

UN SECURITY COUNCIL URGED TO TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE NUCLEAR WAR RISKS

Written by John Hallam
Thursday, 18 January 2018 10:22 -

JAN 18 2018

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

www.pndnsw.org.au

HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

JAN 18 UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL THEMATIC MEETING ON WMD

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The United Nations Security Council will today (Jan18) New York time (tomorrow Sydney time), hold a 'thematic session' on weapons of mass destruction.

People for Nuclear Disarmament and the Human Survival Project have written to the entire Security Council, urging them to prioritise the discussion of measures to lower the risk of nuclear war.

According to PND's UN nuclear disarmament campaigner John Hallam:

“The 'Kings' of all weapons of mass destruction are of course, nuclear weapons. Right now, the risk of either nuclear weapons use, or of global thermonuclear war is as great as it has ever been. Not merely due to tensions in the Korean Peninsula, but because of a generally increased willingness to contemplate and to threaten nuclear weapons use on the part of both the US and Russia. There are also threats of nuclear weapons use taking place between India and Pakistan.”

“Right now the possible large scale use of nuclear weapons is the number one risk to civilisation and to humans as a species.”

“Our letter urges the UNSC to look for measures that would reduce those truly existential risks, and lessen the likelihood of an accidental or not-so-accidental apocalypse. Measures that could do this include de-alerting, no-first-use, and better mil-to-mil communication.”

“A High Level Conference to discuss nuclear weapons is being held in May. We are urging

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Governments to prioritise that conference, and to use that to discuss risk reduction and disarmament.”

“Of course, it goes without saying, that a nuclear weapon that does not exist cannot pose an existential risk.”

John Hallam

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PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT (PND)
HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT (HSP)

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

RE: JAN 18 SPECIAL THEMATIC DEBATE ON WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND
CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

Dear President/Prime Minister, (and UNSC Rep)

PND and HSP are alarmed at the tensions and conflicts between nuclear-armed countries, and the increasing risks of nuclear weapons being used by accident, miscalculation or intent as a result.

As you probably know, our organisation has frequently addressed meetings of the NPT and First Committee on the issue of nuclear war risks. We specialise in this area. However it is not just us who believe that the risk of nuclear conflict is as great now as it has ever been: This has over the last 2-3 years, become the consensus of experts in nuclear war risk, ranging from former commanders of both US and Russian nuclear forces, to academic and NGO experts, notably the nobel prizewinners who move the hands of the Doomsday Clock. The need to reduce nuclear war risk is a pressing existential priority.

Any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic human, economic and environmental consequences. The use of just a small fraction of the 14,000 nuclear weapons in the world's

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stockpiles could end civilisation as we know it. The use of as few as five large warheads roughly over continental landmasses would plunge the world into preindustrial darkness via electromagnetic pulse.

On January 18, the United Nations Security Council will hold a special thematic debate on the topic of 'Weapons of Mass Destruction and Confidence Building Measures.' It is vital that this human survival issue is treated at this meeting. We call on all Governments, whether of nuclear weapon states or non nuclear weapon states, and whether you supported the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons or not, to give nuclear weapons use risk reduction the very highest priority at this meeting.

The debate will be chaired by Kazakhstan President Nazarbayev, who has put forward a number of proposals to the United Nations, including a call 'on all Member States, especially the Security Council's permanent members, to set a goal of ridding the world of nuclear weapons by the UN's 100th Anniversary in 2045.'

In addition, on December 24, 2017 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 72/251 setting the dates and mandate for a High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament to take place at the UN from May 14-16, 2018. The principal aim for the conference is to make progress on effective measures for nuclear risk-reduction and disarmament.

We urge all of you, nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states, to participate in the Security Council session on January 18, and use the opportunity to promote nuclear-risk reduction and nuclear disarmament by:

Supporting the goal of the global elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045;

Calling on the nuclear-armed States to adopt policies never to initiate a nuclear war (no-first-use pledge);

We urge the nuclear-armed States to drastically cut the \$100 billion annual nuclear weapons budget, and re-invest some of these resources in economic and social need (such as the SDGs), as they are required to do under Article 26 of the UN Charter;

Announcing that you, or your Foreign Minister, will participate in the UN High-Level Conference on May 14-16, and do what-ever is in your power at the Conference to prevent nuclear weapons being used, and to advance the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

PND and HSP urge all governments, both nuclear weapon states and non nuclear weapon states, to sign, ratify, and implement the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

We fully understand that nuclear weapon states have (deeply mistakenly in our view) taken an attitude opposing that treaty and have said repeatedly that they will never sign it.

This is a mistake and worse than a mistake. It threatens the continued existence of everyone and everything, and we cannot emphasise too much its gravity.

We urge the nuclear weapon states to reconsider and to fulfil their NPT Art VI obligations by

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coming within the ambit of the TPNW. We urge non nuclear weapon states especially those who have alliances or security arrangements with nuclear weapon states, but also those who do not, to use all the influence you have to persuade the nuclear weapon states that they should reverse their opposition to the TPNW.

To the Nuclear weapon states we say: Even if you nuclear weapon states cannot do so now, and continue to misguidedly denounce the TPNW, we are sure you (nuclear weapon states) will sooner rather than later see the error of your ways and sign, ratify, and implement the TPNW fully, in fulfilment of your existing NPT obligations. Failure to do so in a timely way indeed, puts your NPT compliance in question.

If however, just for the moment (and we are confident that it will be but for the moment, because you will of course want to fulfil your NPT obligations) you nuclear weapon states feel you cannot sign and ratify the TPNW, we urge you (NWS) to take the necessary steps to lower the risk of nuclear weapon use, including no-first use doctrines, military to military communication between each other, the long delayed establishment of a Joint Data Exchange Centre, announced multiple times by the US and Russian Governments and never implemented, and lowering of alert status. In addition, a review of Presidential authority to launch should be undertaken in the US, with perhaps the institution of a 'two button (briefcase) system', whereby at least TWO parties (say the President and the vice-president) must agree to launch.

The Jan18 UNSC meeting should also prepare the way for the May14-16 2018 High Level Conference to give focussed consideration to the whole issue of nuclear risk reduction, and the elimination of nuclear weapons altogether.

To both nuclear weapon states and non nuclear weapon states, we say:

Please use the Jan 18 UNSC meeting and the May 14-16 High Level Conference together to reduce the risk of nuclear war, now at an all time high, and to pave the way to the timely elimination of nuclear weapons.