

**2008 NPT PrepCom  
Geneva, Switzerland  
April 28 - May 9, 2008**

Report submitted by:  
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The second Preparatory Committee session for the 2010 NPT Review was a low-expectation event, with state delegations deciding almost from the beginning that they would make no substantive decisions or recommendations, but would use their time in Geneva to stake out their positions on the three pillars of the Treaty (disarmament, non-proliferation, and so-called peaceful uses of nuclear energy) and to explore possibilities for old and new groupings of states around issues of common concern. While this PrepCom was largely free of the procedural bickering and grandstanding that led to the failure of the 2005 Review and that blocked progress at the 2007 PrepCom in Vienna, the Chair, Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko of Ukraine, was nevertheless prevented from attaching his factual summary to the official report, and had to settle for the compromise of issuing it as a working paper.

As a result, the PrepCom report, as usual, was a bland recitation of organizational decisions, such as the dates and places of the next PrepCom and the Review conference; a list of participants; a superficial description of the plenary meetings held during the session; and a list of documents submitted by various states parties.

The factual summary [*quotes in italics below are from this document*], on the other hand, is a window onto a rich discussion about every aspect of the Treaty, underscoring broad areas of agreement about the mutual importance of disarmament and non-proliferation, especially among the non-nuclear-weapon states. [*Governmental statements, working papers, and other PrepCom documents are available at:* [www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/nptindex1.html](http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/nptindex1.html).]

As one would expect, all states parties gave at least lip service to the need for full compliance with all the provisions of the NPT, as well as the desire to make it universal (the Chair named India, Pakistan, and Israel in paragraph 7 of the summary, reflecting the widespread call for those states to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear-weapon states). Large numbers of states called for full compliance with Article VI; welcomed the reductions in arsenal sizes reported by

some of the nuclear weapon states; but expressed strong dissatisfaction that those reductions were not deeper, faster, and irreversible. *"It was stressed that the indefinite extension of the NPT did not imply the indefinite possession of nuclear arsenals....Concerns were also voiced about the increased role of nuclear weapons in some strategic and military doctrines, and the apparent lowering of the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons."* The modernization plans of nuclear weapon states also came up for repeated criticism. (This prompted the US delegation to complain that the US was the victim of "baseless charges" about its lack of compliance with Article VI.) Frequent calls were also made for the nuclear weapon states to reduce the operational status of their arsenals through de-alerting and de-targeting.

Formal discussion of the 13 Practical Steps that were part of the outcome of the 2000 NPT Review remained impossible, since the US under the Bush administration has refused to even acknowledge the commitments made then and at the 1995 Review and Extension conference. Nevertheless, the need to make progress on specific steps came up time and again, including entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the commencement of negotiations on a verifiable treaty on production of fissile materials, reductions in operational status, further reductions in non-strategic nuclear weapons, and support for nuclear weapon free zones. *"The abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the development of missile defence systems drew concern as adversely affecting strategic stability and having negative consequences on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation."*

The nuclear-weapon states, particularly the US and the UK, pressed their claims that preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons was the highest priority for Treaty compliance, that disarmament is made more difficult by concerns about proliferation, and that the modernization of their arsenals is actually a disarmament initiative (the US made this rather cynical argument explicitly about its Complex Transformation program). For the most part, the non-nuclear-weapon states rejected this perspective, insisting that equal importance be given to compliance with disarmament and non-proliferation obligations. *"Concern was expressed that grave proliferation challenges strained the NPT regime, eroding confidence in the compliance of all States parties with their obligations under the Treaty."*

Iran, the DPRK, and Syria were singled for criticism several times, and demands were made that they return to full, transparent compliance with their non-proliferation obligations. Iran rejected any suggestion that it was developing nuclear weapons covertly, insisted upon its right to pursue a nuclear energy program without interference, and openly chafed under what it considers discriminatory treatment provoked by the US and its allies. Syria, demanding a "right of reply" each time its name came up, denied any wrongdoing, and objected that "false allegations" about illegal nuclear activities were being made

without evidence. Although the DPRK has not taken its seat at the NPT since declaring its withdrawal from the Treaty in 2003, states parties *"noted the progress achieved under the 13 February 2007 initial actions and the shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities,"* welcomed the six-party talks, and called on the DPRK to return to the NPT in full compliance as a non-nuclear-weapon state.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the 2008 PrepCom was the ratcheting up of the rhetoric about the "inalienable right" of NPT member states, under Article IV, to nuclear energy. The principal nuclear energy supplier states—especially the US and Russia, but also Canada, Australia, France, and others—apparently have decided to use NPT gatherings as platforms for the aggressive promotion of uranium supply schemes, multinational fuel reprocessing programs, and global investments in nuclear power plant construction. Russia and the US each held briefings on their plans for multinational nuclear fuel consortia, including the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership, and the "inalienable right" to nuclear energy was a constant refrain by large numbers of member states throughout the PrepCom. While a number of states stressed the importance of nuclear safety and the need to address health and environmental concerns around uranium mines and other nuclear facilities, the call by NGOs for the phaseout of nuclear energy and a crash program to develop clean, safe, sustainable energy sources was largely ignored by the diplomats.

### **NGO Participation at the PrepCom**

The role of NGOs and their *"contributions...in promoting the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and in developing proposals on practical measures to achieve this vision"* was noted briefly in the final paragraph of the factual summary. Earlier in the working paper, the Chair actually made reference to the most important of these "practical measures," a nuclear weapons convention (par. 12).

IPPNW was one of more than 60 accredited NGOs at the PrepCom. Our delegation comprised Inga Blum (Germany), Martina Grosch (Sweden), Xanthe Hall (Germany), Ime John (Nigeria), John Loretz (Central Office, US), Ron McCoy (Malaysia), Wenjing Tao (Sweden), Ursula Volker (Germany), Liz Waterston (UK), Gunnar Westberg (Sweden), and Tim Wright (ICAN-Australia). Tilman Ruff, the chair of IPPNW's ICAN working group, was an official member of the Australian delegation.

On the afternoon of April 29 (the second day of the PrepCom), NGOs presented 15 papers during a three-hour formal session. The presentations ranged from an analysis of nuclear-weapon-state (non)compliance with Article VI and the dangers of current operational status, to the importance of gender balance and the role of mayors and other municipal leaders in promoting a nuclear-weapons-

free world. Gunnar Westberg read IPPNW's paper on the climate effects of regional nuclear war; John Loretz delivered a statement on the US-India deal endorsed by more than 130 experts and organizations from 23 countries. We received quite a bit of praise from delegates who did attend the presentation (fewer in total than we would have hoped), including the Chair, who told me that the NGO contributions showed a very high level of expertise in their content and professionalism in their delivery. [The IPPNW paper is appended to this report; the other NGO papers are available at: [www.reachingcriticawill.org/legal/npt/prepcom08/ngostatements.html](http://www.reachingcriticawill.org/legal/npt/prepcom08/ngostatements.html).]

On Wednesday morning, April 30, IPPNW organized a successful workshop on ICAN, in which activists from Australia, the UK, and France gave detailed reports about campaign goals and activities in their countries, with a number of participants from other countries providing information about ICAN launches and accomplishments in the discussion that followed. Tilman Ruff, Tim Wright, and other representatives of the international campaign described ICAN materials and resources, and focused on the primary campaign goal of gaining support for the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention among the public and policy makers. Meeting with diplomats, both formally and informally, to do just that was one of the principal tasks of IPPNW members in Geneva.

While at the PrepCom, we also participated as co-sponsors in a one-day conference on the concept of good faith and disarmament, organized by NGOs working on a project to return to the World Court for a new advisory opinion on whether the nuclear weapon states are in good faith compliance with their disarmament obligations. The keynote speaker at the conference was Judge Mohammed Bedjaoui, the President of the Court at the time of its historic 1996 advisory opinion, who spoke in public for the first time since that opinion was issued. Judge Bedjaoui offered an in-depth analysis of the Court's thinking and the reasons for its views. [His paper will be posted on [www.lcnp.org](http://www.lcnp.org) as soon as a transcript is available.]

Medical students from Sweden, Germany and Switzerland organized a "My Cup of Tea – Nuclear Weapon Free" event in downtown Geneva on May 1. Wearing their white coats and well supplied with cookies, tea bags, thermos flasks of hot water, and information, they talked with passers-by about the medical consequences of nuclear war and the urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons. Ursula Volker, who helped organize the event, reports that the students found a receptive audience, many of whom asked how they can play an active role in ICAN.

## **Overall Assessment**

At the diplomatic level, this PrepCom lived up to its modest expectations. Occasional flareups around the issues of Iran and Syria did not derail the agenda this time, and the delegations did seem to be engaging in serious and focused discussions about fundamental Treaty issues and forward-looking proposals. The ghost in the room was the US delegation, and while the diplomats refrain on principle from talking about such things, the fact that a new US administration will have been elected by the time of the 2009 PrepCom, offering a real prospect for progress, was clearly on everyone's minds. Other than the nuclear weapon states themselves, almost no one is in a mood to accept the reductions in nuclear arsenals achieved so far as enough, nor is there a willingness to shift the focus of the "compliance" discussion away from disarmament and onto non-proliferation in isolation. Nevertheless, references to a nuclear weapons convention were few and far between, with Costa Rica and Malaysia still standing largely alone in championing the MNWC. Our work is cut out for us in finding states who will be willing to support even substantive discussions about the Convention, let alone call for the commencement of negotiations, regardless of the context (i.e., NPT, CD, UNGA, special conference). The focus on nuclear energy as the linchpin of the NPT and as an "inalienable right" that must be protected and strengthened in any future disarmament and non-proliferation framework, is a serious problem that is going to complicate our abolition advocacy, whether or not we wish to take it on directly.

**The 2009 PrepCom will take place in New York from May 4-15.** We need to focus as much attention as possible during the next year on engaging with states whose voting record in the First Committee and UNGA suggests they *ought* to be more active proponents of a nuclear weapons convention.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Climate and Health Effects of Regional Nuclear War**

#### **Convenors**

*John Loretz, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*

*Ira Helfand, MD, IPPNW, Physicians for Social Responsibility-USA*

*Steven Starr, Physicians for Global Survival-Canada*

*John Hallam, Editor, Nuclear Flashpoints*

*Presenter: Gunnar Westberg, MD; former Co-President, IPPNW*

The prospect of a nuclear winter — a catastrophic global cooling caused by the release of smoke and soot from the explosion of thousands of nuclear weapons and resulting in the collapse of the Earth's life supporting ecosystems — contributed greatly to the realization by the US and the former Soviet Union that a nuclear war could not be won and must not be fought.

While that danger now seems remote, it has not disappeared. U.S.-Russian arms accords have reduced by two-thirds the total number of nuclear weapons in the world's arsenals since nuclear winter was first described in the 1980s. Nonetheless, there are still more than 25,000 nuclear weapons in the world, enough to precipitate nuclear winter several times over.

Until recently, however, there was an unexamined assumption that a smaller, regional nuclear war, while it would cause unacceptable millions of casualties and unprecedented local devastation, would not produce ecological effects at the global level. Those assumptions have been proven false in new research studies conducted by climate scientists who have concluded that a nuclear war involving no more than 100 Hiroshima-sized nuclear weapons — about 0.3% of the global nuclear arsenal — could have terrifying, long-lasting effects on the global climate.

In this presentation, we will summarize very briefly the findings of US scientists Richard B. Turco, O. B. Toon, Alan Robock, and their colleagues<sup>1,2,3</sup> as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Toon, Owen B., Richard P. Turco, Alan Robock, Charles Bardeen, Luke Oman, and Georgiy L. Stenchikov, 2007: Atmospheric effects and societal consequences of regional scale nuclear conflicts and acts of individual nuclear terrorism. *Atm. Chem. Phys.*, 7, 1973-2002.

<sup>2</sup> Robock, Alan, Luke Oman, Georgiy L. Stenchikov, Owen B. Toon, Charles Bardeen, and Richard P. Turco, 2007: Climatic consequences of regional nuclear conflicts. *Atm. Chem. Phys.*, 7, 2003-2012.

public health implications derived from their research by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. We urge you to read the full studies, and we would be happy to refer you to online sites where you can obtain them.

The studies looked at the consequences of a possible regional nuclear war in South Asia, using numbers of weapons currently estimated to exist in the combined arsenals of India and Pakistan. This scenario is only exemplary. In addition to the nine countries that already possess nuclear weapons, 32 own sufficient fissionable nuclear materials to construct them, placing several other regions of the world at risk of nuclear war on the scale described here should the non-proliferation regime unravel.

Population and economic activity in India and Pakistan are congregated in megacities, which probably would be targeted in a nuclear conflict. An examination of the likely outcome of a nuclear exchange in South Asia involving the 100 15-kt weapons available in the combined Indian and Pakistani arsenals shows that such an exchange could have devastating immediate effects, killing 20 million people, a number equal to half of all those killed worldwide during the six years of World War II. In addition, there would be tremendous economic consequences with the megacities exposed to atmospheric fallout likely abandoned indefinitely.

As horrible as these regional effects would be, however, they might well be dwarfed by the global climate consequences of this conflict.

Smoke and soot from urban firestorms caused by the multiple nuclear explosions — 1-5 million metric tons — would rise into the upper troposphere and, due to atmospheric heating, would subsequently be boosted deep into the stratosphere. The resulting soot cloud would block the sun leading to significant cooling and reductions in precipitation lasting for over a decade. Within 10 days following the explosions, there would be a drop in average surface temperature of 1.25° C. Over the following year, a 10% decline in average global rainfall and a large reduction in the Asian summer monsoon is predicted. Even 10 years out, there would be a persistent 0.5° C average surface cooling. In a matter of days, temperatures around the Earth would become colder than those experienced during the pre-industrial Little Ice Age (which occurred from approximately 1400 to 1850).

To make matters even worse, such amounts of smoke injected into the stratosphere would cause a huge reduction in the Earth's protective ozone. A study published in April by the National Academy of Sciences, using a similar nuclear war scenario involving 100 Hiroshima-size bombs, shows ozone losses

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<sup>3</sup> Helfand, I An assessment of the extent of projected global famine resulting from limited ,regional nuclear war, Royal Society of Medicine, October 3, 2007.

in excess of 20% globally, 25–45% at mid latitudes, and 50–70% at northern high latitudes persisting for five years, with substantial losses continuing for five additional years. The resulting increases in UV radiation would have serious consequences for human health.

The sudden climate changes predicted by these studies would have a significant impact on agricultural production. The growing season would be shortened by 10 to 20 days in many of the most important grain producing areas in the world which might completely eliminate crops that have insufficient time to reach maturity. Large quantities of food might also need to be destroyed and significant areas of crop land might need to be taken out of production because of radioactive contamination.

There are currently more than 800 million people in the world who are chronically malnourished and several hundred million more live in countries which are dependent on imported grain. Even a modest, sudden decline in agricultural production could trigger significant increases in the prices for basic foods and hoarding on a global scale, both of which would make food inaccessible to poor people in much of the world. While it is not possible to estimate the precise extent of the global famine that would follow a regional nuclear war, it seems reasonable to fear a total global death toll in the range of one billion from starvation alone. Famine on this scale would also lead to major epidemics of infectious diseases, and would create immense potential for war and civil conflict.

As of mid August of last year, global grain stocks were approximately 322 million tons with annual consumption at 2,098 million tons. Expressed as days of consumption world grain stocks are therefore approximately 49 days, lower than at any point in the last 50 years, and dramatically lower than the 100 to 120 days of consumption available in the 1980's and 1990's. These stocks would not provide any significant reserve in the event of a sharp decline in global production. In this setting we would expect to see much greater rises in grain prices worldwide. These price increases would put a crippling burden on whole countries which import large portions of their food supply and would make food unaffordable for hundreds of millions of individuals who are already malnourished precisely because of their inability to afford adequate food even at current world prices. In addition we would probably see hoarding on a global scale. In the event of a regional nuclear war, the grain exporting states would be faced with major crop losses and the prospect of bad harvests for the next several years. It is probable that they would refuse to export whatever grain surplus they might have, retaining it instead as a domestic reserve.

It is, of course, impossible to estimate with accuracy the full extent of the global famine that would follow a regional nuclear war. But it seems reasonable to conclude that few of the 800 million people who are already malnourished would

survive if their already substandard intake decreased by even 10% for a whole year. If the crop failures and resulting food shortages persisted for several years their fate would be sealed.

Two other issues need to be considered as well. First, the vast megacities of the developing world, crowded, and often lacking adequate sanitation in the best of times, would almost certainly see major outbreaks of infectious diseases; and illnesses such as plague, which have not been prevalent in recent years, might again become major health threats.

Second, an immense potential for war and civil conflict would be created by famine on this scale. Within nations where famine is widespread there would almost certainly be food riots, and competition for limited food resources might well exacerbate ethnic and regional animosities. Among nations, armed conflict seems highly likely as states dependent on imports adopt whatever means are at their disposal in an attempt to maintain access to food supplies.

It is likewise impossible to estimate the additional global death toll from disease and further warfare that this “limited” regional nuclear war might cause but, given the worldwide scope of the climate effects, the dead from these causes might well number in the hundreds of millions.

These findings, while they need to be elucidated and refined, argue for a fundamental reassessment of the role of nuclear weapons in the world, and should inform the deliberations and proposals of this NPT Review cycle. If even a small nuclear war could trigger a global catastrophe, the only viable response is the complete abolition of nuclear weapons.