

Steven Leeper
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Campaign Update

I write with a heavy heart. The Tohoku disaster is still beyond our comprehension. The victims are still in shock. Help is pouring in from around Japan and around the world, but hundreds of thousands remain homeless, hungry, cold and grieving.

Meanwhile, as of March 30, the accident at the Fukushima power plant is still getting worse. The headline in the Japan Times today (March 30) is: "Radioactive water keeps workers out." My understanding is that if the workers really cannot get in there to pour water on the rods, we could see full meltdowns and even explosions. I am praying that by the time you are reading this, the reactors will be under control, but whatever happens, we arrogant human beings have been reminded once more that the power of nature is no joke. Its laws must be obeyed. Now, back to nuclear weapons, another manifestation of human arrogance that must be corrected.

"Whatever happened to the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol?" This question still follows me wherever I go. So let me tell once again the story of the Protocol and bring you up to date on the campaign that has replaced it.

First, please remember that the Protocol was launched in April 2008, during the Bush administration. Do you remember US Ambassador John Bolton and the Bush administration? Does anyone think there was a chance that they would have allowed adoption of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol? The Protocol was not created to be adopted. It was created to intensify and strengthen the 2020 Vision Campaign by spelling out clearly what can and should be done to achieve our Vision. In this effort, the Protocol was a great success.

Please remember as well that Barack Obama changed everything by becoming president of the US and making a certain speech in Prague. During the NPT PrepCom in May 2009, one country after the next rose to

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quote some part of that Prague speech and declare its own commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world. At that point, many diplomats and many in the NGO community felt that, rather than pushing for a Protocol to the NPT, we should start pushing directly for a nuclear weapons convention (NWC), that is, an outright ban on nuclear weapons.

Mayors for Peace rejoiced in the new positive disarmament climate, but we still felt the Protocol had work to do. It was an excellent tool for obtaining grassroots attention and, therefore, applying pressure on governments. Thanks to the Protocol, the Yes! Campaign and Peace Caravan helped enormously to bring the issue of nuclear weapons to a sleeping public. In the end, the Protocol was not adopted, but the campaign did generate considerable pressure. Over 60% of all Japanese municipalities formally signed their support of the Protocol. Nearly 20,000 books about the Protocol were sold, and the Japanese government mentioned the Protocol on the floor during the May 2010 Review Conference.

Well over 2000 Japanese went to New York for that Review Conference, helping to stimulate and fund an important NGO conference, rally and march. The RevCon itself witnessed an intense struggle between the nuclear-weapon-reliant states and the rest of the world. Against significant odds, a Final Document was adopted, and it is widely viewed as progress toward abolition. The overall result of the Conference is seen as positive. Here in Hiroshima, we believe that Mayors for Peace and the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol played important roles in that success.

On the other hand, the Review Conference revealed the true intent of the nuclear-weapon-reliant states. Despite renewed promises to seek a nuclear-weapon-free world, they were obviously determined to continue with business as usual. They rejected every effort to stipulate when or how or where disarmament negotiations should begin. After promising to negotiate for a nuclear-weapon-free world for the past 42 years, they showed that they still have no intention of actually sitting down to talk. At a time when bold,

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positive steps toward abolition were required, the nuclear-weapon states said, “No, we like the world the way it is.”

Fortunately, this infuriating performance by the nuclear-weapon states has inspired a new movement. This movement first appeared in Hiroshima in July. Senator Douglas Roche, in his keynote address to the Hiroshima Conference for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons by 2020, started off by saying, “The time has come.” That is, the time has come for a NWC. The time has come to ban nuclear weapons.

Senator Roche’s speech marked a significant shift in strategy for the disarmament community. Until 2010, most countries and even NGOs opposed the idea of a NWC. They saw no meaning in a convention the nuclear-weapon states refused to sign. Now, however, we are all completely united in calling for the start of negotiations toward a treaty that will specifically and overtly outlaw nuclear weapons.

A NWC even without the nuclear-weapon states will be useful in several ways. First, it will establish a global norm. The world will declare its belief that nuclear weapons are bad. From that point on, nations that have them will be rogues, outside the international consensus.

Second, it will become crystal clear who is working toward a nuclear-weapon-free world and who is not. This clarity will make it easier to apply political, social and even economic pressure on the rogues.

Third, by taking a strong step toward a nuclear-weapon-free world, the international community will create a political climate that make all nuclear-weapons activity more difficult. Once the treaty is in place, we hope the new norm and new control systems will make it significantly more difficult to acquire, develop, deploy or use nuclear weapons.

Fourth, a high-profile global campaign to ban nuclear weapons will grab the

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attention of the general public. Because large majorities in all countries would prefer to live in a nuclear-weapon-free world, we believe that just getting the nuclear threat into the news night after night for two or three years will generate pressure on politicians in those countries to support the ban.

So the disarmament community has decided to pursue a NWC that will clearly outlaw the possession and use of nuclear weapons. However, Mayors for Peace cannot make this happen. It will have to be done by countries. Fortunately, a number of countries are stepping forward to begin the process. Norway, for example, has provided funds for offices of ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) in Geneva and Oslo. Canada, too, has expressed a willingness to begin hosting meetings. However, the strongest movement thus far is being led by Uruguay.

Uruguay has held two meetings in New York, with a third scheduled for next month. The purpose of these meetings is to plan a special ministerial-level disarmament conference that most of the countries involved are hoping will grow into a treaty process. The first meeting held January 18 drew 13 countries. The second meeting on March 24 drew 22 countries.

These meetings and the other efforts by Norway and Canada are all part of behind-the-scenes preparations for a strong, unified, global campaign. I am confident that you will see the emergence of this campaign sometime in 2011. When it does emerge, I hope you will give it your attention, your support, your time and your money. All of us will have to do whatever we can to make this campaign go global and viral. To succeed, it will have to be huge. To be huge, it will have to have support from world leaders, national and international officials, local government officials, celebrities, businessmen and women, professionals and workers in all walks of life, students, and children everywhere. To obtain this level of support, it will have to involve art, film, music, comedy, peace walks, education and unusual feats of strength (like pogo sticking up Mt. Fuji). Therefore, I ask you here and now.

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Please organize art shows, film showings, concerts, comedy nights, lectures, symposia, attempts to enter the Guinness Book of World Records, and anything else you can think of to bring the issue of nuclear weapons to public awareness. Of course, my preference is that all of these events should financially benefit the 2020 Vision Campaign, but the important thing is to make a joyful noise. The choice is ours. Do we want a nuclear-weapon-free world or do we want to be blown off this planet? I very much hope that the upcoming campaign will convince our leaders that the people of this planet intend to liberate ourselves from the nuclear threat. I also hope it will prove to one and all that a nuclear-weapon-free world will be more fun.