

WMDC

THE WEAPONS OF
MASS DESTRUCTION
COMMISSION

www.wmdcommission.org

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*Declaration adopted by the
Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission
Washington DC on 30 April 2009*

The International Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC) met in Washington DC on 30 April 2009 under the chairmanship of Dr. Hans Blix to refocus attention on the comprehensive recommendations of its 2006 Report, *Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms*, and in particular on those relating to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

New hope for a revival of disarmament

When the Commission published its report three years ago, the disarmament and non-proliferation momentum of the early post-Cold War years had been lost and the outlook was desolate. New nuclear armed states had emerged, disarmament negotiations were completely stalled, and commitment to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was eroding.

A much more receptive environment now exists, as a result of the fundamental change of direction in United States policy under the new Obama administration, reinforced by the pathbreaking support for the goal of a nuclear-free world by the bipartisan group of former US statesmen -- George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn. They successfully reminded the US public and the world that the Cold War ended nearly 20 years ago, that it was high time for the US and Russia to draw the right conclusions from this change and lead the world cooperatively toward real disarmament.

To President Obama goes the credit for his courage and wisdom to accept this advice and now to act on it politically. He and President Medvedev of Russia should be praised for their jointly-stated determination to work for disarmament, improved relations and the resolution of regional conflicts. The stated readiness to conclude peace after the Cold War and to recommence serious disarmament negotiations deserves prompt support from other governments and from civil society.

There is a new awareness of the risks and limitations in using military means, and all the big powers see greater virtue in cooperation rather than confrontation in advancing their national interests.

There is, furthermore, an evident acceptance of the value in negotiated agreements within the framework of the international rule of law. As emphasized by the Secretary-General of the UN, unilateral commitments can only go so far.

The reasoning and many detailed recommendations of the Commission can be, we hope, of real utility to all those now working in government, successor international commissions, the media and civil society, to translate the new momentum for arms control and disarmament into practical reality.

Urgent disarmament measures

It is encouraging that President Obama, President Medvedev and many other political leaders are coming out in support of the clear and vital goal of a nuclear weapon-free world. The Commission thinks it is attainable. Governments must begin now to think how they will design their countries' future security without these weapons.

However, the discussion about the long-term goal must not divert our attention from the arms control and disarmament measures that can and must be tackled today. What matters is not just words but deeds. Momentum should be created by agreement on follow up to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty I (START I), and further ratifications of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). A world summit would offer leaders an opportunity to accelerate the agenda for nuclear disarmament.

The entry into force of the CTBT would have more positive ramifications for arms control and disarmament than any other single measure. The negotiation of the treaty - and the commitment to it by the nuclear weapon states - was fundamental to the 1995 indefinite extension of the NPT.

The strong commitment by President Obama to pursue US ratification is welcome. Without US ratification nothing will happen. With US ratification the chances improve that China and other states will ratify and that the treaty will at long last enter into force. A treaty in limbo could increase the risk of new waves of nuclear testing.

President Obama and President Medvedev have jointly stated their support for a verifiable treaty to end the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons (FMCT). This is encouraging. Future agreements to reduce the arsenals of nuclear weapons would be strengthened by such a treaty.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty

Existing arsenals, proliferation of nuclear weapons and non-state actors using terrorist methods and aspiring to acquire weapons of mass destruction are seen as the principal hazards and threats. The Commission agrees that this threat requires a tightening of controls over nuclear and other sensitive material, equipment and technology.

A year from now the eighth review conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty will take place. Against the background of a widespread concern about breaches that have occurred or might occur and about the absence of serious disarmament efforts and of progress on a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East, it is essential to use this occasion to strengthen the treaty and to revive disarmament.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty is rightly seen as expressing the aspiration of the international community to be free from nuclear weapons and even to attain general disarmament. This required a bargain between the nuclear weapons states and the non-nuclear weapon states.

Article VI of the treaty is testimony that the double standard accepted was meant to be temporary – not permanent. The joint Obama-Medvedev London statement is on solid ground when it recognizes that the two states must fulfill their obligations under that Article. It is welcome that, in addition, it commits these two states to take the lead in persuading all other states that have nuclear weapons to join.

That process will have to comprise many components. The 2010 Review Conference must focus on reducing both the role and number of nuclear weapons in states parties. Even though a few states are outside the treaty, the process must be broadly geared to attaining a nuclear weapon-free world and disarmament.

The reliability of the treaty must be strengthened by general acceptance of more effective verification and safeguards mechanisms. It should be understood that international verification is a service. When effective it

offers something states cannot create by themselves: confidence through credible external testimony about their compliance.

Agreements about better protection of sensitive nuclear material and improved export controls on nuclear material, equipment and know-how will strengthen the NPT but will not be part of the treaty.

Several other measures must be taken to ensure that the expected expansion of nuclear power does not increase the risk of fissile material being diverted to weapons. Widespread enrichment of uranium and reprocessing can be discouraged by supplementing the international market through arrangements such as a reserve fuel bank. Other useful measures could be the gradual adoption of more proliferation resistant technologies and fuels.

Role of the United Nations Security Council

Lastly, the reliability of the NPT would be strengthened and the prospects of a nuclear weapons free world could be improved if the Security Council of the United Nations showed greater ability to agree on collective measures. The Council has all the constitutional powers that are needed to bring about effective action. Agreement to use these powers should be easier as interdependence is increasing and collective action is more effective and more legitimate than acting unilaterally.

The WMDC concludes its collective work

The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission urges all governments, groups, movements and individuals who work for disarmament to redouble their efforts at the present hopeful and crucial time. While the adoption of this declaration marks the conclusion of the Commission's collective work its members will remain active and be ready to join others in a new forceful wave to revive and achieve global disarmament.

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In June 2006 the fourteen members of the international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission presented its unanimous report 'Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms' (www.wmdcommission.org). In some two hundred pages the report gives a comprehensive overview of the threats posed by these weapons and sixty recommendations, half of them concerning nuclear weapons.

The WMDC report has been translated into Arabic, Chinese, Finnish, German, Japanese, Russian and Spanish and it has been issued in over 35.000 copies. Hard copies of the report as well as background papers will remain available. A documentary of the WMDC work and report will be released during 2009. Contacts with Commissioners will be assisted through a continued secretariat function (secretariat@wmdcommission.org).

The fourteen members of the WMDC are:

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