

MEDIA RELEASE

ASIA PACIFIC LEADERS DEPLORE LOSS OF POLITICAL WILL ON DISARMAMENT

SINGAPORE 13 SEPTEMBER 2012. Twenty-five political, diplomatic, military and scientific leaders from fourteen Asia Pacific countries today expressed deep disappointment at the evaporation of political will evident in global and regional efforts toward nuclear disarmament over the last year, and called on governments to urgently apply new energy and focus to ridding the world of the most indiscriminately inhumane weapons ever built.

In a statement (attached) issued after a two-day meeting in Singapore hosted by the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the leaders said that the new spirit of optimism which had been very visible in 2009 and 2010 – particularly in U.S.-Russian cooperation in concluding the New START treaty, a largely successful NPT Review Conference and a productive Nuclear Security Summit – was no longer evident.

“Further negotiations on U.S.-Russia nuclear arms reduction are stalled. There is no sign of progress in bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. There has been zero progress on breaking the Geneva negotiating stalemate on a new treaty to ban production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, and if anything an acceleration of nuclear weapons programs by nuclear-armed states in our own region.

“The nuclear-armed states – led by the U.S. and Russia, who between them possess 95 per cent of the world’s nuclear weapons – must get serious about their disarmament commitments, recognize that disarmament and non-proliferation are inextricably connected, and take strong and persistent action in all relevant areas, including constraints on nuclear testing and fissile material production.”

The leaders made clear their belief that while it is critically necessary to address underlying sources of regional tension – especially in our own Asia Pacific region – if progress is to be made on nuclear disarmament, nuclear-armed states must not make their commitment to that unrealistically contingent on the prior settlement of outstanding regional conflicts and disputes. “To do so is just another way of saying nuclear disarmament won’t happen.”

The APLN, convened by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, was founded in 2011 to bring together individuals who have held high executive or advisory positions around the Asia Pacific region, from South Asia and East Asia to Australasia; who share a common belief that nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to all nations and peoples; and who have resolved to work together to promote policies in our region and beyond to effectively contain, diminish and eliminate them, and to create a security environment conducive to those goals (see www.a-pln.org).

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ELIMINATING NUCLEAR WEAPONS THREATS: A CALL FOR NEW FOCUS AND ENERGY FROM POLITICAL LEADERS

SINGAPORE 13 SEPTEMBER 2012

1. The undersigned members of the Asia Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN) have agreed on the following statement expressing concern about the loss of momentum in efforts to achieve a nuclear weapons free world, and the compelling need – in today’s uncertain strategic environment – for renewed focus, energy and political will to be applied to both non-proliferation and disarmament by regional and world political leaders.

2. The APLN was founded in 2011 to bring together individuals who have held high executive or advisory positions around the Asia Pacific region, from South Asia and East Asia to Australasia; who share a common belief that nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to all nations and peoples; and who have resolved to work together to promote policies in our region and beyond to effectively contain, diminish and eliminate them, and to create a security environment conducive to those goals.

The Need for Renewed Political Momentum

3. We are deeply concerned at the evaporation over the last year of the new spirit of optimism which had been very visible in 2009 and 2010, generated by strong statements from many political and civil society leaders, and in particular by U.S.-Russian cooperation in concluding the New START treaty, the largely successful NPT Review Conference and a productive Washington-hosted Nuclear Security Summit.

4. Apart from a further reasonably productive Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul in March 2012, the news has been bleak. Further negotiations on U.S.-Russia nuclear arms reduction are stalled. There is no sign of progress in bringing into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. There has been zero progress on breaking the Geneva negotiating stalemate on a new treaty to ban production of fissile material for nuclear weapons, slow progress on a conference to advance a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East (a key outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference), and if anything an acceleration of nuclear weapons programs by nuclear-armed states in our own region. With the environment for nuclear disarmament not helped by controversial plans for short-range nuclear-tipped missiles, ballistic missile defence and new conventional weapons systems, and modernization of nuclear weapons arsenals by the major powers, there has been no sign of willingness by any nuclear-armed state to embark on serious multilateral arms reduction negotiations.

5. Compounding our concern is an overall strategic environment, both in the region and globally, which remains very uncertain. U.S.-Russia and U.S.-China relations are under strain; efforts at rapprochement between India and Pakistan remain very incomplete; tensions remain high about Iran’s nuclear program; North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and

other nuclear related activity continues to generate strong concern in North East Asia; there are multiple unresolved territorial disputes throughout the region, with those in the South China Sea particularly volatile; and the military capability of many powers in the region is visibly growing.

6. There is an urgent need, in these circumstances, for political leaders – not only of the nuclear-armed states, but of the middle powers and others who have played a creative and constructive role in arms control issues in the past – to take new initiatives to bring the movement for a nuclear weapons free world back to global centre-stage.

7. That means not only strong direction-setting statements, especially about disarmament, but also strong and persistent action in all the relevant, and inter-related, areas of disarmament, non-proliferation, nuclear testing, fissile material production, security, public education, and acting to reduce regional tensions that we spelt out in our Inaugural Statement on 12 December 2011 (www.a-pln.org).

Getting Serious About Disarmament

8. The most compelling need is for the nuclear-weapon states to put beyond doubt not only their support for non-proliferation, which is all too easy for them to do, but also their commitment “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to ... nuclear disarmament”. Article VI of the NPT requires as a matter of international law, as well as morality, that the U.S., Russia, China, France and UK do this, and our common humanity requires as a matter of morality that the same be done by those nuclear-armed states presently outside the NPT - India, Pakistan and Israel.

9. The nuclear-armed states – led by the U.S. and Russia, who between them possess 95 per cent of the world’s nuclear weapons – must inject more substance into such disarmament commitments as they have made. Without significant further nuclear stockpile reductions, by the two major powers in particular, it will be difficult to multilateralise the nuclear disarmament process. All nuclear-armed states must step back from language which prioritises their security concerns over those of states which have bound themselves by treaty not to acquire such weapons; and not make their commitment to nuclear disarmament unrealistically contingent on the prior settlement of outstanding regional conflicts and disputes.

10. There is certainly a need for determined efforts to preserve stability and resolve tensions in areas of potential nuclear confrontation. But it is not acceptable to make serious progress toward nuclear disarmament depend on the prior achievement of lasting peace in the Middle East; or resolution of outstanding India-Pakistan issues; or the ending of remaining tensions in North East Asia; or a complete accommodation of Russia’s and NATO’s competing strategic visions; or complete confidence that no further proliferation of nuclear weapons will occur. To do so is just another way of saying disarmament won’t happen.

11. This is not to suggest that there should be any sympathy for states which fail in any way to meet their treaty-based non-proliferation obligations. There is no security, and no glory, in the instability that an increase in the number of nuclear-armed states would bring. It remains absolutely in the interests of all states to further strengthen international safeguards, to build capacity for the implementation of more effective non-proliferation measures at national and regional level, and to minimise the proliferation potential of any expansion of civil nuclear energy, including by developing new and better proliferation resistant technologies.

12. Our key point remains that disarmament and non-proliferation are inextricably connected. As the Canberra Commission and every major inquiry since then has put it: ‘So long as any state has nuclear weapons others will want them’. The future of the NPT remains critically dependent on the recognised nuclear-weapon states being seen to be serious about disarmament. The NPT nuclear-weapon states may claim, as they did at the Vienna Preparatory Committee meeting in May, to have made “unprecedented progress ... in nuclear arms reduction, disarmament, confidence-building and transparency,” but the evidence to support this is just not there. And as long as these states fail to honour their nuclear disarmament obligations, it is relatively easy for the nuclear-armed states outside the NPT to ignore their part in the process.

Other Issues

13. *Nuclear Security*. On 13 June 2012 a statement was issued, signed by the listed APLN signatories (see www.a-pln.org), pointing out that even after the Washington and Seoul Summits, international governance in nuclear security – ensuring that nuclear weapons and materials do not get into the hands of terrorists and others who would misuse them – remains weak compared with the disciplines of safeguards and nuclear safety. It called on governments to strengthen the system internationally by universally joining the relevant treaties, establishing binding standards and mechanisms for transparency, reporting and accountability, and enhancing the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

14. *Transparency*. On 13 June 2012 another statement was issued, signed by the listed APLN signatories (see www.a-pln.org), making the point that a deliberate effort by all nuclear-armed states to broaden and standardize security and defence transparency, in relation to past, present and future activities concerning nuclear weapons, will be indispensable for any significant progress toward their elimination. Among its specific proposals was that these states undertake national audits of their historic production of fissile material as a basis for later discussions among them.

15. *Nuclear Deterrence*. At this week’s Singapore meeting APLN members discussed a detailed paper on the current state of deterrence and extended deterrence doctrine in the region, recognizing that faith in nuclear deterrence still had strong resonance in policymakers’ and public opinion, and that it is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for the reduction and ultimate elimination of reliance on nuclear armories that strong and persuasive arguments be made making clear both the fragility and dubious utility of relying on it. A statement will be issued reflecting members’ views after further internal consultation.

16. *Asia Pacific Nuclear Energy Community*. At this week’s Singapore meeting APLN members discussed another detailed paper exploring the prospects for the establishment of a new regional institution to facilitate high-level consultation on current and planned nuclear programs; mechanisms for ensuring best practice in nuclear safety, security and safeguards; capacity building; fuel cycle collaboration, including in spent fuel management; harmonization of regulatory requirements; and regional power supply arrangements. APLN members agreed that the proposal for an Asia Pacific Nuclear Energy Community merited wider discussion by governments and others. A revised discussion paper will be issued publicly after further internal consultations.

17. APLN members will continue to meet as regularly as resources permit; engage as appropriate in both individual and collective advocacy; publish group statements from time to time, representing the views of those signing them, aimed at highlighting particular issues in the nuclear policy debate; publish occasional individually signed papers and analyses; and work with partner organisations in hosting, and participating in, workshops and conferences.

We appreciate the support we have received from the Nuclear Threat Initiative to enable the establishment of the Network and its Secretariat.

18. We fully recognise the scale of the challenge. But we believe there is no more important and challenging policy issue in the world today than saving the planet from the catastrophe that will be inevitable if we – and those around the world who share our concern – do not ultimately succeed. We must achieve a world free once and for all of the horror of nuclear weapons, the most indiscriminately inhumane agents of destruction ever built.

SIGNED

Gareth Evans

Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia (APLN Convenor)

Nobuyasu Abe

Former United Nations Under-Secretary General for Disarmament

Hasmy Agam

Former Ambassador of Malaysia to the United Nations; Chairman of the Malaysian Commission of Human Rights

James Bolger

Former Prime Minister of New Zealand

Jayantha Dhanapala

Former United Nations Under-Secretary General for Disarmament

Malcolm Fraser

Former Prime Minister of Australia

Han Sung-Joo

Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea

Robert Hill

Former Minister of Defence of Australia

Pervez Hoodbhoy

Professor of Nuclear and High-Energy Physics, Quaid-e-Azam University, Pakistan

Mushahid Hussain

Former Minister for Information of Pakistan

Kusmayanto Kadiman

Former State Minister for Science and Technology of Indonesia

Jehangir Karamat

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of Pakistan

Yoriko Kawaguchi

Former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Yohei Kono

Former Chief Cabinet Secretary and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Humayun Khan

Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan

Kishore Mahbubani

Former Ambassador of Singapore to the United Nations

Lalit Mansingh

Former Foreign Secretary of India

Pan Zhenqiang

Major General (Rtd); Senior Adviser to the China Reform Forum and Member of the Executive Committee of the Council of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs

Ton Nu Thi Ninh

Former Ambassador of Vietnam to the European Union

Geoffrey Palmer

Former Prime Minister of New Zealand

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