



**THE NEW MOMENTUM FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT:
NUCLEAR REALITY OR NUCLEAR HYPOCRISY**

By
Jody Williams
Chair, Nobel Women's Initiative

*A speech for the 62nd Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference:
For Peace and Development: Disarm Now!
9-11 September 2009, Mexico City, Mexico*

Listening to the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we maybe – just maybe can get some sense of the horror of a nuclear attack. We can try to imagine blasts that destroy cities; intense flashes and waves of fire that vaporise the living, leaving behind only shadows on stone. We've seen pictures of those shadows, after all. And for survivors, there is the slow insidious sickness and death from radiation killing from within and also harming genetic codes resulting in damage to our children and our children's children.

Even as we feel guilty that others have experienced such terror, it is impossible not to be thankful to have been spared the personal horror of surviving a nuclear attack. At the same time, like many people of my generation and since, I grew up in total fear of nuclear bombs and nuclear war. Born in 1950, I was part of the "duck and cover" generation -- grade school children of the 1950s and 60s who had to practice how to protect ourselves in the event of nuclear attack.

At the sound of a warning siren, we scrambled to sit under our desks as quickly as possible, wrap our arms around our legs and curl our heads into our knees – a sitting fetal position. During other nuclear practice drills, we'd file rapidly into the gymnasium, line up around its walls and assume that same fetal position. There were no windows in the gym so the thinking was that we'd even be safer there -- at least there would be no shattering glass flying around the room.

Even as a child I must have recognized the total absurdity of those nuclear practice drills. When I'd sit and dream about things I really, really wanted, at the top of the list was my family's own private bomb shelter. If it were built just right, surely it would save us. But then I'd just begin to worry about what it would be like to finally dare to emerge from the bomb shelter. Everything would be in total ruin. Everybody we knew would be dead. Then I wouldn't be able to avoid thinking that perhaps, after all, it would have just been better to die along with them and the world as I knew it.

No children anywhere should have to grow up with such fear. No people anywhere should ever again have to suffer a nuclear attack.

It's absurd that children were taught to believe that curling up into a ball underneath their tiny grade school desks would protect them from direct nuclear attack. It's exponentially more absurd that a tiny number of people in the world can sit in remarkable isolation from the majority's desire for nuclear abolition. It is truly terrifying that these people can hold us all hostage to the possibility of nuclear war and continue pressing and planning for new nuclear weapons and holding on to doctrines of nuclear deterrence or even worse – the nuclear policies of the “Bush Doctrine.”

We must stop accepting such nuclear absurdity. We can no longer accept anywhere or from anyone the nuclear hypocrisy of rousing rhetoric covering a weak incrementalist approach to banning nuclear weapons or worse -- back peddling. We must single-mindedly push now for an international convention that completely bans the use, production, trade and stockpiling of nuclear weapons for all time.

As some of you know, my own experience in disarmament has been mostly related to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which was successful in partnering with like-minded governments and international bodies and agencies and bringing about the Mine Ban Treaty in 1997. For the first time in history, a conventional weapon widely used for generations around the world was completely banned. Not only that, but the model of civil society partnering with governments to effectively deal with a problem inspired others to use the model to address other issues.

In the disarmament arena, the most successful example would be the work of the Cluster Munition Coalition, launched in late 2003. The pressure of that coalition helped push governments to coalesce around the leadership of Norway to begin negotiations of a treaty to ban cluster bombs. Again through the partnership of the non-governmental organizations and like-minded governments, the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions was born. That success again demonstrated that citizen diplomacy is key to moving governments to take action that they otherwise would not take if left to their own devices.

The Mine Ban Treaty is a decade older than the Convention on Cluster Munitions and is firmly established with 156 states parties to the Mine Ban Treaty. Challenges remain, including its universalization, large areas remaining to be cleared of mines and extremely pressing, socio-economic integration of landmine survivors. I believe the Treaty has been so successful because the International Campaign to Ban Landmines has never ceased its work and continues working with governments to make sure the treaty is fully implemented and complied with.

The much younger Convention on Cluster Munitions still has much work before it before it enters into force. But as with the case of the Landmine Campaign, the Cluster Munition Coalition which has been the engine of change on the issue of banning cluster munitions remains committed to working toward that goal and then the full implementation of and compliance with the Convention.

Of course landmines and cluster munitions are not the only weapons of concern. NGO work to stop the proliferation of small arms and light weapons – a very daunting goal – continues unabated. Each of these, and all of the other disarmament challenges facing the world today, are important and require the time and attention of civil society and governments alike to find solutions for these disarmament issues.

Broadly tackling disarmament means tackling militarism head on. We must pressure countries to meet their long-standing obligations under Article 26 of the UN Charter which says that “[i]n order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources, the Security Council shall be responsible for formulating...plans to be submitted to the Members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments.”

It's been almost 65 years and absolutely nothing has been done to meet that obligation. Imagine how the world might be today in terms of sustainable peace and sustainable development if that Article 26 obligation had been fully met. Just to get a sense of how much money we are talking about, studies have indicated that over the years the United States alone has spent more than USD 6 trillion to build 70,000 nuclear weapons, conduct more than 1,000 nuclear tests and deploy and maintain a worldwide network of delivery systems, sensors and command and communications structures.

All of the issues I've mentioned are important and worthy of serious discussion and work. But for the rest of my time here today, I am going to focus on the absolutely critical issue of nuclear disarmament. Today, there are nine nations that possess nuclear weapons – China, India, Israel, France, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, the US and the UK. There are concerns about Iran's nuclear intentions and increasing anxiety about Myanmar wanting to obtain the weapons as well. Few want to think of nuclear weapons in the hands of non-state armed groups, whatever their stripe. Nuclear terrorism is not something any of us want to consider.

But I don't want to focus on the horrors of nuclear weapons or on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the moment. I believe, like many, many others, that it is possible to abolish nuclear weapons. And we are standing at a crossroads of historic proportion. We can choose to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world today, eliminate them completely and start building sustainable peace and security in the world with the resources no longer poured into those weapons. Or we can stand by and listen to strong words followed by weak and vague actions that, by design or ineptitude, fritter away this chance, and a new nuclear arms race spirals out of control.

In the last couple of years we have seen a reinvigoration of calls and action for nuclear disarmament, some of which I have personally found completely stunning. Who would have ever expected such Cold Warriors as Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn – not once but twice from the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* in January 2007 and again in 2008 -- to call for nuclear disarmament led by the United States? Then the launching in December 2008 of Global Zero, which brings together former heads of state, former foreign ministers, former defense ministers, former national security advisors and more than twenty former top military commanders in support of a plan for the phased, verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

Who wasn't heartened when presidential candidate Barack Obama's platform included nuclear abolition and even more so when he quickly reiterated that call as President of the United States – the country which, along with Russia, holds thousands and thousands more nuclear weapons than the rest of the world combined. Then speaking in Prague on April 5 of this year, he said, “One nuclear weapon exploded in one city...could kill hundreds of thousands of people. And no matter where it happens, there is no end to what the consequences might be – for our global safety, our security, our society, our economy – to our ultimate survival.” He clearly stated the commitment of the US to “seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”

His meetings with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, their vows to cut their nuclear stockpiles and ensuing negotiations to do so are good signs. But there is much, much more to be done both to bolster those first steps and to insure that there is a process that makes sense and moves nuclear abolition forward with urgency. We must, as members of civil society and as non-governmental organizations, ask what more we can do to broaden and deepen the ongoing efforts of NGOs around the world working to abolish nuclear weapons. What are key issues that we must focus on in the short, medium and long-term to build unstoppable global momentum and unshakeable political will that will result in the elimination of those weapons?

As I mentioned before, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines was successful beyond our wildest expectations. We took an issue that many at the time called a “utopian dream” and created enough political pressure around the world to result in governments beginning to take unilateral steps to deal with the landmine problem. Those individual actions provided the necessary momentum and built sufficient political will so that governments that believed in the ban and civil society organizations became strong partners in the process that gave the world the Mine Ban Treaty. A very similar process resulted in the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It can be done again to ban nuclear weapons.

The work to prohibit landmines and cluster munitions has been called “micro-disarmament” by some and not always as a compliment. There is absolutely no question that abolishing nuclear weapons is a far more daunting enterprise. Yet it is also **NOT** an impossible goal.

First and foremost, we need to have a coherent strategy to lay the groundwork for the abolition of nuclear weapons. At its core must be the fundamental objective of successful negotiation of a **nuclear weapons convention** – a treaty or framework agreement for the complete prohibition of the development, production, trade, acquisition, and stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons. That convention must also set out the timetables and conditions for the verified dismantlement and elimination of existing arsenals.

It is not as if this is a new idea. The UN Secretary-General put this at the top of his five-point disarmament proposal last year. He talked about states pursuing the goal of nuclear disarmament through agreement on a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments or by “negotiating a nuclear-weapons convention, backed by a strong system of verification, as has long been proposed at the United Nations.”

The nuclear weapon states say that it is “premature” to talk about negotiating a nuclear weapon convention. This is sheer nonsense designed to derail real discussion of banning the weapons.

Governments negotiated a comprehensive test ban treaty when they wanted international law and verification to replace the voluntary moratoria some nuclear powers had undertaken on nuclear testing. At the end of the cold war nations finalised the Chemical Weapons Convention to eliminate chemical weapons. When we wanted to ban landmines, we negotiated a Mine Ban Treaty. When we wanted to ban cluster munitions, we negotiated a Convention on Cluster Munitions. Calling for the appropriate treaty is the normal and obvious way to proceed in order to generate the necessary political will and momentum to achieve a weapons ban.

NOT to be calling for negotiations on some kind of nuclear weapon convention or framework would be the more bizarre approach. It would seem to imply that we could somehow have nuclear disarmament without coming to grips with the legal, technical, safety, verification and other kinds of requirements necessary to confidently ensure that nuclear weapons have been eliminated. Talk about a world free of nuclear weapons is simply not serious unless governments are willing to put a nuclear weapons convention on the agenda.

In his five-point disarmament proposal, the Secretary-General also referred to a model Nuclear Weapons Convention drafted by NGO experts and circulated to all UN member states at the request of Costa Rica and Malaysia. He stated that it “offers a good point of departure.” But the way some governments reacted you’d have thought they were being asked to sign on the dotted line immediately, without actually negotiating a nuclear ban treaty themselves – which is, of course, patently absurd.

The model Nuclear Weapons Convention drawn up by NGOs simply offers suggested ways to think about addressing some of the tough technical, legal and verification problems likely to be encountered -- but they are just suggestions meant to be helpful, not to usurp the role of governments. When we banned landmines, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and some of its members created drafts of ban treaties they would like to see. When we banned cluster munitions, the Cluster Munition Coalition and some of its members crafted treaty language and principles that they thought would be useful in negotiating the actual convention that bans cluster munitions.

Just as in those cases, with a Nuclear Weapons Convention, it is governments that will negotiate the actual treaty, which will no doubt end up looking very different from this suggested model. The point, however, is to get that process started. For that, we have to put a nuclear weapons convention on the disarmament agenda and make it a priority.

Getting the message about the need for a Nuclear Weapons Convention across to our governments is one of the greatest challenges facing civil society today. Many NGOs, including the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and networks such as Mayors for Peace and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament are already working on this. Every NGO represented here must also add our voices and take up the issue with our own governments -- all but four are parties to the NPT.

One extremely important opportunity for NGOs to work on this is to make sure the issue of a Nuclear Weapons Convention is raised at the upcoming Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (the NPT) due to be held in New York in May 2010. This is, of course, in addition to all the efforts being made to ensure that a strong and successful outcome of that Review Conference.

In the NPT process, some states have already called for negotiations of a Nuclear Weapons Convention and language noting this has been included in three of the Chairs’ summaries from PrepCom meetings held from 2007-2009. However, for there to be any chance of including a call for such negotiations in a final document from the 2010 Review Conference, NGOs must get as many governments as possible to include reference to negotiating a nuclear weapons convention - preferably with the target date of 2020 – into their opening statements and relevant working papers. If we can convince them to so, we could make this objective a reality.

Linked with this, there are other steps we can take to pressure governments that would go a long way toward unblocking obstacles to nuclear disarmament. There is no dearth of work for us to tackle and all of it is important. The elimination of nuclear weapons will be impossible without bold, involved and sustained government leadership. Nuclear armed states must demonstrate their real commitment to give up their weapons by immediately taking multiple, concrete actions to build confidence around the world. A treaty between the US and Russia to replace the START treaty before it expires at the end of this year is certainly one measure that can do much to begin to build such confidence.

Other key objectives for NGOs to focus our work on include 1) getting individual countries as well as NATO to change their nuclear doctrine, 2) working for the earliest entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and 3) pressing countries to stop nuclear hypocrisy.

The outcome of the US Nuclear Posture Review now underway is critically important. Not only will it set US nuclear policies for the next decade but it will also send a strong signal to the rest of the world as to what the nuclear intentions of the US really are. While President Obama's overarching policy goal of nuclear abolition is encouraging, the devil is in the details. To have real credibility in leading the world toward nuclear abolition the US must change its current aggressive nuclear doctrine to reflect that goal.

Left to the nuclear bureaucracy, as is happening right now, such an outcome is at extremely high risk. There is too much vested interest in modernising nuclear weapons and billions and billions of dollars at stake. President Obama himself must pay attention to what positions the Pentagon, the nuclear weapons laboratories and the high-ranking – but often old thinking – staffers writing the US Nuclear Posture Review are advancing. He must shape the outcome of the process to meet his goal of nuclear abolition.

President Obama needs to hear from you loud and clear from all corners of the world that you want the US Nuclear Posture Review to change the current aggressive nuclear policies with doctrine that clearly and unequivocally moves the world toward nuclear disarmament. The review must recognize and embrace the need to drastically reduce the number of such weapons in US stockpiles. If it doesn't it will be nuclear hypocrisy. It would undermine the President's leadership and clearly demonstrate that while he talks the talk, the US is not willing to walk the walk.

At the same time, NATO is reviewing its strategic concept. Most citizens in NATO countries want the US to take its nuclear weapons out of Europe and at the very least a change in policy to a doctrine of "no first use." As it is now, policy allows for NATO to use nuclear weapons first, even against countries that do not have nuclear weapons.

Even in Japan, which suffered deeply from the atomic annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, some government officials are determined to keep the US nuclear umbrella, including insisting on retention of first-use policies of nuclear deterrence. They are exerting significant pressure for the US to keep a large nuclear arsenal for extended nuclear deterrence purposes.

These aren't just issues for the United States or for NATO countries and Japan. They affect us all. European and Japanese NGOs have been in the forefront of efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. We must work harder to support their work. NATO, along with the US, must change its policies – or we will be seeing more nuclear hypocrisy.

In addition to US and NATO nuclear policies, we also need to challenge other nuclear deterrence doctrines based on using or threatening to use nuclear weapons. Currently, “first use” is the policy not only of the US, but also of Russia, Britain, France and Pakistan. They must be pressured to change those policies now.

We also need to go much further than that and outlaw the use of nuclear weapons altogether. This could be done most quickly through the UN Security Council or by having the International Criminal Court declare the use of nuclear weapons to be a crime against humanity. Let’s not forget that the use of chemical weapons was banned before the comprehensive treaty was finally negotiated. In other words, it has been done before with other weapons of mass destruction, it can be done again with nuclear weapons.

Another obstacle is UK policy. Government officials have taken a strong rhetorical position on nuclear abolition while at the same time the government stands on the brink of replacing Trident nuclear subs and thus renewing its nuclear weapons for another 30-50 years - blatant nuclear hypocrisy. There is a major campaign underway in Britain to reverse the 2007 parliamentary decision to replace Trident taken by Tony Blair’s government and instead become a “disarmament laboratory” to pave the way for the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

The UK also needs to hear from you loud and clear from all corners of the world that you want them to support disarmament and not begin the next generation of nuclear weapons. The British government needs to know that in the eyes of the world they will violate their NPT obligations and weaken the non-proliferation regime if they go ahead with a new generation of nuclear weapons. If we can get one nuclear weapon state to renounce its reliance on nuclear weapons and move toward zero, it will have far-reaching impact. It is time for definitive leadership, not just each waiting for the others to “do something first.”

We must also work to support entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Nine states, including the US and China, are currently obstructing the treaty from coming into force. NGOs have an important part to play in persuading these hold outs and the others – Egypt, Israel, Iran and Indonesia to ratify or, in the case of India, Pakistan and North Korea to sign as well as ratify the test ban treaty.

These are the major pressure points I wanted to highlight where NGOs can step up our work now. I haven’t spent much time dwelling on some of the more traditional steps and measures associated with nuclear disarmament such as a fissile material cut-off treaty or the US-Russian negotiations on the follow-on to the START treaty that I’ve mentioned earlier. Such agreements are important and, done well, they can assuredly accelerate progress towards nuclear disarmament. But since such incremental steps are already being worked on by governments, I wanted to put them into the larger context of the urgent imperative to not just pursue the better management of nuclear weapons at lower numbers but to press immediately for the total elimination of nuclear weapons through a nuclear weapons convention.

In my short time here today, I’ve had to radically limit the many other issues I would have liked discuss. Even on the topic of nuclear abolition, I’ve barely touched the surface of what civil society must do so that our “utopian vision” becomes the feasible reality of a nuclear weapons convention that will finally and forever ban the use, production, trade, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

As every one of us here today knows a fundamental element that is key to successfully reaching that goal is the pressing need for substantially broadening and deepening involvement of NGOs and civil society in every part of the world in the work to ban nuclear weapons. The NGO campaigns and networks that have long worked on nuclear abolition need the sustained involvement of as many in this room that can make such a commitment.

The world needs to know that we are here and our determination and commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons is unstoppable. The work of International Campaign to Ban Landmines might have been “micro-disarmament” but in every single corner of the world people knew of us and knew what we were doing and celebrated with us in their hearts when we succeeded in banning landmines.

Through my experience with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, I know much of our success rested on the collective, planned and very deliberate work of the independent NGOs that make up the Campaign. Nor did we discriminate. The Landmine Campaign worked closely and collaboratively with the International Committee of the Red Cross and various UN agencies to advance our common goal of banning landmines.

Information is power. As founding coordinator of the Landmine Campaign, I worked overtime to make certain that all the members of the Campaign knew about the work and plans of every one else. I **shared information** and by doing that **shared “power.”** By sharing all our plans and experiences, successes and failures, we moved together as a solid bloc – we were the proverbial “well oiled machine.”

If I could only make one concrete suggestion to NGOs, networks, and coalitions working to abolish nuclear weapons it would revolve around communication, communication and more communication. **Share information;** create more “power” for and buy-in from everyone who strives to ban nuclear weapons. **Raise the visibility of all** working to abolish nuclear weapons -- **not just one or a handful at the cost of the many.** Don’t focus on maintaining turf, **focus on** what is really important – the **goal of banning nuclear weapons.** Without **deep, broad and sustained collective action** by NGOs and civil society to seize upon this incipient momentum to ban nuclear weapons and increase its power and drive, the rather fragile political will out there will evaporate more quickly than it appeared.

If we lose this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to stop the world’s nuclear arms race and start building sustainable peace and security in a world free of nuclear weapons, we could easily tip in the opposite direction and see a renewed and volatile arms race with an increasing number of players. If this were to happen, the probability of the use of a nuclear weapon would increase exponentially.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki have experienced the utter horror of nuclear attack. One Hiroshima was one Hiroshima too many. The second attack on Nagasaki was perhaps even more reprehensible and incomprehensible. We must strive to make sure that there will never again be a Hiroshima or a Nagasaki. Ever. Anywhere.

I visited Hiroshima one time, in August of 2006. At the epicenter of the nuclear attack, I swear I could feel the spirits of those whose lives were lost in an instant on August 6 so many decades ago beseeching all who came there to never let such a thing happen again. If not us, who? If not now, perhaps never. We simply cannot allow “never” to happen. We must join together and seize this historic moment and work to ensure that the opportunity to create a world free of nuclear weapons is not lost and all the nations of the world move quickly toward the successful negotiation of an unambiguous, comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Thank you.

*For more information,
please visit our website at www.nobelwomensinitiative.org
or contact:
Rachel Vincent - Manager, Media and Communications
613-569-8400 or rvincent@nobelwomensinitiative.org*