

January 29, 2014

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. President,

The 2010 Nuclear Posture Review Report rightly declared: “***It is in the U.S. interest and that of all other nations that the nearly 65-year record of nuclear non-use be extended forever.***” On February 13-14 in Mexico, governments will gather for a second conference on the consequences of nuclear explosions. The point is to develop and disseminate understanding of the consequences, and the inability to respond adequately to them, so as to reinforce the determination, well expressed in the Report, that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

***The United States should be there.*** The aim – and the focus on catastrophic consequences – is completely in accord with your speeches in Prague, Berlin, and elsewhere. In Prague you said: “One nuclear weapon exploded in one city – be it New York or Moscow, Islamabad or Mumbai, Tokyo or Tel Aviv, Paris or Prague – 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.”

***As representatives of organizations working for the global elimination of nuclear weapons, we respectfully urge that you direct the State Department to send a delegation to the Mexico conference and to participate constructively.***

We last wrote you by letter dated June 6, 2013 to urge that you speak at the September 26, 2013 United Nations High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament. While regrettably there was no high-level US representative at the meeting, the United States did make a statement and also joined in a statement made by a UK mission policy advisor (!) on behalf of the United Kingdom, France, and United States.

***It would have been better if the joint statement had not been made at all.*** It conveyed a profoundly negative attitude toward the multiple efforts being made in international forums to stimulate progress on achieving and sustaining a world free of nuclear weapons, stating: “And while we are encouraged by the increased energy and enthusiasm around the nuclear disarmament debate, we regret that this energy is being directed toward initiatives such as this High-Level Meeting, the humanitarian consequences campaign, the Open-Ended Working Group and the push for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.”

In the remaining three years of your Presidency, ***we strongly urge that your administration shed that negative attitude and participate constructively in deliberations and negotiations regarding the creation of a multilateral process to achieve a nuclear weapons free world.***

Opportunities will arise in the Conference on Disarmament, the NPT Review Process, and the UN General Assembly.

Regarding the Conference on Disarmament, in December 2013 the General Assembly adopted a new resolution following up on the High-Level Meeting. The resolution calls for “the urgent commencement of negotiations, in the Conference on Disarmament, for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention” to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. Rather than reflexively rejecting that call, ***the United States should engage in good faith in efforts to make the Conference on Disarmament productive in pursuing the objective for which it was established more than three decades ago: complete nuclear disarmament.***

Finally, ***your administration should work hard to convene soon the conference on a zone free of WMD in the Middle East promised by the 2010 NPT Review Conference.*** Prospects for movement on substantive issues are appreciably higher now than they were a year ago, due to the praiseworthy US-Russian initiative on disarmament of the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal and the encouraging progress on reaching a permanent settlement of disputes over Iran’s nuclear program.

We would appreciate a reply to this letter, and would be happy to meet to discuss the matters it addresses.

Sincerely,



John Burroughs, Executive Director, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy  
[contact for this letter: johnburroughs@lcnp.org; (212) 818-1861;  
866 UN Plaza, Suite 4050, New York, NY 10017]

Joseph Gerson, Disarmament Coordinator, American Friends Service Committee

Kevin Martin, Executive Director, Peace Action

Jacqueline Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation

David Krieger, President, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Ashish Sinha, Program Director, Alliance for Nuclear Accountability

Henry Lowendorf, Chair, Greater New Haven Peace Council

Alfred L. Marder, Honorary President, International Association of Peace Messenger Cities

Alice Slater, Director, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, New York

Marylia Kelley, Executive Director, Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)

Tim Judson, Acting Executive Director, Nuclear Information & Resource Service

Baria Ahmar, Canada/Lebanon coordinator, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament

Blase Bonpane, Ph.D., Director, Office of the Americas

Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, Executive Director, Pax Christi USA

Sheila Croke, Pax Christi Long Island Council

The Rev. David W. Good, Tree of Life Educational Fund

Nydia Leaf, Granny Peace Brigade (New York)

Paul Hodel, Promoting Enduring Peace

Odile Hugonot Haber, Co-Chair, Middle East Committee, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - US

Alan Haber, The Megiddo Peace Project.

David Hartsough, Executive Director, PEACEWORKERS, San Francisco

Valerie Heinonen, o.s.u., Director, Shareholder Advocacy, Dominican Sisters of Hope, Mercy Investment Services, Inc. and Ursuline Sisters of Tildonk, U.S. Province

Margaret Melkonian, Executive Director, Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives

Sr. Rosemarie Pace, Pax Christi New York

Rob van Riet, Coordinator, Disarmament Program, World Future Council

Ellen Rosser, President, World Peace Now

Rev. Kristin Stoneking, Executive Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation

Dr. Kathleen Sullivan, Program Director, Hibakusha Stories

David Swanson, cofounder, WarIsACrime.org

Carol Urner, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2014 Nuclear Weapons Abolition Campaign.

Alyn Ware, Member, World Future Council

Bill Wickersham, Adjunct Professor of Peace Studies, University of Missouri – Columbia

cc:

John Kerry, Secretary of State

Rose Gottemoeller, Acting Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security

Thomas M. Countryman, Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and  
Nonproliferation

Susan Rice, National Security Advisor

Ben Rhodes, Deputy National Security Advisor

Samantha Power, Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Christopher Buck, Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., Conference on Disarmament