

The Hon Stephen Smith MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Wednesday 19 May 2010  
Cc'd the Australian delegation at the NPT RevCon

Dear Minister Smith,

**re: Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2010**

We write with deep concern about Australia's position and participation in the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, currently being held at the United Nations in New York.

While civil society expectations remain high for a positive consensus outcome from this conference, there is yet to be any sign of real progress or substantial input from our government and this is both alarming, as we are more than half way through the conference, and unwelcome.

Like many non-government organisations and governments alike, we recognise that this RevCon presents a historic opportunity for the international community to move towards nuclear disarmament.

We welcome your reaffirmation of "Australia's firm commitment to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons" and your recognition that "The goal of a world without nuclear weapons can only be achieved with commitment to action by both nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states." (3 May speech to General Debate at the 2010 NPT RevCon).

We remind you again of the 2007 ALP pre-election promises made by then Shadow Foreign Affairs Minister Robert McClelland that committed the Rudd government to "drive the international agenda for a nuclear weapons convention." Last year the bipartisan report of the cross-party Joint Standing Committee on Treaties report 106, requested by Prime Minister Rudd to examine how Australia could better contribute to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, recommended Australia actively support a nuclear weapons convention (NWC) and invest research and consultation resources in its development. The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) has also recommended preparatory work on a NWC.

We note that the government responded to the ICNND report through your press release of 3 May. However the official response to the Commission report falls well short of the current opportunity, and the scale and urgency of the danger posed to all by nuclear weapons.

The government has recently made its support for an NWC so heavily qualified that it has been relegated to meaninglessness and inaction. In an earlier response to the JSCOT report, your Government referred to the NWC as a long-term goal. Reference to a NWC is not made in the Australian statement to the RevCon, Australia's statement to the UN Disarmament Commission in March, or in the Australia-Japan Joint Package on Nuclear Disarmament submitted to the RevCon.

Yet the UN Secretary General and a strong list of the world's governments have spoken in support of an NWC at the RevCon, and the discussion about the need for a Convention at the RevCon continues. RevCon President Ambassador Libran Cabactulan has described an NWC as one of the "three key issues that need to be addressed" by the conference.

It is evident in the global discussion on answers to the problem of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament that the NWC is an idea whose time has come. The Australian government seems relentlessly out of step with the majority of States Parties to the NPT calling for a convention to achieve elimination of nuclear weapons, and is both failing to play a leadership role and to deliver on its promises.

We note that, in relation to disarmament the Australia-Japan package contains little more than an affirmation of measures agreed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference and the 2000 RevCon. We do not see that it contains any significant or substantive new initiatives. To see progress in this RevCon it is vital that we move

beyond simply holding the line on past commitments and crucially develop a roadmap for getting to the world free of nuclear weapons.

We welcome your statement in the government's response to the ICNND report that "the United States knows that Australia would be comfortable if the United States were to reach its stated objective of making deterrence of nuclear attack the sole purpose of its nuclear weapons." However there are inherent contradictions to this in your statement in the ICNND response (on 3 May) that "Australian defence policy acknowledges the value to Australia of the protection afforded by extended nuclear deterrence under the US alliance". Statements like this only serve to reinforce the 'value' and strategic importance of nuclear weapons. In addition, the 2009 Defence White Paper undermines the government's commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons by anticipating reliance on extended nuclear deterrence until 2030, when major progress in disarmament – and potentially nuclear weapons abolition – should be achievable within that timeframe.

Australia should be working to assist, promote and build defence policies without nuclear weapons. Australia could very usefully help counter the arguments of those who oppose decisive action towards a world free of nuclear weapons by making clear that global and regional security would be better served without nuclear weapons.

In view of Australia's commitment to see the NPT strengthened at this month's Review Conference, the undersigned organisations encourage the government to:

- Speak strongly in favour of immediate commencement of preparations for multilateral negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention;
- Advocate that preparations for commencement of such negotiations be agreed at the current RevCon, with a view to negotiations on a global treaty to eliminate and outlaw nuclear weapons being underway by the next RevCon in 2015;
- Announce that it will promote and assist the creation of a world without nuclear weapons by undertaking a review of options and processes to remove nuclear weapons from Australia's defence policies, and urge other nuclear-allied states to do the same.

Australian civil society urges your delegation and our government to continue to speak out strongly on nuclear disarmament. We ask your government to seize the opportunity at this important time to urge strong action to eliminate nuclear threats to our global community.

Yours sincerely,

Assoc Prof Tilman Ruff  
Chair, **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons**

Dr Bill Williams  
President, **Medical Association for Prevention of War**

Dr Jim Green  
National Nuclear Campaigner, **Friends of the Earth Australia**

Stephen Campbell  
Head of Campaigns, **Greenpeace Australia Pacific**

Don Jarrett  
President, **Australian Peace Committee**

Dr Hideko Nakamura  
Representative, **Japanese for Peace**

Phil Glendenning  
Director, **Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education**

Dr Marianne Hanson  
Reader in International Relations School of Political Science & International Studies, **The University of Queensland**

Professor Stuart Rees  
Professor Emeritus and Director, **Sydney Peace Foundation**

Professor Peter King  
Professor, Research Associate, Government and International Relations,  
Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, **The University of Sydney**

Lyn Lane and Ruth Russell  
**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom**

Peter Murphy  
Coordinator, **Search Foundation**

Dale Hess  
**The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Peace and Social Justice Network**

Mairi Neil and Amy Duncan  
Joint Coordinators, **Southern Branch of the Union of Australian Women**

Brenda Conochie  
Coordinator, **Environment House, WA**

John Hallam  
Convenor, **Nuclear Flashpoints**

Judith Homa  
CEO, **SPLICE Foundation Social Change Agents**

Jo Vallentine  
Chair, **Anti-Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia**

Judy Blyth  
Convenor, **People for Nuclear Disarmament, WA**

Dr Jane Baker  
President, **Australian Federation of Graduate Women**

Harry Kerr  
**Pax Christi Australia**

Helen Relph  
National Convenor, **Mayors for Peace Australia**

Irene Gale  
Trustee/Secretary, **Ron Gray Human Rights Foundation**

Kerrie-Ann Garlick  
**Footprints for Peace Australia**

Rev. Elenie Poulos  
National Director, UnitingJustice Australia, **Uniting Church in Australia**

Denis Doherty  
**Australian Anti-Bases Campaign Coalition**

The Rev. Dr Wes Campbell  
**Uniting Church minister** and Chaplain to University of Melbourne.