

New Asia Pacific Leadership group to work for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament

Canberra, 18 May 2011: The launch was announced today of a new Asia Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN), comprising thirty former senior political, diplomatic and military leaders from thirteen countries around the region including nuclear weapons possessing states China, India and Pakistan (see the attached list).

The objective of the group, convened by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, is to inform and energize public opinion, and especially high-level policymakers, to take seriously the very real threats posed by nuclear weapons, and do everything possible to achieve a world in which they are contained, diminished and ultimately eliminated.

The Network is modelled on a recently established European counterpart (the ELN), convened by former UK Defence Minister Des Browne, which has already been active and visible in calling for urgent changes to NATO nuclear policy. The concept of such advocacy networks was strongly supported by the Australia and Japan-sponsored International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (co-chaired by Professor Evans and former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi) in its final 2010 communique.

A common inspiration for the both the ELN and now the APLN has been the highly influential series of articles published since 2007 supporting a nuclear free world by former senior US officials Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn (emulated by similar groups in a number of other countries, including Russia), and the strong commitment articulated by President Obama in Prague in April 2009. The creation of both networks has been made possible by seed grants from the US-based Nuclear Threat Initiative, co-chaired by former Senator Nunn and CNN founder Ted Turner.

APLN members will contribute to the nuclear debate by making public statements from time to time, engaging in direct advocacy with regional governments as both public and private opportunities arise, commissioning research and hosting regional seminars and conferences as resources permit, and maintaining an active website (www.a-pln.org) through its secretariat based at the Australian National University in Canberra. Working groups are in the process of being established to address specific issues such as nuclear deterrence, nuclear transparency and the potential for multilateralising the most sensitive stages of the nuclear fuel cycle.

Efforts to achieve a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons are at a critical stage. Serious threats persist from the use or misuse of weapons by existing nuclear armed states, newly nuclear-armed states and terrorist actors, and from the misuse of the civil fuel cycle.

Last year saw some important developments, including agreement by the United States and Russia to make significant cuts in their nuclear arsenals and the modest success of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. But that momentum is in danger of stalling. It badly needs re-energizing, both globally and regionally.

There is little sign of progress on bringing into force the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, on breaking the negotiation stalemate on a treaty to prohibit further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, on meeting future proliferation risks associated with the civil nuclear sector, or on measures to significantly strengthen the non-proliferation treaty regime. And there are few if any signs of willingness by the established nuclear weapons powers to embark on serious multilateral arms reduction negotiations of a kind which could eventually lead to a nuclear weapons free world.

The Asia Pacific region impacts every dimension of the global nuclear agenda, with acute tensions and risks remaining in North East Asia and South Asia in particular. With the world's economic, political and security centres of gravity shifting inexorably to this region, its stake in a secure world order – and its responsibility to contribute with ideas, policy proposals and vision to that end – have grown commensurately.

In launching the APLN, its Convenor Gareth Evans said, “The quest to eliminate nuclear weapons cannot begin to succeed without the determined engagement of policymakers in the Asia Pacific region. And this stellar group of senior, respected and extraordinarily experienced individuals can really help make that happen.”

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Please direct enquiries and requests for comment in the first instance to the Convenor:

Gareth Evans Telephone: +61 3 9035 8160 (17 May, after 1530; 18 May, AM)
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Other APLN members available for comment on 17 or 18 May include:

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INAUGURAL MEMBERS

Australia

Gareth Evans	Foreign Minister 1988-96 (Convenor)
Malcolm Fraser	Prime Minister 1975-83
Robert Hawke	Prime Minister 1983-91
Robert Hill	Defence Minister 2001-06

China

Cui Liru	President, Chinese Institute of Contemporary International Relations
Li Bin	Director Arms Control Program, Institute of International Studies, Tsinghua University
Ma Zhengang	President, China Arms Control and Disarmament Association, China Institute of International Studies 2004-09
Pan Zhenqiang	General (ret.); Director, Institute of Strategic Studies, National Defense University to 2001

India

Lalit Mansingh	Foreign Secretary 1999-2001
Jaswant Singh	Minister for External Affairs 1998-2002

Indonesia

Kusmayanto Kadiman	State Minister for Research and Technology 2004-09
Nur Hassan Wirajuda	Foreign Minister 2001-09
Wiryono Sastrohandoyo	Ambassador to US, UNO Vienna and Australia

Japan

Nobuyasu Abe	UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament 2003-6
Yasuo Fukuda	Prime Minister 2007-08
Yoriko Kawaguchi	Foreign Minister 2002-04 (ICNND)
Yohei Kono	Foreign Minister 1999-2001, Speaker House of Representatives 2003-09

Malaysia

Tan Sri Hasmy Agam	Ambassador to UN 1998-2003
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New Zealand

James Bolger	Prime Minister 1990-97
Geoffrey Palmer	Prime Minister 1989-90

Pakistan

Mushahid Hussain	Minister for Information 1997-99
Jehangir Karamat	Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff 1996-98
Humayan Khan	Foreign Secretary 1988-89

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Philippines

Domingo Siazon

Secretary of Foreign Affairs 1995-2001

Republic of Korea

Han Sung-Joo

Foreign Minister 1993-94

Lee Hong-Koo

Prime Minister 1994-95

Singapore

Kishore Mahbubani

Ambassador to UN 2001-04, Dean Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Sri Lanka

Jayantha Dhanapala

UN Under Secretary General for Disarmament 1998-2003

Vietnam

Nguyen Tam Chien

Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs 1997

Ton Nu Thi Ninh

Ambassador to EU 2000-03

For more detailed biographies of all members, see the APLN website www.a-pln.org