

Media release
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Canada must help alleviate rising U.S.-Russian tensions, says Pugwash Group

(Toronto) The Canadian Pugwash group says that Canada should play a lead role in repairing the unravelling U.S.-Russian relationship by addressing NATO's outdated nuclear policies.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrives in Moscow today to meet with President Putin and others amid escalating East-West tensions. AP quoted Ms. Rice as describing the moment as "not an easy" time in Russia-U.S. relations, adding that she said the tensions do not amount to a new Cold War. But according to AFP, Russia's Kommersant newspaper wrote on Monday that Moscow and Washington have lost all trust and now see each other as a threat.

The Canadian Pugwash Group, a distinguished group of scientists and diplomatic experts, has urged Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay to take steps to alleviate tensions between NATO and Russia, beginning by dealing with NATO's nuclear weapons policy.

"It is time to place a debate on NATO's outdated and dangerous reliance on nuclear weapons squarely before the alliance's members," said Dr. Adele Buckley, chairperson of the Canadian Pugwash Group.

"Negative momentum is building, and the West's relationship with Russia could spin out of control," said Dr. Sergei Plekhanov, Pugwash member, Associate Professor of Political Science at York University, and former close advisor to President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Foreign Affairs Minister McKay has told Parliament that he raised Pugwash's concerns over the alliance's nuclear policy with NATO's current president during a NATO meeting in Oslo last month. The Canadian Pugwash Group welcomed this, but said further action is needed from Canada.

The Canadian Pugwash Group is an affiliate of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. Inspired by Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell, the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs were founded at a controversial meeting of Eastern and Western scientists in the village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia, in 1957.

This year, on July 5-8, nuclear scientists and disarmament experts will mark the group's fiftieth anniversary by once again meeting in Pugwash to discuss nuclear disarmament.

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