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Nuclear Disarmament Groups Worldwide Welcome Obama Pledge to Take Nuke Weapons Off Alert

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- **Abolition 2000 Global Council,**
- **People For Nuclear Disarmament - Nuclear Flashpoints Project, Sydney, Australia**
- **International Peace Bureau**
- **Association of World Citizens, San Francisco**
- **Peaceworkers San Francisco**
- **Nuclear Age Peace Foundation**
- **Marrickville Peace Group**
- **Peace Organisation of Australia**
- **Disarmament and Security Center, Christchurch, New Zealand**
- **Physicians for Social Responsibility, Kenya**
- **World Court Project, United Kingdom**
- **Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND-UK)**
- **Abolition 2000 UK**
- **British-American Security Council (BASIC), London & Washington**
- **International Association of Peace Messengers Cities**
- **Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire (France)**
- **American Friends Service Committee**
- **Citizens Nuclear Information Centre Tokyo**

Nuclear Disarmament groups world-wide have welcomed President -Elect Obama's pledge to work with Russia to take nuclear weapons off high alert. They are calling on Obama to fulfil his campaign promise to do so. Nuclear Disarmament groups have greeted President-Elect Obama's nuclear weapons policies with a good deal of hope. This particular one is vital for the safety of the whole world.

A resolution passed at the end of October in the United Nations General Assembly First Committee by 134 votes to 3, at the end of October, calls on the US and Russia to lower the operational readiness of its nuclear weapons systems. The US and Russia commenced talks on the successor to the START nuclear arms limitation treaty Tuesday in Geneva. The START successor talks will provide a potential opportunity to talk with Russia about this and other nuclear arms reduction measures.

The lowering of nuclear weapons operational readiness has been urged for over a decade by a series of high - level commissions, and most recently has been urged as a first step toward nuclear disarmament by Kissinger, Nunn, Shultz and Perry. Obama himself in a recent interview with the Arms Control Today , said that the operating status of nuclear weapons systems should be lowered.

According to disarmament groups:

"When Barack Obama takes office as President on 20 Jan, one of the less agreeable - but apocalyptically significant - perks of the office that he will discover is that he must be at all times within sight of a CIA agent who is handcuffed to a large black briefcase with an aerial. This is the nuclear briefcase, which he will inherit from George Bush. With it he can now launch up to 2000 nuclear warheads, basically within two minutes, ending civilisation and much else."

"There are a depressingly large number of occasions on which the launch of large numbers of nuclear warheads has been minutes away as a result of miscalculation, computer error, system failure or just plain panic. Each year that we maintain large numbers of missiles on quick - launch status, we play Russian or American Roulette with everyone

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and everything."

"Taking nuclear missiles off alert as President-Elect Obama has said he will, is an essential step toward nuclear disarmament and is the single step that will do most to make the world a safer place. It cannot happen soon enough."

The following quote is from Obama policy statement:

'Obama Will Work with Russia to Take Nuclear Weapons off Hair-Trigger Alert:

'The United States and Russia have thousands of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert. Barack Obama and Joe Biden believe that we should take our nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert - something that George W. Bush promised to do when he was campaigning for president in 2000.

'Maintaining this Cold War stance today is unnecessary and increases the risk of an accidental or unauthorised nuclear launch. As president, Barack Obama and Joe Biden will work with Russia to find common ground and bring significantly more weapons off hair-trigger alert.'

"President Obama should implement this policy commitment as a matter of the highest priority."

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- Bob Rigg, former Chair, NZ National Consultative Committee on Disarmament (NCCD)
- Hideyuki Ban, Co-Director, Citizens' Nuclear Information Center (Tokyo)

Following is the text of the resolution that passed the United Nations General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security by 134 yes votes to 3 no votes, with 32 abstentions:

Sixty-third session

First Committee

Agenda item 89

General and complete disarmament

Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Sweden and Switzerland: draft resolution

Decreasing the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems

The General Assembly,

- Recalling its resolution 62/36 of 5 December 2007,

- Recalling that the maintenance of nuclear weapons on high alert was a feature of cold war nuclear postures, and welcoming the increased confidence and transparency since the cessation of the cold war,

- Concerned that, notwithstanding the end of the cold war, several thousand nuclear weapons remain on high alert, ready to be launched within minutes,

- Noting the increased engagement in multilateral disarmament forums in support of further reductions to the operational status of nuclear weapons systems,

- Recognizing that the maintenance of nuclear weapons systems at a high level of readiness increases the risk of the use of such weapons, including the unintentional or accidental use, which would have catastrophic consequences,

- Also recognizing that reductions in deployments and the lowering of operational status contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as to the process of nuclear disarmament, through the enhancement of confidence-building and transparency measures and a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies,

- Welcoming bilateral initiatives, such as the proposed United States/Russian Federation Joint Centre for the Exchange of Data from Early Warning Systems and Notification of Missile Launches, which can play a central role in operational status reduction processes,

- Also welcoming the steps taken by some States to reduce the operational status of their nuclear weapons systems, including de-targeting initiatives and increasing the amount of preparation time required for deployment,

1. Calls for further practical steps to be taken to decrease the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, with a view to ensuring that all nuclear weapons are removed from high alert status;

2. Urges States to update the General Assembly on progress made in the implementation of the present resolution;

3. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

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