'Catastrophic Humanitarian Consequences' in the nuclear weapons dialogue, of getting human survival squarely onto the page as a 'game changer' in the debate. While human survival has in one sense always been there in the background or else as 'boilerplate' language, it has relatively rarely been talked of in a matter of fact way as a real consideration as distinct from as rhetoric. Our aim was to make it a serious part of the debate.

The Geneva prepcom was two weeks of intense diplomatic activity and NGO lobbying, almost impossible to sum up in a very few words.

For Peter and I, Days began in early morning with a meeting of Abolition2000 in the NGO room, followed by a government briefing under 'Chatham House Rules' from some prominent ambassador or other, followed by the regular session of the prepcom, plus never less than two other side meetings, all three of which we really should be attending. There would be a lunch break (which also consisted of meetings and workshops – so those that provided lunch tended to win out), followed by an afternoon session of three meetings in parallel, followed often as not by diplomatic receptions.

Other (very important) highlights were:

--The Swiss meeting on operational readiness, at which Gareth Evans pointed to me in the audience and said he'd gotten some of what he was saying from me, and urged me to 'keep on nagging' the US and Russian governments on operational readiness, which I certainly intend to do. This also saw the presentation/launching of Hans Kristensen's report (in its final form) on operational readiness. Look for me in the acknowledgments.

--The statement, now signed by 80 governments it seems (was 77), on catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons use. While this statement maybe says less about the catastrophic CLIMATIC consequences of nuke weapons use than we might like, it does say something, and it puts the debate in the right direction. I have taken on the task of sending on this text with a cover letter signed by NGOs worldwide, to the strategic forces subcommittees of the US Congress and Russian Duma. (The letter is now maturing nicely). A previous statement garnered support from 16 governments in Vienna at the last prepcom, and from 32 in the October 2012 First Committee of the General Assembly. This statement and previous ones change the entire direction of the debate on nuclear weapons.

As far as I am aware, the Australian government has not yet made up its mind to sign this utterly-vital-for-human-survival statement. However

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 18 June 2013 14:28 -

in my extended conversation with our representatives, they were careful to stress that 'we are not saying no' and 'we are engaging closely with the Swiss' (who along with the South Africans, coordinated the statement). This means another task in trying to persuade them to sign the statement AS IS, without watering-down.

--Establishment of an 'Open Ended Working Group' on nuclear disarmament in Geneva. Technically this was an outcome of a General Assembly resolution, but much of the working out came in Geneva, and many of the participants are of course the same people. (The OEWG as it is now called has now had a number of meetings into which there has been substantial NGO input.)

I seemed to have had conversations with more diplomats than ever before, some with Prof Peter King, some alone. From memory, these included:

--The Romanian ambassador, who chaired the entire prepcom.

--The South African ambassador, who coordinated the 'Catastrophic Consequences' statement.

--The Mexican ambassador, who is responsible for the next meeting on 'Catastrophic humanitarian consequences' in Mexico.

--The Swiss team, who seem to coordinate just about everything that has to do with getting rid of nuclear weapons at a global level, and 'catastrophic consequences'. (I had this conversation together with Peter)

--The New Zealanders, (Amb. Dell Higgie) who work closely with the Swiss on this

--The Nigerians who also work closely with the Swiss as part of the de-alerting group as well as an important part of NAM and the 'African Bloc'.

--The Chileans, part of the de-alerting group.

--The Costa-Ricans, another strong voice for nuclear disarmament and for a nuclear weapons convention.

--Our own, Australian delegation, a little defensive over 'catastrophic consequences' but talkative.

--The US, who now insist that 'catastrophic consequences', including 'catastrophic climatic

Written by John Hallam

Tuesday, 18 June 2013 14:28 -

consequences'('CCC') are a 'major driver' of their nuclear posture (five years ago in response to a question by Steve Starr and I they'd 'never heard of it').

--The Chinese, who insist that their nukes are not on alert, and who like the US, say that catastrophic humanitarian/climatic consequences, 'always were' a major policy driver. Of course, silly me.

In all of these conversations (and I am sure there are quite a number I've failed to remember), I strongly emphasized the need to prioritize catastrophic global climatic consequences, (Which Aaron Tovish of M4P (Mayors For Peace) now abbreviates to 'CCC') precisely as we had stressed in our panel. And to all of these diplomats I gave either in hard copy or by email, a copy of my panel presentation on human survival.

My presence at these utterly vital meetings, meeting that truly do affect the likelihood of human and other species survival, is made possible by PND's and others very limited financial support.

PND has limited resources. Your support, and individual contribution to this work truly can make a difference to the fate of the whole world.

That's enough to be going on with,

John Hallam

johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au