



MEETING SUMMARY:

Getting to Zero Nuclear Weapons

At a meeting December 4 2012 at the Cartier Place Hotel in Ottawa, a panel of well-known Canadian disarmament advocates addressed strategies for advancing progress toward a global ban on nuclear weapons. The discussion was moderated by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice, Michel Bastarache. Speakers included:

- Murray Thomson O.C., co-founder of Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, a group of over 600 Order of Canada recipients who have endorsed a call for greater progress in implementing United Nations Secretary-General's five-point plan for nuclear disarmament.
- Douglas Roche O.C., Former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament (1984-1989);
- Peggy Mason, Former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament (1989-1995) ;
- Steve Staples, President, Rideau Institute.

Nuclear weapons pose a continuing, growing threat. The fact that there are 14 nuclear weapons states (NWS, i.e. including those states that maintain nuclear weapons on their territory), that there is an increasing risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors, and the risk of accident or miscalculation leading to use of nuclear weapons all point to the need to eliminate these weapons.

Complacency is a danger. Public opinion favours nuclear disarmament. But the public and media are not seized of these issues.

Speakers developed three tracks for mobilizing public opinion and political will in Canada:

- Campaigning civil society organizations with broad-based membership among Canadians;
- Opinion leaders, for example more than 600 Order of Canada recipients calling for progress on a nuclear weapons convention;
- Continued work with decision-makers: government, parliamentarians, DFAIT and DND officials.

... 2

President Obama may show more leadership in his second term. However, the initial indication – pulling the plug on the Middle East meeting on a WMD Free Zone – is not promising. Canada should encourage the sustainment of the Middle East WMD Free Zone process.

A global ban on nuclear weapons is the overarching objective, and there are many measures that can be taken by the Government of Canada in support of that goal. These include the following in the context of NATO's nuclear policies:

- Encourage NATO to take a firm step toward reducing its reliance on nuclear weapons by affirming that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, their sole purpose should be to deter their use by others, and by making a clear no first use commitment;
- Encourage the removal of nuclear weapons from Germany, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands and Turkey;
- Ensure, at a minimum, that any Ballistic Missile Defence development or deployment should only proceed within a framework of full cooperation with Russia and other Nuclear Weapon States;

Other proposals made at the meeting include the following:

- NGOs should seriously consider collaborating on monitoring the Canadian government's spending on military defence and disarmament, calculated semi-annually;
- The government of Canada, after reviewing the unanimous motion by the Canadian Parliament of 7 December 2010, should review its position that the nuclear weapons convention process is "premature;"
- Furthermore, the government of Canada should heed the unanimous motion of the Canadian Parliament of 7 December 2010, *"to deploy a major world-wide Canadian diplomatic initiative in support of preventing nuclear proliferation and increasing the rate of nuclear disarmament."*

In this 50th anniversary year of the Cuban missile crisis, those present were reminded of the observation of Robert McNamara, that "we were just lucky in 1962." McNamara's view, and the view of meeting participants is that only a global ban on nuclear weapons will safeguard humanity's security over the long term.