



24 April 2015

The Honorable Rob Nicholson, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Foreign Affairs Trade and Development Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2
Canada

Email: rob.nicholson@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Nicholson,

Greetings from the Canadian Council of Churches.

We are writing in view of the 2015 NPT Review Conference. As we did in our April 10, 2014 letter to Minister Baird regarding Preparatory Committee of the 2014 NPT Review conference we would like to share with you certain concerns and expectations for this year's conference.

Our letter is a reflection here in Canada of the growing worldwide support for the humanitarian initiative against nuclear weapons. We ask our government to affirm the initiative at the Review Conference and to stress the need for a new legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

The Action Plan from the 2010 Review Conference brought some meaningful disarmament steps into the NPT process. But, five years on, progress on the disarmament actions has been very, very modest. Crises in the world are no excuse for this lack of progress. If anything, international instability makes the elimination of nuclear weapons more urgent.

In contrast, the facts-based approach to the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons has generated new energy, understanding, participation and resolve since 2012. This precious momentum must be maintained. We therefore request that, during the NPT Review Conference, our government representatives:

- a) **Stress the importance of the joint statements and conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons since 2012.** These events have done what the NPT has failed to do – empower the majority in their commitment to eliminate nuclear arms.

- b) **Endorse the current Pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.** It was issued at the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in December 2015. Please announce our country's support for the Pledge during NPT debate. If you have already endorsed the Pledge, we thank you, and please announce this good news again at the Review Conference.
- c) **Encourage other states to endorse the Pledge.** As the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan, 2015 is a propitious year for real progress on nuclear disarmament. To ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again, they must be eliminated. To eliminate them, they must be banned. We therefore look to our government in this memorial year to also:
- d) **Announce that our country favours the start in 2015 of negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons.** Since such an instrument is for the good of all, it will require a negotiating forum that is open to all states and where no state can block progress towards such a widely shared and long-overdue goal.

The Pledge issued in Vienna and the call to negotiate a legal ban on nuclear weapons are strategic opportunities for all states to help meet the disarmament obligation in the NPT. We ask that our government join actions in that regard at the Review Conference.

We are associated with churches and related organizations in 140 countries through the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. World Council of Churches representatives at the United Nations will be following-up on this letter and contacting the Canadian delegates at the NPT meeting.

Since 1948, the World Council of Churches has consistently promoted the international rule of law as a pillar of peace and justice. Nuclear weapons are inherently illegal and are an obstacle to the building of peace. It is time to close the legal gap that perpetuates the nuclear *status quo*.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to receiving a response to these concerns. We would be very pleased to meet with you to discuss this further. Please accept our good wishes for a constructive outcome in New York.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
General Secretary

Attachment: Letter to Prime Minister Harper, A World Without Nuclear Weapons, 25 June 2010

cc: Paul Dewar, M.P., Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party of Canada
Marc Garneau, M.P., Foreign Affairs Critic, The Liberal Party of Canada
Louis Plamondon, M.P., Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, M.P., Green Party of Canada

Lt. Colonel Jim Champ, President, The Canadian Council of Churches
Rev. Dr Olav FykseTveit, General Secretary, World Council of Churches, Geneva

The Canadian Council of Churches is the broadest and most inclusive ecumenical body in the world, now representing 25 denominations of Anglican; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox; Protestant; and Catholic traditions. Together we represent more than 85% of the Christians in Canada. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.