

Message of Dissociation from IPB criticism of Nobel Peace Award
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I formally disassociate myself from the International Peace Bureau (IPB) [statement criticizing the Nobel Peace Prize Award to US President Barack Obama](#). I disagree with the sentiments expressed in the statement.

From my experience working in conjunction with key governments and in international disarmament and arms control forums, President Obama has created a sea-change which is already producing results. He has re-started bilateral negotiations with Russia on the next START treaty. He has halted the most provocative plans from the previous US administration for the deployment of Ballistic Missile programs in Europe. He has removed the major block to multilateral disarmament negotiations thus enabling the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva to adopt a program of work after a 12-year hiatus. He has re-started the process for US ratification of the CTBT. He has chaired a special session of the UN Security Council on nuclear disarmament.

Most importantly, he is the first US President to unambiguously put forward the vision of a nuclear-weapons-free world, and to acknowledge that the US, as the only country to have used nuclear weapons against another country, has a moral responsibility to lead the effort to achieve such a world. This has enabled comprehensive nuclear disarmament proposals to be seriously discussed in Washington, other key capitals and at the United Nations – a big change from the last eight years when the only proposals which had any chance of success were dealing only with non-proliferation.

The IPB statement is critical of the lack of progress regarding nuclear issues in Iran and North Korea. I would agree that there is still a long way to go for success. However, the Obama Administration has started on the basis of negotiated settlements to the problems – a much improved climate for the possibility of success than under the previous US administration. Already this appears to have a positive impact in North-East Asia with North Korea indicating a willingness to return to Six-Party talks, and the proposal for a North-East Asian nuclear-weapon-free-zone is now making it onto the table as a possible option.

It is also true that President Obama has not cut the bloated US military budget, and perhaps deserves the IPB criticism of this. On the other hand, we should also recognize that in his first month in office President Obama rejected a strong push by the weapons corporations and military for an increase in military budget as part of the economic stimulus package. President Obama instead opted to put the additional stimulus package primarily towards renewable energy industries (albeit after rescuing the financial, housing and automotive sectors).

Of course IPB members and other advocates for peace and disarmament would like him to go further and faster. However, we must understand the very intense political forces trying to derail his efforts. The weapons manufacturers, in particular, have huge budgets for counter-lobbying. So do the right-wing political forces that are clinging to political dominance doctrines. If these forces prevent President Obama from succeeding on the initial steps, he will not have any political capital to achieve the more ambitious elements of his vision. IPB and other peace advocates should be working to counter the political forces opposing President Obama, not criticizing him for failing to deliver a perfect world in his first months as President of a very militarized country.