

“Towards a Nuclear Weapon Free World: Challenges and Opportunities for Canada”
Remarks by Ambassador (ret) Paul Meyer to the meeting of Parliamentarians for
Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament, May 13, 2014, Ottawa

The goal of a nuclear weapon free world has long been embraced by Canadians. It was implicit one might say in the early decision of the Canadian government to forgo acquiring atomic weapons despite its role in their development during WWII. This goal animated the policies of Canadian leaders as diverse as John Diefenbaker and Pierre Elliott Trudeau. And since the issuance of NATO’s Strategic Concept in 2010 it has also been the official aim of the Alliance to which we belong.

Yet as I hardly need to point out to this audience: articulating a goal and devising an effective strategy for realizing it are two very different steps. As a former career diplomat, I have a professional disposition towards developing practical strategies to achieve concrete results. This is not always easy in the realm of nuclear weapons, where the chief cards are held by only a few parties and genuine progress can be hard to measure. However as some sage has remarked a vision that is divorced from a strategy and the resources to carry it out is more a hallucination.

Canada is well placed I believe to play a leading role in the global effort to ensure nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. This will mean in part reviving the political and diplomatic effort that characterized earlier periods, such as during the late 1990s when SCFAIT produced a major study on Canada and the Nuclear Challenge and which elicited a comprehensive response from the Government that laid out a strategy for advancing our nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament goals.

Much of that strategy was premised on the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and the regime based on it, remaining the solid, core foundation for international security. The NPT has however been under major strain for several years now. It has been challenged by clandestine nuclear programs in member states such as Iraq, Libya, Syria and seemingly Iran, outright defection as per North Korea, abdication of the goal of universalization by states keen to strike nuclear deals with non-NPT members, and the failure of its NWS to honour many of their specific commitments for nuclear disarmament. This central treaty has also continued to suffer from its “institutional deficit” and lack of supporting infrastructure.

If Canada and other NPT member states are going to continue to benefit from the relative nuclear order the treaty represents, they will need to become much more active in its defence. The following is a short list of some of the steps that Canadian leaders, officials and parliamentarians can take to progress the nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament goals we espouse.

1. The Canadian government can, in accordance with the unanimous Parliamentary motion of December 2010, devise and launch a major diplomatic initiative to support our nuclear objectives.

2. Canada can become even more engaged in the 12 nation grouping of non-nuclear weapon states called the Nonproliferation and Disarmament Initiative and galvanize that grouping to press fellow NPT members to greater efforts to reinforce the treaty.
3. Canada can leverage its current chairing of the UN GGE on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) to press for the launch of actual negotiations in a forum not subject to the veto of spoiler states.
4. Canada can align itself with the majority of states which, in line with the NPT 2010 Review Conference outcome, are stressing the humanitarian imperative for nuclear disarmament and champion actual measures of prevention, such as de-alerting those US and Russian deployed nuclear forces maintained on high alert status.
5. Canada could revive its lamented verification research program and help develop the verification solutions to contemporary arms control and disarmament problems.
6. Canada could resume its support for having the NPT parties adopt accountability mechanisms, such as empowered annual meetings and systematic reporting that would strengthen the authority and effectiveness of the treaty.
7. Canada, in cooperation with like-minded states, could devise a diplomatic strategy for getting the remaining hold-outs to agree to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) – a key piece of unfinished business 18 years after this treaty was open for signature.
8. Canada, in concert with allies, can work to wean NATO off its attachment to nuclear deterrence and enhance the political and conventional military capabilities that the Alliance requires in contemporary conditions.
9. Canada could re-invigorate its dormant leadership position on outer space security in recognition of the close interrelationship between issues of space weaponization, missile defences and the potential for nuclear disarmament.
10. And last but not least, Parliament can re-engage on this subject matter, by reviving the lapsed practice of holding annual sessions with Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament and arranging for meetings of the parliamentary committees responsible for foreign affairs and defence that would be devoted to the topic of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. Globally, Canadian parliamentarians can agitate for implementation of the resolution "Towards a Nuclear Weapons Free World" that was adopted by consensus at the 130th IPU Assembly in March 2014.

These are ten practical suggestions for Canada to consider taking action on. However appealing it is to pay lip service to the aim of a world without nuclear weapons it will take tangible measures if we are to actually progress towards it. Thank you

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