

Time has come for Abolition of Nuclear weapons

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Thank you for once again inviting me to come to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the beautiful month of August and be your partner in this important peace event.

My speech covers three themes relevant for the World Conference against A and H bombs. **First theme:** civilians as victims of war, from Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, to the ongoing wars in the world.

Second theme: How disarmament could help development, and help the many needs in the world, how the military spending could be turned into good, and how much the costs are for nuclear weapons.

Third and last, but not the least: How we could strengthen our common resources to influence the NPT review conference in springtime next year.

First, about civilian victims, from the time of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to Gaza, to Kabul and to Mogadishu.

The day I booked my air ticket for travelling to the world conference against A and H bombs in Japan, I read some breaking news in the newspapers about the Israel war in Gaza, news coming out six month after the war ended at the 18th of January. A small Israeli organisation, **Breaking the Silence** have done a courageous research about what really happened during the war. By interviewing Israeli soldiers “Breaking the Silence” proved that no mercy was to be given to civilian Palestinian. The military order was formulated: “Fire your arms first, and look afterwards who were civilians”.

This reminds me of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 64 years ago, military acts directed towards civilians, innocent and ordinary Japanese People, city inhabitants who were by no means parties in the war between Japan and the United States, they just happened to live in cities chosen to be targets for experimental bombings.

The victims in Hiroshima and the victims in Nagasaki were mainly civilians, as were the victims in the recent war in Gaza – 1.400 Palestinians killed during 21 days of modern war.

Civilians have become the main military target, from the time of the second world war through out contemporary history.

In the ongoing war in Afghanistan civilians are trapped in between the Taliban troops and the American and allied troops. Suicide bombers and terrorist acts contribute by targeting places where usually many civilians are gathered. In the cruel war in Somalia civilians are the victims of an endless fighting between clan groups, private militias, religious fanatics and the

government.

These are wars fought with so called conventional weapons, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was as we all know made by nuclear weapons – but the victims are all the time civilian innocent people, wishing to live in peace.

In the beginning of this summer I visited Iraq, a country still in war. My visit included a travel to the small city in the northern part of the country, **Halabja, which is as symbolically well known for the use of chemical weapons** against human beings as Hiroshima and Nagasaki are well known for the use of atomic weapon against human beings.

Halabja was attacked by Saddam Hussein and Iraqi governmental airfighters on the 16th and 17th of March 1988. The attack on the small village of Halabja killed immediately between 3.000 and 5.000 people and injured 7.000 to 10.000 in addition. The attack started with rocket bombs and Napalm, and was followed up with helicopters dropping chemical bombs with **mustard gas, the nerve agent sarin and others**, killing and injuring those not yet dead.

In the memorial museum of Halabja you can find images of people killed by the Chemical weapons, people caught in their daily work, and just dying on the spot, workers, women, old people, parents trying to protect their children. The images of the memorial museum of Halabja very much **reminds of the memorial museum of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**.

The attack towards Halabja has rightly been condemned as a crime against humanity, as genocide against civilians. And today we have international conventions banning Biological Weapons and Chemical Weapons.

We are gathered here to remember and to mobilize. The world has got all the argument needed to **Ban also Nuclear weapons**, as the worst form of weapon of Mass destruction.

Victims of war are civilians, as it was in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as it is today in the modern wars in Gaza, in Afghanistan, in Somalia, in Iraq, in too many places all over the world, in need of our solidarity.

My second theme: Disarmament for development, and the costs of nuclear weapons

The International Peace Bureau has a special program, called **Disarmament for Development**, we focus on the enormous costs of war and armament, and how these resources could be used much better to feed the world, to foster development, to diminish the risks of war and support conflict resolution.

Military spending is one of the main problems in a world in economic crisis. At the occasion of the World Conference against A and H bombs the International Peace Bureau will launched a new book, called **“Nuclear Weapons – at what costs”**.

Nuclear weapons not only threaten massive destruction, but they also incur enormous costs. Apart from the damage caused by blast, fire and radioactive fallout from actual use in warfare, the weapons impose major financial, moral and political costs on the nuclear weapon states, and countries that host the weapons. At a time of global economic crisis, when the

international community is also struggling to come up with ways to respond to climate challenge and dwindling energy resources - can this be the right use of public money?

Of course not, and the book “**Nuclear weapons - at what costs**” aims to give some new and fresh arguments to the international campaign against nuclear weapons.

The third, and last theme of this paper, is about the NPT review conference in springtime next year.

Why is the NPT review conference important?

I believe the NPT review conference is utterly important as an event because it gives us, me and you and peace groups and civil society organisations around the world, an opportunity to reach out with a global call for Nuclear Abolition.

It gives us an opportunity to influence, not inside the meeting halls as such, but in the time from now until April-May and opening of the NPT, to reach out, to set our argument, to sign petitions and collect signatures, to arrange meetings and write in the newspapers, to make it clear for every delegate from every country that there is a public demand for Nuclear Disarmament.

The important time is now, from today till the start of the meeting, from Hiroshima to the meeting in New York, **nine months of actions!**

The prospect for reaching true steps towards the abolition of Nuclear weapons has rapidly changed since the world conference against A and H bombs was organised in Hiroshima city last year.

The new development since then, is of course that there is a new president in Washington DC, a president actually speaking of getting rid of nuclear weapons, as Obama did in his speech in Prague earlier this year.

I love to hear the president of the worlds most powerful nation, say as he did in Prague:
“Today I state clearly, and with conviction Americas commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”

Doesn't that sound wonderful, not only in the light of the old fashion style of his predecessor President Bush, but as a statement as such:
“...a world without nuclear weapons...”

But I know all of you are enough experienced and enough knowledgeable to be aware that such a statement does not lead to actual steps in the direction of reducing the number of nuclear weapons.

It may do, if we as the civil society and public opinion responds in a clever and proactive way.

But **we are still far from zero**, and we are far from the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Our vision, the vision of the people, the vision of the international conference on A and H bombs in Japan in August 2009, still has to be put forward without ceasing, our plans

for 2010 and to focus all possible actions in the period from today to the opening of the NPT review conference in April-May 2010 are still valid.

We will have no time for rest until the job is finished!

We are ready to salute President Obama for his vision, but we will constantly remind him the meaning of what he said.

My personal character is such as I am sceptical until I have seen real change, not just heard of the good will. Speech is good, change is needed. We need proof of a new policy from the American administration.

The first test of the vision presented in Prague by President Obama, was the talks that was held after that, about one month ago in Moscow, when President Obama met with the Russian president Medvedev.

Did we see the first steps towards the vision of a world without nuclear weapons materialize from the talk between President Obama and President Medvedev.
No we did not see those signs.

There was an agreement to decrease the number of strategic nuclear warheads and missiles. But not that much, and no statement that this was a step in the march to zero, steps towards the vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

President Obama - it is time for change!

President Obama – it is time to re-cycle your own slogan from the time you were campaigning to be the new president of United states of America.

It is time for change.

United States and **Russia** are the biggest nuclear powers and have the greatest responsibility for reducing their nuclear arsenals. The other handful of states with nuclear capacity, have differing capacity but have in common that they continue planning for their maintenance of nuclear weapons, upgrading their capacity like **England** with Trident and **India** with the recent announced decision to go offshore with their nuclear arsenal.

Some of the nuclear weapons states are party of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, some are not. **North Korea** offers specific problem – North Korea is one of the worlds most hidden, most controlled and most secret countries. With so many basic needs not fulfilled towards its own people, like food for all, and decent development – but they give their priority to develop a nuclear capacity - that is **absolutely scaring!**

But talking about hidden politics, secrets, and development without any public control – when it comes to nuclear policy, all the superpowers, all the nuclear states **acts in a “North Korean way”** to keep the public outside of influence and information.

The talks in Moscow between president Obama and President Medvedev, was not so much about reduction in small figures the number of nuclear warheads, it was actually about

maintaining Weapons of Mass Destruction. Two presidents, claiming to be civilized men, are in the year of 2009 actually sitting together and **jointly agreeing that they will maintain, stockpile, keeping ready for use Weapons of Mass destruction**, and in such a number, that they could destroy all life on earth over and over again.

This is not acceptable.

Biological weapons are banned.

Chemical weapons are banned.

Landmines are banned.

Cluster bombs will be banned.

Change is possible.

Time has come to ban Nuclear weapons.