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Nuclear Disarmament Now

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Our topic today is “Nuclear Disarmament Now.” In speaking on that subject, I will address four key points, the first being a discussion of some of the main reasons why nuclear disarmament is urgently needed. The second point will focus on an action plan developed by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation of Santa Barbara, California for advancing President Obama’s nuclear disarmament agenda. (Incidentally, for the remainder of this presentation I shall refer to the organization as the Foundation). Thirdly, we will discuss U.S. plans for the weaponization of space as an obstacle to global nuclear disarmament; and finally, I will discuss the campaign for a nuclear-free world which was recently launched by the International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Security, and what you can do to help with that effort.

At the outset, lets take a look at some of the critical issues that surround nuclear weapons and why they need to be eliminated from Planet Earth. First, they are extremely dangerous, and literally threaten to make human beings an endangered species. The exact number of nuclear weapons in possession of each of the nine nuclear weapons states is a closely held national secret. Nevertheless, publicly available information and occasional leaks make it possible to obtain best estimates about the size and composition of the national nuclear weapon stockpiles. More than a decade and a half after the Cold War ended, the world’s combined stockpile remains at a very high level, i.e., more than 23,300 warheads. According to Hans Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists more than 8,109 of these warheads are considered operational, of which approximately 2,200 U.S. and 2,200 Russian weapons are on high alert, ready for use on short notice. (1)

In case of a nuclear weapons alert, the Russian President has three minutes to decide whether or not to launch an attack on the U.S. The U.S. president has 8 minutes to decide if he receives such an alert. Launch to landing time for Russian missiles is about 25 minutes. Launch to landing time for U.S. missiles is approximately 10 minutes. (2)

During the past 64 years, there have been dozens of incidents, accidents and errors with nuclear weapons, including several near misses. One of those near misses occurred in early September, 1983, when tension between the Soviet Union and the United States was very high. Not only had the Soviet military downed a Korean passenger plane, but the United States was also conducting exercises in Europe that focused on the use of tactical nuclear weapons against the Soviets – a situation that led some Soviet leaders to worry that the West was planning a nuclear attack. To make matters worse, an unanticipated variable was thrown into the mix. On September 26, 1983, the alarms in a Soviet early warning bunker, just South of Moscow sounded as computer screens indicated that the United States had launched a nuclear strike against the Soviet Union. The officer in charge of the bunker and its 200 officers and enlisted personnel was Lt. Colonel Stanislav Petrov. It was his job to monitor incoming satellite signals and to report directly to the Russian early warning headquarters if indicators revealed that a U.S. missile attack was underway. Years later, Col. Petrov said: “ I felt as if I had been punched in my nervous system. There was a huge map of the States with a U.S. base lit up, showing that the missiles had been launched.”

minutes Petrov held a phone in one hand and an intercom in the other as alarms continued blaring, red lights blinking, reporting that U.S. missiles were on their way. In the midst of this horrific chaos and terror, with the prospect of nuclear war, Petrov made a historic decision not to alert higher authorities, believing in his gut and hoping with all that he could that, contrary to what all the sophisticated equipment was reporting, this alarm was an error... As agonizing minutes passed, Petrov’s decision proved correct. It was a computer error that signaled a U.S. attack.” (3)

"Had Petrov obeyed standard operating procedures by reporting the erroneous attack, Soviet missiles could have devastated all major U.S. cities and the Pentagon would have retaliated. In reviewing the incident, Petrov concluded that a nuclear war could have broken out and the whole world could have been destroyed. On Dateline NBC, November 12, 2000, Bruce Blair, president of the Center for Defense Information, and himself a former U.S. Minuteman missile launch officer said: "I think this is the closest we've come to accidental nuclear war." (4)

On January 25, 1995, another potentially disastrous early warning error occurred when a Russian radar mistook a U.S. weather research rocket launched from Norway as an incoming nuclear strike from a U.S. Trident submarine. Even though the United States had notified Russia it would launch a non-military weather research rocket, those in control of Russia's strategic nuclear weapons did not receive the message. Fortunately, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, a man with a drinking problem, who had three minutes to order a retaliatory strike, elected to "ride out" the crisis and did not launch the thousands of nuclear tipped missiles available on his command. (5) As previously mentioned, there have been many serious mishaps since the beginning of the nuclear age. For a comprehensive list by date, see: www.nuclearfiles.org.

In addition to the dangers posed by the nuclear threat systems, there are other basic reasons for abolishing them. Not only are they extremely dangerous, they are also illegal, immoral, environmentally destructive and very expensive. They kill men, women and children indiscriminately and are virtually unlimited in their effects.

In addressing the illegality of nuclear deterrence, University of Illinois Professor of International Law, Frank Boyle quotes the 1996 World Court Advisory Opinion on Nuclear weapons which says: "States must never make civilians the object of attack, and must consequently never use weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets." He goes on to say: "... U.S. strategic nuclear weapons systems do indeed make civilians the direct object of attack, and because of their incredible explosive power are also incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets." (6)

In analyzing the immorality of nuclear weapons, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church has developed a resolution titled "Nuclear Disarmament The Zero Option", which states: "Now is the time to exercise the zero option to eliminate all nuclear weapons throughout the globe." In keeping with that pronouncement, the Conference approved the following statement of commitment and action which says: "We affirm the finding that nuclear weapons, whether used or threatened, are grossly evil and morally wrong. As an instrument of mass destruction, nuclear weapons slaughter the innocent and ravage the environment. When used as instruments of deterrence, nuclear weapons hold innocent people hostage to political and military purposes. Therefore, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence is morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. Therefore, we affirm the goal of total abolition of all nuclear weapons throughout Earth and Space." I don't think there is a better way to say it. Nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence are unquestionably morally corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. (7)

In 1983, Cornell University Professor Carl Sagan and four other NASA scientists conducted an in-depth study of the possible atmospheric consequences of nuclear war. The study concluded that the gigantic fires caused by nuclear detonation in cities and industrial areas would cause millions of tons of smoke to rise into the Earth's atmosphere. There the smoke would block most sunlight, causing average temperatures on Earth's surface to rapidly cool to Ice Age levels.

The 1983 study was repeated by Professor R.P. Turco of UCLA and Professor O.B. Toon of the University of Colorado, and others. The new research modeled a range of nuclear conflicts beginning with a "regional" nuclear war between India and Pakistan, then a "moderate" nuclear war which used about one third of the current global nuclear arsenals (equivalent to the nuclear weapons now kept on launch-ready, high alert status by the U.S. and Russia), and lastly, a full scale nuclear conflict using the entire global arsenal. The new research substantiated the original 1983 findings, and found that smoke could actually remain in the stratosphere for at least a decade. A large nuclear conflict would cause crop-killing nightly frosts for more than a year in the world's large agricultural regions, destroy massive amounts of the protective ozone layer, and lead to the collapse of many ecosystems and starvation among most people.

Recently, my University of Missouri colleague, Steven Starr published a summary of the 2006 studies in the Bulletin of the International Network of Engineers and Scientists Against Proliferation. In that article, Steve states: "U.S. researchers have confirmed the scientific validity of "nuclear winter" and have demonstrated that any conflict which targets even a tiny fraction of the nuclear arsenal against large urban centers will cause disruption of the global climate." To view that summary, simply Google www.nucleardarkness.org. (8)

A final reason for abolishing nuclear weapons is the high cost of nuclear security spending. According to Stephen Schwartz and Deepti Choubey "nuclear security spending is the amount of money the United States spends to operate, maintain and upgrade its nuclear arsenal; defend against nuclear attack; prevent the further spread of nuclear weapons, weapons materials, technology, and expertise; manage and clean up radioactive and toxic waste left over from decades of nuclear production, and compensate victims of past productive and testing activities; and prepare for the consequences of a nuclear or radiological attack."

"Total appropriations for nuclear weapons and related programs in fiscal year 2008 were at least 52.4 billion dollars. That's not counting classified programs, air defense, anti-submarine warfare, and most nuclear weapons-related intelligence programs. Over 10 billion dollars is spent on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, weapons materials, technology and expertise of the nuclear age, the cost of U.S. nuclear weapons research, development, testing, deployment and maintenance is 10 BILLION dollars. Clearly the abolition of nuclear weapons will free up billions of dollars for health, education and human development programs."

So, what is needed to rid the world of these deadly, obscene devices? In June, 2009, the Board of Directors of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation adopted a five-point action plan to guide the Foundation's work through the end of 2010. The preface to the plan states: "The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation seeks a world free of nuclear weapons. We believe that nuclear arms reductions and the stabilization of nuclear dangers are not ends in themselves, but must be viewed in the context of achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This is a matter that affects the future well-being, even survival, of the human race." In this light the Foundation is pursuing the following five-point action program:

First, we support a meaningful replacement treaty for the Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty between the United States and Russia. This treaty expires on December 2009. Under President Obama's leadership, the U.S. and Russia have embarked upon negotiations for a replacement treaty. The Foundation will press for a replacement treaty that has deep and verifiable reductions in the number of nuclear weapons on each side; one that reduces the high-alert status of the weapons on each side, and one that includes a legally binding commitment to NO FIRST USE of nuclear weapons. To this end, we will seek to form a coalition of like-minded organizations to put forward recommendations for a new treaty, to educate the public on the importance of such a treaty, and to lobby the Senate for the treaty's ratification.

Second, we hope to secure a NO FIRST USE commitment from the United States. President Obama has called for reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, but he has not referred to the possibility of making a legally binding commitment to NO FIRST USE of nuclear weapons. We believe that such a commitment would be an essential step in downplaying the role of nuclear weapons in military strategy. We will educate the public and lobby the Obama Administration to make a legally binding commitment to NO FIRST USE of nuclear weapons and seek such commitments from other nuclear weapons states as well.

Third, We seek U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The U.S. has signed but not ratified the CTBT. President Obama has said, 'To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.' The Foundation will work with other national organizations to achieve Senate ratification of the treaty.

Fourth, We will promote a broad agenda for President Obama's proposed Global Summit on Nuclear Security. President Obama has pledged to hold a Global Summit on Nuclear Security within the next year. He has called for this Global Summit in the context of preventing nuclear terrorism. We will seek to broaden the agenda of the Summit to include a full range of nuclear security issues beyond only the issue of nuclear terrorism. This would include consideration of the security risks of the current nuclear arsenals and the need to open negotiations on a treaty banning all nuclear weapons. The Foundation will engage in public education, including interviews and op-eds, and networking with other organizations to lobby the Obama administration.

The fifth and final point of the 2009-10 Action Plan calls for a highly strengthened Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) by assuring a successful NPT Review Conference in 2010. The NPT is at the heart of efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The treaty also requires the nuclear weapons states to engage in good faith negotiations to achieve nuclear disarmament in all its aspects. We believe that the key to achieving the goals of the NPT rests upon the commitment of the nuclear weapons states to take meaningful actions to achieve their Article VI nuclear disarmament obligations. Following the 2009 Preparatory Committee meeting for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the five nuclear weapons states (who are parties to the treaty, i.e., the U.S., Russia, UK, France and China), also known as the P5, issued a joint statement in which they said: 'Our delegations reiterate our enduring and unequivocal commitment to work towards nuclear disarmament, an obligation shared by all NPT states parties.' These P5 states expressed their commitment to a new U.S.-Russian agreement to replace the Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty and to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as negotiations for a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty. We believe that their case for strengthening the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will be far more persuasive if they also join in assuring a broad agenda for a Global Summit on Nuclear Security and join in making legally binding commitments to NO FIRST USE of nuclear weapons. Thus, these prospects for a successful NPT Review Conference in 2010 will be considerably enhanced if the first four points of the Foundation's Action Plan are successful. (10)

Clearly the Foundation's Action Plan will require strong support by U.S. scientists and many other citizens if it is to have any chance for implementation. The good news is that most Americans are in favor of seriously addressing the various issues related to nuclear disarmament. A 2004 poll by the Program on International Policy Attitudes found Americans to be highly concerned about nuclear weapons. Clear majorities favored reducing their role and ultimately eliminating them under provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Eighty-four percent said that doing so was a "good idea". An even higher 86 percent wanted the United States "... to do more to work with other nations toward eliminating their nuclear weapons. In each case, more than 70 percent of Republicans and 80 percent of Democrats and independents favored working toward elimination." (11)

The bad news is that some Americans, including several key Members of Congress are still victims of Cold War-era fear based thinking which argues that getting rid of nuclear weapons – even with open inspection and verification – would make us vulnerable. Additionally, there is another potential roadblock to genuine nuclear disarmament which centers on U.S. plans to deploy offensive weapons, including lasers, particle beams and rockets in outer space. The U.S. Air Force's long term proposal known as "Vision for 2020" is a plan for the U.S. outer space for military and commercial purposes and to deny access to outer space to other states. The pro-
< new missile defenses for what they truly are: an early phase of militarization of space and, as such, part of an >
, global offensive system masquerading as defense. (12) If the United States insists on the deployment of
weapons in outer space, it will be nearly impossible to convince Russia, China, and others to agree to the zero nuclear weapons option.

On the U.S. domestic front there have also been a number of nuclear deterrence advocates and military analysts who have been highly critical of disarmament measures such as those outlined in the Foundation's Action Plan, and of any efforts to halt the U.S. weapons in space program. The critics, including corporate producers of nuclear weapons, and other members of the military-industrial-academic-congressional complex, want absolutely no reduction in the tens of billions of dollars spent annually on nuclear weapons. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council: " Hundreds of companies, large and small, are involved in nuclear weapons research, development, production and support. Each Department of Energy (DOE) facility is managed and operated by a corporate contractor. And, nuclear weapons components and delivery systems are manufactured by hundreds of prime and subcontractors" (13). Thus, lobbyists for giant companies such as Lockheed Martin, TRW, Boeing, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and dozens of others will do everything in their power to prevent significant efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide. Consequently, a highly mobilized citizen movement will be needed to counter those vested interests.

Therefore, we must speak out now to protect our nation, other nations, and our entire planet. We must challenge those who believe that ANYONE has a right to genocidal weapons. We must also challenge those who want to build a new generation of nuclear weapons and offensive killing devices in outer space. In doing so, we must vigorously seek support for the provisions of the Foundation's Action Plan with its emphasis on ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, full implementation of Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and the elimination of all nuclear weapons from our Planet.

In addressing challenges to the zero option, we must emphasize the fact that such thinking is no longer the sole possession of the historic nuclear disarmament organizations, nor those only on the political left. Neither is it a Utopian dream. To date, several retired U.S. generals, including Eugene Habiger and George Lee Butler, both former chiefs of the U.S. Strategic Command, have voiced support for measures such as those outlined in the Foundation's Action Plan. Other well known political figures of both major political parties are also making the case for nuclear weapons abolition. For example, in a January 8, 2007 Wall Street Journal commentary titled " A World Free of Nuclear Weapons", former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Schultz, with former Secretary of Defense William Perry and former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia wrote: " Nuclear weapons today present tremendous dangers, but also historic opportunity. U.S. leadership will be required to take the world to the next stage – to a solid consensus for reversing reliance on nuclear weapons globally as a vital contribution to preventing this proliferation into potentially dangerous hands, and ultimately ending them as a threat to the world..."

" Reassertion of the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and practical measures toward achieving that goal would be, and would be perceived as, a bold initiative consistent with America's moral heritage. The effect could have a profoundly positive impact on the security of future generations. Without the actions, the vision will not be perceived as realistic or possible. We endorse setting the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and working energetically on the actions required to achieve that goal." (14)

In my opinion, it is critical that scientists and engineers lead the way in achieving nuclear weapons abolition as suggested by Kissinger, Schultz, Perry, and Nunn. In 1995, when Joseph Rotblat received the Nobel Peace Prize, he appealed to his fellow scientists with the following statement: " At a time when science plays such a powerful role in the life of society, when the destiny of the whole of mankind may hinge on the results of scientific research, it is incumbent on all scientists to be fully conscious of that role, and conduct themselves accordingly. I appeal to my fellow scientists to remember their responsibility to humanity The quest for a war-free world has a basic purpose: survival. But if in the process we learn to combine the essential with the enjoyable, the expedient with the benevolent, the practical with the beautiful, this will be an extra incentive to embark on this great task. Above all, remember you humanity."

On August 6, 2009 the International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility (INES) launched a campaign in support of that zero option. The first act of the campaign was the signing of an appeal titled "Scientists for a Nuclear Free World" by forty individuals, 28 of whom are Nobel Laureates. The goal of the campaign is to increase scientific as well as public awareness of nuclear weapons issues, and to add weight to calls for an international Nuclear Weapons Convention which obligates all states to achieve complete nuclear disarmament by 2020. The last four paragraphs of the appeal state:

"Nuclear weapons were created by humans, and it is our responsibility to eliminate them before they eliminate us and much of the life on our planet. The era of nuclear weapons must be brought to an end. A world without nuclear weapons is possible, realistic, necessary and urgent."

"Therefore, we the undersigned scientists and engineers, call upon the leaders of the world, and particularly the leaders of the nine nuclear weapons states, to make a world free of nuclear weapons an urgent priority."

" We further call on these leaders to immediately commence good faith negotiations as required by the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, with the goal of achieving a Nuclear Weapons Convention for the phased, verifiable, irreversible and transparent elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020."

" Finally we call upon scientists and engineers throughout the world to cease all cooperation in the research, development, testing, and manufacture of new nuclear weapons." (14)

< If you wish to participate in the INES campaign, there are several things you can do: >

• Sign the appeal, either individually or as an organization;

- Publish the appeal on your website, or in your newsletter, and forward it to members of organizations to which you belong;
- Collect as many signatures as possible within your network;
- Promote the appeal through your organizations; and
- Issue your own statement in support of our common cause.

For those of you who wish to sign the petition immediately, please see me following this symposium. I will have copies for your reading, signing and distribution. I will also have copies of Nuclear Age Peace Foundation materials which suggest other nuclear disarmament education activities, including information on our newly produced DVD which is titled: " U.S. Leadership for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World".

In closing, I want to quote my colleague, Rick Wayman, who is the Foundation's Director of Programs: " Now is the time to create a new equilibrium in the thinking of Americans. Public support is essential for strong U.S. leadership on the issue of nuclear weapons abolition. U.S. leadership is essential if progress is going to be made on the world stage. So the answer is simple. To change the reality of nuclear weapons, to reduce and then eliminate them, we must change thinking and grow the movement to support a new approach. Such a massive change in the public's thinking is a major undertaking. But it is necessary. Otherwise, fear will carry the day. And the nuclear hawks will play on American insecurity to stymie progress and enshrine the status quo of thousands upon thousands of nuclear weapons. True security will come only from global cooperation. We must be proactive. We must pioneer a new way of thinking in society. The goal of zero nuclear weapons must be accepted as the starting point of all discussions. To achieve this, we must rally the public"

I sincerely hope you will join this effort.

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