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9th NPT Review Conference

No Reply to the Letter we sent to Laurent Fabius on the Position of France

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The 9th Review Conference for the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) ended on 22 May 2015 without any agreement on a common declaration.

The chief obstacle encountered by the official delegations to this quinquennial conference was the huge gap between the wishes - or rather the ill-will - of the Nuclear Weapons States (NWS), supported by their close allies, and the expectations of most of the Non-Nuclear Weapons States (NNWS) for tangible nuclear disarmament measures.

Added to that was the paradoxical and even improbable interference of Israel, a State which is not an NPT member but which was admitted to the Conference as an observer, for the first time and as a favour. Israel practises a so-called "ambiguity policy", refusing to admit that it is nuclear-armed, despite everyone being sure that it is. Not being an NPT signatory, or officially either a NWS or a NNWS, Israel had no right to speak. Yet, consulted by the USA about the last version of the final declaration, the Israelis let it be known that they opposed it because the declaration was again calling for a Conference about a Middle East without Weapons of Mass Destruction.

That objective, initiated by Egypt, goes back to Resolution 687 of the UN Security Council, dated 3 April 1991. In 1995, at the sixth NPT Review Conference, which was to rule on the fate of the NPT after 25 years since its entry into force, thanks to this objective, it had been possible to rally the Arab states for the indefinite prorogation of the NPT. This was confirmed again at the 2010 Conference, which decided that a conference of the parties concerned would take part before the end of 2012. But this was postponed *sine die*, chiefly because Israel refused to take part.

In 2015 again the USA lined up with the Israel's opinion, followed by the UK and Canada, who then refused to sign the agreement protocol and who thereby buried it, since consensus was required.

France, for her part, "supports the project of a Middle East Zone free from weapons of mass destruction and their vectors". So she did not follow the USA.

But nor did France unblock the situation during the earlier phases of the Conference - something she could perhaps have done through a significant gesture for disarmament. This gesture was suggested to the French delegation on May 1st by ACDN's President - as shown by the letter below, which was sent to Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius on May 18, four days before the conference ended.

One month later, Fabius has still not replied. He probably won't. And is that surprising, from a minister for whom a State can commit 'mass crimes' provided it is like France a permanent member of the Security Council" and considers itself threatened in its "vital interests"?

The conclusion is inescapable: France, no more than the other NWS in the NPT, does not intend to renounce her nuclear weapons. They all assure us, hands on hearts, that they want "a world without nuclear weapons". But failing some kind of overriding pressure, they will not willingly respect the undertaking they made, in Article VI of the Treaty, to negotiate at an early date for the complete elimination of their nuclear weapons.

How can they be forced to do so? The 107 non-nuclear states who, during the conference, stated their support for the "Austrian Pledge" re-named the "Humanitarian Pledge" now glimpse a way forward: to elaborate a nuclear weapons ban treaty which, even without signatures by the NWS, will turn them into outlaw nations, rogue nations, pariahs of humanity. International Law, which the NWS have hitherto flouted shamelessly, will thereby be reinforced:

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in the chain of treaties and conventions for banning "weapons of mass destruction" (i.e. weapons for massacres, for crimes against humanity), there was one big link missing, the nuclear one. The day will come more or less soon when that link will be in place. The NWS will see themselves surrounded by a judicial, moral and political chain.

However, to obtain this result, the people of the non-nuclear states will have to support their governments strongly, will have to push them. And the peoples of the nuclear states also will have to apply pressure. If they have a constitutional provision for referenda on major questions, as France does, the people will have to seize this tool.

Yes or no, citizens, do you want France to participate with the other states concerned in the total elimination of nuclear weapons, under strict, effective, mutual and international control?

If the answer is no, you just have to do nothing. The government will undertake, denying it all the while, to preserve the status quo - or more precisely to aggravate it by "vertical proliferation" - the continuous modernisation of our weapons.

If the answer is yes, then call out, demand the referendum that will enable you to impel France's participation in abolishing nuclear weapons, by imposing this objective on a ruling elite which is largely irresponsible, having been anaesthetised or corrupted by the nuclear lobby whose policies are leading us straight towards a civil or military catastrophe.

ACDN

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LETTER TO LAURENT FABIUS

- Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire (ACDN)
- 31 Rue du Cormier
- 17100 Saintes

Saintes, 18 May 2015

- Monsieur Laurent Fabius, Ministre des Affaires étrangères

Copies :

- S.E. Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel (...)
- MR Tierry P... et MM..., members of the French delegation at the NPT RevCon

Objet : Position of France at the 9th NPT Review Conference

Monsieur le Ministre,

In the name of ACDN, the association which I chair, I have attended the first week of the 9th NPT Review Conference, which opened at the UN in New York on 27 April and will end on 22 May. It seems, judging by the information we are getting, that the conference will reach no conclusion by way of a significant progress towards nuclear disarmament, nor even perhaps a common statement agreed by consensus between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear states.

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On April 30, Ambassador M. Jean-Hugues Simon-Michel, assisted notably by staff of the ministry's section on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, met a delegation of French citizens who had traveled to New York, at the initiative of the Mouvement de la Paix.

The following day, I was given the chance to meet M. Thierry Peyroux, of the section in question, as delegated by M. Simon-Michel. Despite disagreements between the official viewpoint and that of ACDN, I formulated a suggestion which M. Peyroux promised to pass on to the highest levels, i.e. to you as Minister and eventually to the President of France.

France, before the end of the NPT Review Conference, could announce that she would be ready to take part in negotiations between the nuclear-armed states with a view to working out a programme for the verified elimination of all nuclear weapons, as is required by Article VI of the NPT, on the condition that Russia accepts President Obama's offer to reduce the number of strategic nuclear warheads from 1570 - their current ceiling - to 1000 for each of the two partners in the new START Treaty.

That is the suggestion which must have been transmitted to you. I draw your attention to the fact that this announcement :

- would encourage the feeling that France is sincere when she declares that she « shares the objective of a world without nuclear weapons » ;
- would perhaps contribute to unblocking the current situation ;
- and would certainly be favourably greeted by the international community and especially by the non-nuclear states.

On 30 April and 1 May I submitted this idea to the senior diplomats H.E. Jorge Lomonaco of Mexico and Alexander Kmentt of Austria. Both of them assured me that they would appreciate such gesture on France's part and would see it as an important step in the right direction. As you know, Mexico and Austria are at the forefront of the growing number of countries that support the «Austrian Pledge» to work for a nuclear ban treaty which would fill the legal gap which separates the legal status of nuclear weapons from that of other weapons of mass destruction.

I would greatly appreciate, Monsieur le ministre, if you would indicate what decision France has taken on this matter, or, if there is still time, what initiative France intends to take before the end of the NPT conference.

Yours respectfully,

for ACDN,
Jean-Marie Matagne, President

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