



July 17, 2018

Dear CNWC Signatories,

This message comes to you as one who has endorsed the Call for negotiations towards a Nuclear Weapons Convention and thus has supported this initiative under Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (CNWC). Four key points are briefly addressed:

1. changes in the disarmament environment since this initiative was begun in 2009;
2. the structure and workings of the CNWC initiative and its Steering Committee;
3. our most recent communication with the Prime Minister; and
4. plans for an Ottawa seminar as part of our ongoing program to bring the urgent need for disarmament, including the need to codify nuclear disarmament provisions through a Nuclear Weapons Convention, to the attention of the Canadian Government and Parliamentarians.

1. In 2009 Murray Thomson, O.C., John Polanyi, C.C., and Douglas Roche, O.C. began inviting distinguished Canadians who had been honoured by the Order of Canada to join a “Call on all member States of the United Nations – including Canada – to endorse, and begin negotiations for, a Nuclear Weapons Convention.” You and more than 1,000 others have endorsed that Call.

In the early days of this initiative we were enjoying a moment of heightened hope that nuclear weapon states would find the political will to accelerate reductions to their nuclear arsenals. President Barack Obama had spoken forcefully for nuclear disarmament and the UN Security Council, which of course included Russia and China, found the consensus to resolve “to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons, in accordance with the goals of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).” The US and Russia agreed, through their New START Treaty, to limit their deployed strategic arsenals to 1,550 warheads each. And with the UN Secretary-General we dared to hope that the international community, including nuclear weapon states, would soon be open to exploring the detailed agreements, regulations, institutional arrangements, and verification mechanisms needed to realize the widely shared objective of the irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons – with all such provisions codified in a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

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We still dare to hope, but the circumstances have become increasingly dire. Rather than pushing toward a world without nuclear weapons, the major powers are pressing toward nuclear weapons “modernization” and have produced a world in which the danger of nuclear weapons use has risen sharply. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in issuing a new “Agenda for Disarmament,” warns that “we are one mechanical, electronic and human error away from a catastrophe that could eradicate entire cities from the map.” So, instead of repeating his predecessor’s bold call for negotiations on a convention, he is focused on urging nuclear weapon states to at least make good on the commitments they have already made. He nevertheless affirms that “the total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations,” and we thus continue to call for a Nuclear Weapons Convention to guide the international community toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons (the core Call that you have endorsed remains, although the introductory paragraph has been adjusted to reflect current circumstances – see Appendix 1).

One truth is inescapable: nuclear disarmament has not become easier-quite the reverse. For this precise reason, it has become even more urgent.

2. Because our collective pursuit of nuclear disarmament is both daunting and urgent, our CNWC initiative is organized for persistence. Our effort has always been modestly funded, but steady and ongoing – and many of you have responded generously to our occasional requests for support for particular events. We are especially grateful we have now been awarded a three-year operating grant by The Simons Foundation of Vancouver, which has enabled us to hire a part-time support staff person to maintain the still growing list of persons joining our Call and to assist us in communications with government and in organizing events. Special events will continue to require additional funding.

CNWC is structured as a Project of the Canadian Pugwash Group; we are not a separate organization. We therefore operate within the Pugwash mandate and program (linked to International Pugwash which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995), and all of our financial arrangements and transaction are managed by Canadian Pugwash.

Our Steering Committee is made up of Murray Thomson, Douglas Roche, David Silcox, Ernie Regehr, Bev DeLong, Adele Buckley, and Cesar Jaramillo. We have followed the

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custom of having a rotating Chair, Debbie Grisdale having most recently served in that position, with Ernie Regehr now serving as the Chair.

We are also served by an Advisory Panel of 25 persons. This group of distinguished Canadians (listed in Appendix 2) is available to provide counsel and advice, and to collaborate with us in pursuit of our common objective.

3. In November 2017 we wrote a detailed letter to the Prime Minister, making the point that the UN-negotiated Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, while not meeting the requirements for a comprehensive convention, is a significant step in the right direction. We urged Canada to sign and ratify the new treaty. We also encouraged Canada to become a leader within NATO in seeking the denuclearization of the Alliance and urging it into conformity with the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

Some 30 of you, a group broadly representative of the thousand plus Canadians who have endorsed the Call for the start of negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention, signed the letter. The response from the Government has been discouraging. Canadian representatives, at international nuclear disarmament forums like the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conferences, continue to insist that Canadian security relies on nuclear deterrence.

As we reminded the Prime Minister:

The elimination of all nuclear weapons, and an end to the military doctrine of nuclear deterrence, is an objective that Canada has long shared with the international community, knowing that the use of even one of the 15,000 nuclear weapons still in existence would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. The tenacity with which nuclear weapon states seek to retain and even “modernize” weapons whose use would be in direct violation of international humanitarian law, makes a mockery of the solemn commitments they made and legal obligations they assumed under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Canada must take extreme care not to aid them in their abdication of responsibility.

4. Finally, we will of course be continuing our non-partisan efforts to press the Federal Government to act in urgent support of nuclear disarmament, not only because of

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Canada's historic support for it, but because today's nuclear arsenals are an existential threat to our security and the planet itself.

We continue to be inspired by your commitment and support and by the worldwide movement that seeks to pull the planet back from the brink of nuclear destruction. We remain committed to taking small but persistent steps in support of bold Canadian action for disarmament – the seminars that delve into particular elements of the nuclear weapons challenge, the letters to the Prime Minister that argue for effective national action, and the sessions with Parliamentarians to inform them on nuclear issues and to urge them to speak in their respective caucuses in support of bolder disarmament measures and initiatives.

On October 1 we will join other organizations in an Ottawa seminar that will examine dangerous trends in US and NATO nuclear postures and policies. That event will also explore ways to support nongovernmental organizations in their efforts to offer nonpartisan background information and policy proposals to interested candidates for election.

On behalf of the CNWC Steering Committee I want to assure you of our continued attention to nuclear disarmament imperatives and opportunities. We are honoured and challenged by your commitment to disarmament. We interpret your Call for a Nuclear Weapons Convention as a strong mandate to continue the pressure on Canadian legislators and policy makers to act boldly and diligently in support of nuclear disarmament.

We would be delighted to hear from you and welcome any comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

Sincerely,



Ernie Regehr, O.C.
Chair, CNWC Steering Committee

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Appendix 1

A Call for Canadian Action on Nuclear Disarmament

The United Nations General Assembly's first resolution (January 24, 1946) called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national armaments. That remains the formal objective of the international community, but it has not prevented a monumental nuclear arms race, the legacy of which is dangerously present in the almost 15,000 nuclear weapons that remain in national armaments, some 1,800 of which are on high alert and capable of being fired on 15 minutes' notice. In 2017 the UN General Assembly adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which opened for signature on 20 September 2017. It marks a significant milestone in the pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons and Canada should sign it as a matter of urgency. This nuclear prohibition treaty reinforces the need for a comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention through which to codify the agreements, regulations, institutional arrangements, and verification measures essential to accomplishing the prohibition and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons.

Accordingly, we call on all member states of the United Nations – including Canada – to endorse, and begin negotiations for, a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

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Appendix 2

Members of the CNWC Advisory Panel

Carolyn Acker, CM, Toronto, ON
Bruce Aikenhead, OC, Salmon Arm, BC
Christopher Barnes, CM, Victoria, BC
Gerry Barr, CM, Antigonish, NS
Michel Bastarache, CC, Ottawa, ON
Tony Belcourt, OC, Ottawa, ON
Paul Copeland, CM, Toronto, ON
Gisèle Côté-Harper, OC, Quebec, QC
Nigel Fisher, OC, New York City
Margaret Hilson, OC, Vancouver, BC
Dan Ish, OC, Saskatoon, SK
Pierre Jeannot, OC, Montreal, QC
Bruce Kidd, OC, Toronto, ON
Patrick Lane, OC, Victoria, BC
Margaret MacMillan, CC, London, UK
Elizabeth May, OC, Saanich, BC
Audrey McLaughlin, OC, Whitehorse, YT
Alex Neve, OC, Ottawa, ON
Landon Pearson, OC, Ottawa, ON
Nancy Ruth, CM, Toronto, ON
Jennifer Simons, CM, Vancouver, BC.
Gérard Snow, CM, Moncton, NB
Setsuko Thurlow, OC, Toronto, ON
Jean Vanier, CC, Trosly-Breuil, France
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