

Appeal for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons



The world still lives under the threat of nuclear weapons. Despite the end of the Cold War, there are still more than 25,000 nuclear weapons. Thousands of them can be launched within moments. 9 countries now possess nuclear weapons. There is a growing danger that terrorists will obtain nuclear materials.

Today, forty years after the Cold War, the promise that the nuclear powers made in the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to work toward a world free of nuclear weapons has yet to be fulfilled. Their military planning and foreign policies foresee retaining nuclear weapons far into the future. The role of nuclear weapons in tense international situations is again expanding. The costs are enormous, more than 50 billion dollars annually in the United States alone.

We consider continued reliance on the threat of nuclear destruction of human life morally unacceptable. A world free of nuclear-weapons does not lie beyond the politically possible. It is a question of political will. And there are new opportunities. It is heartening to note that, since the end of the Cold War, many nuclear weapons from what used to be much larger arsenals have been dismantled. It is encouraging that the United States and Russia are cooperating on additional reductions. It is significant that they have performed no nuclear tests in recent years.

Former foreign secretaries Kissinger and Shultz now call upon the United States to develop a new policy aimed at freeing the world from all nuclear weapons within the foreseeable future. They have now gained the support of at least two thirds of all former US defence and foreign affairs ministers and national security advisers. Their effort is no longer aimed at reducing nuclear weapons but at eliminating them radically. Moreover, President Obama has made clear that he will put nuclear disarmament high on his agenda. We support the call issued by aforesaid former foreign secretaries and secretaries of defense. We believe that a world free of nuclear weapons is a moral obligation and a political necessity.

We are convinced that we now have a historic opportunity to fulfil the promise of a world free of nuclear weapons, and this no later than 2020. This will be possible if government leaders clearly speak out NOW in no uncertain terms and if they take irrevocable steps in this direction.

We urgently ask our government to take action now by:

1. Declaring officially that it supports the call for a world free of nuclear weapons by 2020 latest.
2. Seeking support for this call from all European countries and NATO allies.
3. Urging at the 2009 NATO summit to end the political and military role of nuclear weapons in NATO's security policy.
4. Speaking out in favour of a Europe that will be free of nuclear weapons no later than 2015, taking steps to achieve this and ending the nuclear task of the Dutch Air Force.
5. Advocating that nuclear warheads no longer be kept on hair-trigger alert but stored safely and apart from their delivery systems.
6. Promoting the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) no later than the 2010 NPT Review Conference.
7. Discouraging any further modernisation of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems.
8. Promoting agreement in 2010 on a treaty that forbids production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.
9. Promoting supranational control of the entire fissile material cycle of nuclear materials, also as a way to prevent nuclear terrorism.
10. Urging the governments of the United States, Poland and the Czech Republic to refrain from deploying a missile defence shield in Europe.
11. Taking the initiative for an independent and authoritative international technical investigation into all aspects relating to the worldwide abolition of all nuclear weapons.

When taken by a resolute vanguard of countries, these steps can move states with nuclear weapons within their own alliance as well as Russia and China to free the world of nuclear weapons by 2020. This can also get the nuclear powers like India, Israel and Pakistan that are not part of the NPT to follow suit. That is why we ask governments, religious leaders, civil society organisations and citizens to support this appeal. The hope for a world free of nuclear weapons will be more than a dream if enough people lend it their support.