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Nuclear issues, 25th April 2009 : 3 items of good news and 3 bad.

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On the eve of the 23rd anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster three items of good news come to hand for the future of the planet and the health of its inhabitants.

The first comes from Strasbourg: **the European Parliament on 24th April**, by a crushing majority (271 for, 38 against, 29 abstentions) **adopted a report** from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, known as the « Beer Report », **which recommends that the European Council should work for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by 2020**, proposing as specific instruments for achieving this objective the « Nuclear Weapons Convention model » and the « Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol » proposed by « Mayors for Peace », both supported by the global « Abolition 2000 » network. (See : [European Parliament recommends complete nuclear disarmament by 2020](#)) The date 2020, added by an amendment to the Beer Report, specifies a time-frame for the objective set by President Obama in his [5th April Prague speech](#). (See [Letter to President Obama](#))

The second piece of good news comes from Rome, where (again on 24 April) the Russian and US negotiators emerged from a day of discussions showing great optimism about the success of the forthcoming US-Russian talks aimed at replacing the START Treaty by the end of this year with a new treaty which would make greater bilateral reductions in strategic nuclear weapons (See : [US-Russia talks on nuclear reduction begin](#)).

The third item is from Belgium, where the Parliament recently adopted unanimously a bill banning the making, use, transfer and stockpiling of all armaments containing depleted uranium, and the law will come into effect on 21st June. The uranium dust resulting from the use of such weapons, notably in Iraq, in the Balkans, in Afghanistan, and perhaps recently in Gaza, is the source of a public health catastrophe. Belgium is the first country to ban them. One can hope for a knock-on effect.

But the resistance being mounted by certain authorities darkens the outlook - three bad items.

In Paris, the French President Sarkozy maintains his attachment to the nuclear strike force, viewing it as « the nation's life-assurance », he says nothing about depleted uranium weapons in France, and keeps trying to export everywhere nuclear technology described as « civilian », paying no heed to the immense risks it involves, illustrated by Chernobyl and aggravated by the risks of proliferation.

In Geneva the World Health Organization (WHO) remains tied hand and foot to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) through a 1959 agreement that forces it to be silent and untruthful about the dangers of radioactivity. Thus the WHO still attributes less than 60 deaths to the Chernobyl accident, when dozens of international experts cited by Greenpeace in 2005 did blame it for almost 200,000 deaths.

Finally, in Gaza, three months after promising to investigate the use of radioactive weapons during the so-called Israeli « Cast Lead » operation, the IAEA still hasn't sent anyone to start doing so.

Knowing Planet Earth to be threatened by more than 25 000 totally useless nuclear weapons, by millions of tons of radioactive waste, and by 438 nuclear reactors that don't even produce 3% of the world's final energy consumption, **it is absurd to sit waiting for a new Hiroshima or a new Chernobyl before stepping out on the only sensible path forward: the path to [a Europe and a world without nuclear weapons or nuclear power-plants](#).**

ACDN calls on European electors to vote only for candidates who will undertake such a commitment.

Saintes, France, 25th April 2009

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More on this subject: See : [Obama and Medvedev on Nukes](#), By Alice Slater