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Two letters to the French President and a request for a referendum to commit France to participating in the abolition of nuclear weapons

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Press release, 26 February 2013

Today 26 February, President Hollande is receiving two group letters calling on him to ensure that France participates in the abolition of nuclear weapons.

One was signed by 113 leaders of political, NGO and religious groups in France and abroad. They stress that a nuclear war would make the earth unlivable, and they judge as intolerable the current situation which flies in the face of human life, Human Rights, international law, the French constitution, good sense and democracy. They ask that the following question - which is already part of the international agenda for 2013 - be put to the French people in a referendum: "Do you agree that France should participate with the other states concerned in the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, under mutual international control that is strict and effective?"

Alongside personalities like Noam Chomsky and Stéphane Hessel, one sees among the signatories Nobel laureates, representatives of famous NGOs like the International Peace Bureau, the International Association of Peace Cities, the IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War), and Mayors for Peace, but also MP's from the socialist and ecologist parties, former ministers and bishops.

The EELV Party (Europe Ecologie - les Verts), well-represented among the signatories, has been asking its representatives in parliament and in government since June 2012 to work for the establishment of this referendum on the question formulated in this appeal.

The other letter comes from the ICAN-France collective, which groups 64 national organisations within the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. It asks the President to ensure that France participates in the forthcoming International Conference in Oslo on March 4 and 5. More than 120 countries, including 35 of France's European partners, are about to meet to discuss "the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons" - yet France's government has still not stated whether it will take part.

The signatory organisations say this: « You will understand, Monsieur le Président, that the option of our nation being absent cannot be contemplated. If France were not present, what a bad signal we would be sending to the world and particularly to the governments of the 184 nations which don't have atomic weapons and which are worried by the threat that the nine nuclear powers are brandishing over their populations every day.

« France cannot remain deaf to these appeals, cannot barricade herself off in a position of non-response which could be viewed as contempt towards other nations. And you cannot remain deaf either to the worries of the French people, who wonder how the government would handle an attack or accident resulting from atomic weaponry. »

ACDN (Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire), has co-signed these two letters, and calls on the journalists of France to draw them to the attention of a broad public.

ACDN also invites all our fellow-citizens to sign the LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC which is on-line at its site [http://www.acdn.net/>www.acdn.net]

PS:

ICAN - France
French Coordinating Office

Purpose : Open Letter asking for France to take part in the Oslo Conference on March 4 &5.

to Monsieur François Hollande
Président de la République

Paris, 26 February 2013

Monsieur le Président,

Our nation France has been invited along with all the nations on earth to an international conference in Oslo on March 4 & 5, in order to discuss "the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons". This unprecedented conference ensued from the declarations of a growing number of states about this topical subject at the May 2010 conference which reviewed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, at the first preparatory committee for the Review Conference of 2015, and at the UN General Assembly's First Committee in 2012.

The 64 organisations of the French collective of ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) are concerned that France must attend this conference and play a dynamic role by committing to an international process aiming to ban all atomic weapons.

However, as of today, it seems that our nation has not yet responded positively to the Norwegian government's invitation, despite the announced participation of over 120 countries, 35 of which are European partners of ours.

You will understand, Monsieur le Président, that the option of our nation being absent cannot be contemplated. If France were not present, what a bad signal we would be sending to the world - and particularly to the governments of the 184 nations which don't have atomic weapons and which are worried by the threat that the nine nuclear powers are brandishing over their populations every day.

France cannot remain deaf to these appeals, cannot barricade herself off in a position of non-response which could be viewed as contempt towards other nations. And you cannot remain deaf either to the worries of the French people, who wonder how the government would handle an attack or accident resulting from atomic weaponry.

Many studies show that nobody is safe from the consequences of the deliberate or accidental use of nuclear weapons. This is no less true for the 65 million French citizens that your government is responsible for. Any State which envisages the making of nuclear strikes, as France does, must also envisage the possibility of being targeted by enemy strikes. The "deterrence doctrine" must indeed consider the case of possible failure, and so of nuclear retaliation against us. Therefore the NGOs of the ICAN campaign wish to know what measures are in place in each of France's départements (counties) to ensure the safety of our citizens in such a situation. The Oslo conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is expected to highlight just how unacceptable the risks are. We consider that cooperation and negotiation among states must be developed in order to abolish nuclear arms in the interests of all populations.

Like you we reject the emergence of any new nuclear-armed state. But we do not forget that the greatest dangers today come from the estimated 20 000 existing nuclear warheads, 2000 of which are on high alert, rather than from the hypothetical new atomic bombs of tomorrow. That is why we are appealing to all states to behave responsibly, and first of all to the nuclear states of which France is unfortunately one. The security which the world's people need today is global security. That is why most states have renounced the nuclear threat. Today our nation has everything to gain by committing herself to the road of abolition in order to prevent any urge for others to acquire atomic arms. Arguing forever that such weapons are essential to France's security is an ongoing and permanent incitement to proliferation.

We expect a firm commitment by France on this matter, and we ask you to confirm immediately that our nation will participate in the Oslo Conference. Some twenty French citizens who are about to participate in the Civil Society Conference preceding that state conference, are able and willing to meet with the official French delegation.

In hope of that result, I ask you, Monsieur le Président, to accept our respectful greetings,

Pierre Villar, Coordinator of the ICAN - France collective

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The ICAN France collective is composed of 64 national organisations.

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