



General Assembly

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Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations¹

Geneva 2016

Item 5 of the agenda

Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations

Open letter

Submitted by Mayors for Peace

1. We, Mayors for Peace, are writing today to express our sincere hope that all UN Member States will participate in the UN General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament and engage in constructive deliberations. Regardless of whether they are nuclear-weapon states or not, all States share a common duty to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Together, States must respect the wish of all people around the world to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons.

2. Seventy years have passed since the General Assembly first established the goal of nuclear disarmament. Yet we are still living in a world filled with violence, countless seeds of conflict and nearly 16,000 nuclear warheads. Some political leaders have openly threatened to use such weapons, while others steadfastly support the use of nuclear weapons in accordance with the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Above and beyond those risks lies the specter of nuclear terrorism, a major focus of the latest Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C. We are deeply concerned that, while nuclear weapons have not been used since the tragic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the risk of use remains real and may even be growing due to accidents, miscalculations, and even the prospect of willful use. This dangerous situation is a special concern of ours because if such weapons were used—regardless of the reason—cities and their innocent people would surely pay the ultimate price.

3. This is why we mayors, who bear a strong sense of responsibility for the safety and welfare of our citizens, wholeheartedly support the General Assembly's decision to establish this second Open-ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament and place high expectations on it to address "concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions and norms" needed to achieve global nuclear disarmament. In this regard, we strongly urge all UN Member States to participate in this Working Group and start constructive discussions on a nuclear weapons convention and negotiations to conclude one.

¹ Established pursuant to resolution 70/33 of the General Assembly of the United Nations.
GE.16-06992(E)



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4. Not only can the current doctrine of nuclear deterrence fail with unacceptable humanitarian consequences, it can also lead to dangers of nuclear proliferation, as seen in North Korea's nuclear and missile developments. Furthermore we seriously question that nuclear deterrence can offer any effective solutions to the global security challenges we face today as we believe that nuclear weapons are useless both in preventing and responding to terrorism—and their very existence brings new risks of use, such as nuclear terrorism, with each passing day.

5. Emerging challenges demand new thinking and innovative approaches. The international community—including cities in particular—needs to join forces and seek security without reliance on nuclear deterrence, based on the earnest wish for peace shared by people at the grassroots. We therefore encourage world leaders, especially those in nuclear-weapon states and those under the 'nuclear umbrella' to:

- (a) unite under a shared awareness that we all belong to one human family
- (b) engage in innovative ways to achieve peace and security without nuclear weapons
- (c) and work collectively to enhance mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity.

6. Genuine security will be achieved only through dialogue, mutual understanding, and cooperation, not confrontation, mutual threats, or rivalry.

7. In such a light, we believe that the legal prohibition of nuclear weapons would strengthen the security of all. All countries already support nuclear disarmament as a goal—it is now time to start the discussions to translate that goal into concrete actions. Legally binding commitments including those relating to verification, irreversibility, and transparency will pave the way for a world without nuclear weapons. We must also not neglect the efforts to limit conventional arms, reduce military spending, and reinforce the basic norms of the UN Charter with respect to the prohibition of threats of use of force and the duty to resolve disputes by peaceful means, which all contribute to strengthening of the security of all States. Discussions on nuclear disarmament must be parallel to these efforts.

8. With this in mind, world leaders must exercise decisive leadership. With firm determination to prohibit nuclear weapons globally, they need to agree on a clear direction toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. This agreement between leaders is sure to accelerate nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation initiatives. Mayors for Peace, together with a wide range of civil society partners, whole-heartedly supports such initiatives as we believe that doing so will serve the interest of our citizens and, indeed, all humanity. We will also intensify our efforts to nurture an international environment that transcends differences and fosters the creation of common values.

9. On April 10 and 11, Hiroshima City was the site of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, in which the participants adopted the G7 Foreign Ministers' Hiroshima Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. This Declaration acknowledges that "the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced immense devastation and human suffering as a consequence of the atomic bombings," encourages other political leaders to come to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and concludes that the foreign ministers "share the deep desire of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that nuclear weapons never be used again." During their visit to Hiroshima, the foreign ministers of the G7, consisting of nuclear-weapon states and states under the 'nuclear umbrella', saw firsthand the realities of the atomic bombing, shared their wish for peace, and reaffirmed their commitment to nuclear disarmament.

10. Mayors for Peace will continue to encourage leaders around the world to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki to witness firsthand the horrific humanitarian consequences of the

atomic bombings. As they visit these cities, we hope for them to see, hear, feel, think, and most of all, form an unshakable determination to advance towards a world free of nuclear weapons. It is our earnest hope that these leaders will start acting on behalf of nuclear disarmament with a profound understanding of the wishes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which stem from the hibakusha's deep humanitarian conviction that "no one else should ever again suffer as we have."

11. Once again we express our strong hope that more representatives, including those from nuclear-weapon states, will participate in the Working Group and engage in constructive deliberations, leading to a final outcome of shared understanding of effective legal measures to advance to a world free of nuclear weapons.

April 22, 2016

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 Vice president, Lord Mayor of Hannover, Germany
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