



**TOWARDS A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE WORLD:
THE CONTRIBUTION OF PARLIAMENTS**

**Background paper submitted by
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1. The existence of nuclear weapons and their possible threat or use is no doubt one of the main dangers threatening the planet today and in the future. One of the IPU's priorities should therefore be to fight for the total elimination and permanent prohibition of such weapons, as the sole and absolute means of preventing the disappearance of the human race.
2. Under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the States Parties undertake to pursue negotiations in order to achieve general and complete nuclear disarmament. The NPT thus complies with the first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, which, as early as 24 January 1946, called for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction".
3. The Declaration adopted by the Tenth Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament emphasized the following: "Mankind today is confronted with an unprecedented threat of self-extinction arising from the massive and competitive accumulation of the most destructive weapons ever produced. Existing arsenals of nuclear weapons alone are more than sufficient to destroy all life on Earth."¹
4. This remains a reality today and, unfortunately, very little progress has been made towards achieving nuclear disarmament. Despite the end of the Cold War, humankind continues to face the serious risk of being annihilated by the more than 19,000 nuclear weapons in existence, 2,000 of which are ready to be used immediately.
5. The use of even a negligible part of the existing nuclear arsenal would bring about a nuclear winter, with catastrophic consequences for our planet. The most recent studies of the nuclear winter hypothesis show that not only were the ideas prevailing in the 1980s correct, the effects of the use of such weapons will last for at least 10 years, a period much longer than originally believed.
6. It is truly disappointing that the strategic defence doctrines of nuclear-weapon-possessing States justify the use of these weapons. It is equally disappointing that the strategic defence and security concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is based on the use or threat of nuclear weapons and endorses unjustifiable concepts related to international security based on the promotion and establishment of military and political alliances predicated on nuclear deterrence.

¹ Official documents: Tenth Special Session. Supplement 4 (A/S-10/4).

7. This is not the first time the IPU has considered the issue. The 120th IPU Assembly (Addis Ababa, April 2009) adopted a resolution recommending that parliaments take steps to play an increasingly active role and urge governments to meet their commitments, mobilize public opinion and contribute to progress towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The 125th IPU Assembly (Bern, October 2011) included a panel discussion on Nuclear Weapons: The Road to Zero. In 2012, the IPU published a handbook entitled Supporting Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, a comprehensive overview of invaluable information on the subject.

8. We must continue this struggle with all the strength we can muster. Parliamentary action worldwide should aim to eliminate the concept of "nuclear deterrence" once and for all, since it encourages the perpetual possession of nuclear weapons and justifies the use of huge sums to modernize nuclear arsenals, funds that could be invested to solve the most pressing problems facing the world's population, such as hunger, poverty and unhealthy living conditions.

9. In the last 10 years, military spending has skyrocketed by more than 49 per cent, to US\$ 1.74 trillion. The resources currently being invested in the manufacture of weapons could be used instead to fight the extreme poverty suffered by 1.4 billion people worldwide, to provide food for the more than one billion people who go hungry every day, to prevent the death of 7 million children who die every year of hunger and preventable diseases, or to teach 775 million illiterate adults to read and write.

10. The humanitarian dimension of the use of weapons of mass destruction is an issue that should be more thoroughly addressed by the international community.

11. Article VI of the NPT establishes that each State Party is to pursue negotiations on efficient measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to nuclear disarmament, and on a general and complete disarmament treaty under strict and effective international control.

12. Parliaments, governments and civil society should use every means possible to reiterate the urgent need for nuclear-weapon States to comply with the commitments entered into under Action 5 of the plan of action on nuclear disarmament adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Specifically, nuclear-weapon States committed to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, inter alia by:

- (a) rapidly moving towards an overall reduction in the global stockpile of all kinds of nuclear weapons;
- (b) addressing the question of all nuclear weapons, regardless of their type or location, as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process;
- (c) further diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies;
- (d) discussing policies that could prevent the use of nuclear weapons and eventually lead to their elimination, lessen the danger of nuclear war and contribute to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament;

- (e) considering the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security;
- (f) reducing the risk of accidental use of nuclear weapons;
- (g) further enhancing transparency and increasing mutual confidence.

13. Parliamentarians from all countries must speak out against the inflexible stand adopted by some nuclear-weapon States, which has prevented the Conference on Disarmament from establishing a special committee on nuclear disarmament.

14. The IPU and all parliaments must do everything they can to ensure that, pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, all nuclear-weapon-possessing States guarantee to non-nuclear-weapon-possessing States, by urgently adopting a universal, unconditional and legally binding instrument on security guarantees, that they will not use or threaten to use those weapons.

15. The IPU must demand that the three pillars of the NPT – disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy – be strictly observed without discrimination or double standards.

16. Article IV of the NPT sets out the inalienable right of all States Parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination. Questioning the development of programmes for the peaceful use of nuclear energy not only contravenes the spirit and letter of the NPT, it is also an obstacle to full and effective compliance with the mandate entrusted to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

17. All parliamentarians should support the adoption of concrete measures to eliminate improper restrictions on or limitations to the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the export of material, equipment and technology to developing countries for peaceful purposes. They should respect the options chosen and decisions made by each State regarding the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. They should support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different countries or regions of the world, as part of the effort towards nuclear non-proliferation and in order to meet the goal of nuclear disarmament.

18. It is important to support the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, as proposed by an overwhelming majority of the region's countries, in United Nations Security Council resolutions 487 (1981) and 687 (1991), and in other resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by consensus. The creation of this zone, in addition to making an important contribution towards the achievement of nuclear disarmament, would be a transcendental step in the Middle East peace process. Israel, which is the only country in the region that is not party to the NPT and which has never declared its intention to become one, should give up possession of nuclear weapons and submit all its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards system, in conformity with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), in order to comply, without delay or preconditions, with the just demands of the international community.

19. Acting on an initiative promoted by Cuba and endorsed by the member countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 67/60 in December 2012 convening the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament on 26 September 2013 in New York.

20. The 129th IPU Assembly (Geneva, 2013) will consider the outcome of the High-level Meeting and spearhead the determined ongoing efforts of parliaments and parliamentarians to achieve a treaty that could lead to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, allowing humankind to live in a world of peace and guaranteeing its continued existence.