
United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination

6 June 2017

English only

New York, 27-31 March 2017 and 15 June-7 July 2017

Comments and Proposals for the Draft Convention on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Submitted by Soka Gakkai International (SGI)

Overview

1. The release of the Draft Convention on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons marks a crucial milestone in the effort to free humankind and our planet from the threat posed by nuclear weapons—a threat that has darkened our world for more than seven decades.
2. As an international grassroots network of Buddhists dedicated to the values of peace, culture and education, we at the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) believe the draft text can be further strengthened through incorporating elements that expand the frame of reference to highlight the relevance of the Convention to the lives of all people—whether they live in States that possess nuclear weapons or States that have renounced them. This working paper submits ideas and proposals for modified Convention language for the consideration of all parties involved in the negotiation process.

The security challenge

3. Security, in its fullest and most comprehensive sense, is the shared desire of people everywhere. As the world's security environment makes evident, nuclear weapons do not contribute meaningfully to the achievement of an even more narrowly defined state security. They are not effective in meeting the threats that humanity faces and in fact—due to the instantaneous, enduring and indiscriminate destruction they cause—give rise to new and intolerable threats.
4. Nuclear weapons have escaped the bounds of any traditional logic of armaments, balance of power or deterrence, to become instruments of planetary murder-suicide. At the heart of the nuclear weapons issue is the radical negation of others—of their humanity and their equal right to happiness and life. As SGI President Daisaku Ikeda put it, “If we are to put the era of nuclear terror behind us, we must struggle against the real ‘enemy.’ That enemy is not nuclear weapons *per se*, nor is it the states that possess or

develop them. The real enemy that we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons; the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realization of our objectives.”¹

5. Nuclear weapons do not meet the real security needs of people or States. It is clear that the world would be safer without them.

A global consensus

6. We believe that an already shared understanding of the unacceptable nature of nuclear weapons motivated the stipulation of a commitment to nuclear disarmament in Article VI of the NPT.² The unequivocal nature of this commitment was affirmed in the Final Document unanimously adopted by the 2010 NPT Review Conference, along with deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and the resolve to achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.³

7. It is therefore clear that the present negotiating conference, and the Convention it seeks to produce, are fully compatible with and supportive of the objectives of the NPT, which is the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. In this sense, constructive engagement with and participation in, this negotiating conference is an appropriate and indeed necessary opportunity for all States Parties to the NPT to fulfill their commitments under the Treaty.

8. With all these in mind, we propose that the following elements be considered and incorporated in the Convention:

Humanitarian consequences

9. The Convention preamble opens with an expression of deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, citing the specific nature of these consequences and the legal reasoning that makes the prohibition of nuclear weapons necessary and appropriate.

10. We welcome this clear statement of the underlying rationale and foundations for the Convention. These could, however, be stated in even broader and more comprehensive terms, by citing not only international

¹ Ikeda, Daisaku. 2009. “Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition.” <http://www.sgi.org/content/files/about-us/president-ikedas-proposals/AntinuclearProposal20090908.pdf>

² UNODA. 1978. “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.” Article VI. <http://disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/npt/text>

³ UN. 2010. “Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.” NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol.I). [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20\(VOL.I\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20(VOL.I))

humanitarian law, but also human rights law, in particular the individual and collective right to life.

11. To this end, we propose an additional preambular paragraph after the paragraph referring to the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations:

Bearing also in mind the inherent right to life which is declared in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,^{4 5}

12. We also feel that the preamble could be strengthened by more explicit acknowledgement of the nonmaterial impacts of nuclear weapons on the human person and human dignity, something found in their potential to instantaneously obliterate and render meaningless the painstaking efforts of countless generations of humanity.

13. To this end, we would like to propose an additional preambular paragraph:

Noting that the continued existence of nuclear weapons hampers people's ability to envisage a hopeful future and thus threatens human dignity, one of the principle objects of protection under international humanitarian law,

The role of women and youth

14. While the Convention notes the “disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on maternal health and on girls,” we feel that a fuller account of both the gender- and age-disparate impacts of nuclear weapons, as well as the role of women and youth, is important, as the active engagement of these constituencies will be essential to ensuring the success of the Convention.

15. To this end, we would like to propose an additional preambular paragraph after the paragraph referring to the purpose and principles of the Charter of the United Nations:

Bearing in mind UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security,^{6 7}

⁴ UN. 1948. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” Article 3.
<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

⁵ OHCHR. 1966. “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.” Article 6.
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>

⁶ UNSC. 2000. “Resolution 1325 (2000).” S/RES/1325 (2000).
[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325\(2000\)-E.pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ods/S-RES-1325(2000)-E.pdf)

⁷ UNSC. 2015. “Resolution 2250 (2015).” S/RES/2250 (2015)*.
<http://unoy.org/wp-content/uploads/SCR-2250.pdf>

A world free from nuclear weapons

16. Embedded in the Convention are a set of ethical, indeed transformational, aspirations shared by people everywhere. Further clarifying these would strengthen the ethical foundations of the Convention and could make it a more effective focus for the energies of public conscience.

17. To this end, we would like to propose a modification of the preambular clause, “*Bearing in mind* that the prohibition of nuclear weapons would be an important contribution towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament,” to:

Bearing in mind that the prohibition of nuclear weapons would be an important contribution towards comprehensive nuclear disarmament leading to a safer world for all and achieving the peace and security of a world free from nuclear weapons,⁸

In the name of, and for the sake of, humanity

18. Although the Convention is to be adopted by States—and perhaps it will at first be adopted only by States that do not now possess nuclear weapons—it could be argued that it should rightfully be adopted in the name of all humankind. This is because it speaks to the concerns and aspirations of humanity and embodies the qualities of moral vision and agency that are at the heart of what it means to be human: our capacity to choose hope over fear, faith over suspicion, creation over destruction, life over death.

19. In light of the special character of the Convention, the role played by civil society in its formulation to date, and the need for the participation and contribution of civil society going forward, it would be welcome if this could be reflected in the language of the preambular clauses.

20. To this end, we would like to propose a modification of the clause, “Determined to act towards that end,” to:

Determined to act towards that end, in the name of humanity, for human security and the long-term well-being of all inhabitants of our planet,

The vital role of disarmament education

21. We welcome the last preambular paragraph stressing “the role of public conscience in the furthering of the principles of humanity.” Nuclear disarmament education has the power to communicate and strengthen

⁸ UN. 2010. “Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.” NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol.I). [Part I.Conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions/I.Nuclear disarmament/A.Principles and objectives/i.]. [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20\(VOL.I\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20(VOL.I))

international norms prohibiting nuclear weapons, to extend and empower the reach of public conscience and increase momentum for comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

22. As part of general obligations, currently stipulated in Article 1, the Convention should contain operational paragraphs with positive obligations for all States Parties to the Convention to support disarmament education both within their own States and globally.

23. To this end, we would like to propose an additional clause as part of general obligations stipulated in Article 1:

Each State Party shall provide nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education in order to maintain and strengthen this Convention and to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons. The knowledge and experience of the immense destructive power of nuclear weapons, as well as the injury and death they cause, must be shared worldwide and passed from generation to generation. Such education should foster the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to achieve and sustain a world free from nuclear weapons.

A global quest for security for all

24. We welcome the recognition of the Hibakusha, an originally Japanese term that can now be understood to signify all victims of the production, testing and use of nuclear weapons. The determination of these victims that no one anywhere experiences what they have endured is the vital heart of the Convention.

25. The understanding that all members of the human family live under the threat of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons, and in this sense are all potential Hibakusha, can serve as the basis for global solidarity, mustering the voices of people, mobilizing public conscience and individual action, and generating the political will to overcome all obstacles toward the realization of a world free from nuclear weapons.