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Abolishing Nukes

Letter to President Obama

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Dear Mr President,

Our organisation, ACDN (Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire), sends you sincere congratulations and hearty thanks for the undertaking you have made, on behalf of the USA, to work without pause or delay for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

On this issue, your speech in Prague on 5 April 2009 will mark a historic step along the only path that humankind can take to avoid nuclear self-desttruction.

We rejoice to see the President of the USA adopting an objective which we have been pursuing with conviction since ACDN was established in 1996 - and even since 1986 when Mikhail Gorbachev, then the Soviet leader, launched his « January Proposal » for eliminating all nuclear weapons by 2000. The credit for sketching this utopian vision goes therefore to Gorbachev; the task of making it come true falls and you and your peers; and the role of supporting you in this work for collective survival belongs to us and all the « abolitionists » of the globe.

The process of moving to a nuclear-free world will certainly not be simple. It implies a parallel effort to find sustainable solutions to the regional conflicts in which nuclear powers are implicated, and to set up a genuine international security system. But it could all happen quickly, once the political will to eliminate nuclear weapons is shared by the group of leaders of all nuclear-armed states (both signatories and non-signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty). In this regard, a decisive factor could be pressure from ordinary people. It would be good if this pressure were exerted between now and the NPT Review Conference in 2010.

Assistance is likely to be given by the approximately 2800 cities worldwide that are grouped in the « Mayors for Peace » campaign. Our local city, Saintes (in Western France) is contributing. It is the only city in France to belong to both abolitionist networks : « Abolition 2000 » and « Mayors for Peace ». A symbolic « Nuclear Disarmament Flame » was lit here in 2001. Saintes regularly hosts international gatherings for disarmament - nuclear, biological and chemical.

We think that France must join without delay in the process that you initiated in Prague and announced the previous day in Strasbourg. We think that the people of France, who have never been consulted, have a deep desire for nuclear disarmament, because the French have no vocation (no more than any other nation) for being accomplices or victims of an unpardonable crime against humanity. If President Sarkozy suspects otherwise, we are inviting him to organise a referendum on this vital question,.

On the specific and essential issue of nuclear abolition, we will support the actions of the President of the USA - and actions of any Head of State or Head of Government who desires with sincerity and determination to abolish nuclear weapons. We call on all the world's citizens to do likewise.

Yours respectfully,

for ACDN,

Jean-Marie Matagne, President

"Sud Ouest", Thursday 9 April 2009

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Progress in the right direction, but ...

NUCLEAR ISSUES. Jean-Marie Matagne is not in total agreement with Barack Obama's position.

The President of ACDN, Jean-Marie Matagne, who lives in Saintes, has analysed all the terms of the speech which Barack Obama gave last Sunday in Prague. In it the new US President reaffirmed his wish for nuclear disarmament, a theme he had already touched on during the election campaign. One of his notable declarations is this:
"I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons." He went on to announce *"concrete steps toward a world without nuclear weapons".*

In the view of Jean-Marie Matagne, these statements from the US President represent progress in the right direction. *"But, at the same time, Barack Obama is in favour of maintaining NATO, is developing an anti-missile shield (which is a real provocation towards Russia) and is urging European countries to increase their military budgets and send even more troops to Afghanistan".*

For these reasons, Jean-Marie Matagne is not in total agreement with the US policies, and he speaks even of total disagreement on the development of civilian nuclear technology, as advocated by both the USA and France. He points out that: *"Developing civilian nuclear technology heightens the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation".*

Furthermore, he regrets that in France neither the media nor public opinion show much interest in this question, which is always a sensitive one. *"Today, France's nuclear fire-power is great enough to wipe 700 to 900 million people from off the face of the earth. And our arsenal accounts for only 1.5 % of all the nuclear weapons in service around the globe."*

Photo Dominique Pariès : Jean-Marie Matagne, President of ACDN.

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