

A nuclear-weapon-free world our common good

Presentation to the UN Open Ended Working Group on Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament

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Your Excellencies,

I have the honour to present a statement on behalf of *Religions for Peace*, the world's largest and most representative multi-religious coalition.

Religions for Peace, works to foster interfaith dialogue for peace globally, led by our World Council of senior religious leaders, six regional inter-religious councils, over seventy national councils and a global network of millions of faith-based individuals.

The threat and use of nuclear weapons violate basic principles common to all major religious faiths. These include the sanctity of life, the ethic of reciprocity – sometimes referred to as the Golden Rule to treat others as you would have them treat you, the requirement to protect the environment and future generations, and the principle of unity which requires the development of common security rather than security based on threatening others.

Religions for Peace shares the view of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that nuclear abolition is a common global good which would remove the “Sword of Damocles” hanging over our heads, foster the development of common security for all and liberate billions of dollars for sustainable development.

We welcome the establishment of the Open Ended Working Group, which provides a forum for governments and civil society to come together to establish the legal measures to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. It is vital that we use this opportunity to move quickly from deliberations to concrete action to adopt such measures.

We have the support from religious communities for this goal.

In 2009, over 20 million youth of faith supported the Religions for Peace appeal for nuclear abolition and the reallocation of 10% of the annual military budget to fund sustainable development.

And in the past few months, religious leaders from around the world have joined with mayors and parliamentarians to endorse the joint statement *A Nuclear Weapon Free World Our Common Good* (attached), which calls for negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements. Religions for Peace, Mayors for Peace and Parliamentarians for Nuclear

Non-proliferation and Disarmament will formally present this statement tomorrow morning to Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi, Chair of the Open Ended Working Group.

Religions for Peace understands that there are serious international conflicts and security issues that have given rise to nuclear deterrence policies. However, we believe that diplomacy, international law and common security can, and must, replace nuclear deterrence. Otherwise a nuclear catastrophe could occur by accident, miscalculation or unauthorized use.

The OEWG could explore and highlight the possibilities to achieve security and resolve international conflicts without nuclear weapons through international law – and thus move the nuclear-armed States to agree to nuclear abolition.

We hope that delegates here in Geneva – and your governments back home – join with civil society and the United Nations to make the achievement of this common good a primary priority.

Thank you