

# Abolishing All Nuclear Weapons. Necessary, feasible and increasingly urgent

Malcolm Fraser

## Abolishing All Nuclear Weapons. Necessary, feasible and increasingly urgent

Malcolm Fraser, former Prime Minister of Australia

Hiroshima, 18 April 2010~ In today's world there are two great existential challenges looming over all others. Firstly, the question of climate change. Whatever happened in Copenhagen is far short of what is required.

Too many countries are refusing to pay any price for changes that must be consummated if the world environment is to be safeguarded.

The other great challenge concerns nuclear weapons and it is this subject with which our meeting in Hiroshima is particularly concerned.

It is 65 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed with what by today's standards would be small 'tactical' nuclear weapons. Even though the [global nuclear arsenal](#) is now about one third the size of its peak in 1986, yet this still amounts to the explosive power of over 330,000 Hiroshima-size bombs. Just one Hiroshima-sized bomb detonated over a modern highly populated city could cause up to three quarters of a million immediate deaths, radiation deaths in the hundreds of thousands, and millions exposed to levels of radiation warranting protective action such as evacuation.

The significance of this meeting being held in Hiroshima is not lost on any of us. I hope very much that the [Interaction Council](#) will make a very strong affirmation concerning the need to reach a zero option for nuclear weapons at the

earliest possible opportunity. It won't happen in months and maybe not in a decade but in twenty years we could live in a world free of nuclear weapons. It can be done without jeopardising any country's defence, without placing any country at risk – and we, and the planet, would be so much more secure.

The nuclear crisis in which we find ourselves is profound and we cannot afford to be inattentive. Let us review some of the key elements of this crisis:

First, nuclear materials, technology and expertise are increasingly widespread and accessible. If one of the most impoverished, isolated and technically backward countries, North Korea, is able to develop nuclear weapons using essentially 1950s technology, any government can.

Second, smuggling of fissile materials has been extensive and for years the A.Q. Khan black market network, active in over 30 countries, peddled centrifuges for enriching uranium and Chinese designs for nuclear weapons suitable for missiles, the latter fitting on a single CD. North Korea is reported to have sold nuclear technology and weapons know-how around the world, including to Syria and Burma.

Third, nine countries have nuclear weapons; and nuclear weapons programs have progressed to varying degrees in several more before they were abandoned (such as Libya) or destroyed (such as Iraq).

Fourth, more than 40 countries have the nuclear technology to produce nuclear weapons

within a matter of months if they so chose, by either enriching uranium further from reactor to weapons grade, or extracting plutonium from used nuclear reactor fuel.

Fifth, the non-proliferation regime is terribly inadequate in terms of scope, mandate, application and resources. It has repeatedly failed to prevent or detect nuclear weapons programs, not only in the 3 states always outside the NPT, but also in South Africa, Iraq, Libya and North Korea.

Sixth, as of 15 Dec 2009, of the 189 states party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 22 still did not have comprehensive safeguards agreements with the IAEA in force, and 95 did not have in force an Additional Protocol, the strengthened provisions introduced in 1997 after the discovery of Iraq's well-advanced nuclear weapons program.

Finally, quite apart from states, international terrorists actively seek nuclear weapons, and could buy or steal existing weapons or fissile material. It is the widespread knowledge of nuclear technology, the ease with which that knowledge can be obtained that make the current situation so precarious.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the danger today is even greater than during the Cold War because then, nuclear technology was more limited, proliferation had not proceeded so far, and the major players, as events have proved, were determined to avoid nuclear conflict. The knowledge, expertise and the weapons were in relatively few hands. That has changed. More countries have nuclear weapons, a greater number have potential to develop them. The danger of world terrorism is real and the possibility that a regional nuclear conflict or a terrorists organised incident involving nuclear weapons may occur is greater than ever before. The processes of proliferation and the dangers of nuclear terrorism will grow. The current non-proliferation regime has broken down and now the only safe path for all of us is to work

for and achieve the zero option.

There are three ways in which countries like Japan, my own, and other non nuclear-armed members of nuclear alliances such as NATO can contribute to this objective. First, by planning, in the near future, for security arrangements in which nuclear weapons have no place. Second, countries should be working together to define a comprehensive treaty which would underpin, verify and sustain the abolition of nuclear weapons. And third, the safeguards and procedures to make sure that nuclear materials cannot be diverted from civil to military use need to be greatly strengthened and reinforced. All fissile materials - whether designated as military or civilian - must either be eliminated or brought under international control.

Japan has recently made a significant step, by making clear that its military relationship with the United States should not stand in the way of progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. On the way to achieving this goal, the government of Japan favours prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-armed NPT member states, with the sole purpose of nuclear weapons being to deter their use by others. This is a welcome first step and is to be applauded because all countries have a role to play and a responsibility to help create a nuclear weapons free world.

There has also been welcome realisation on the part of many others that abolishing nuclear weapons is necessary, urgent and feasible. In 2007 George Schultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn helped create the political space for the US President to embrace the goal of abolition. Since then, support groups from a number of countries, including Britain, France, Denmark, Poland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Australia have reinforced this momentum. In Japan there has also been considerable support for the zero option. So far, however, there has been little

action and the gulf between rhetoric and reality remains huge.

There are also contradictions between the statements of many leaders and the official policy of their governments. Gordon Brown commits repeatedly to work to “achieve a world that is free from nuclear weapons”, while his government’s policy is still to build new submarines to carry Trident nuclear missiles to 2050 and beyond. The Australian Government has called for a roadmap ultimately leading to the abolition of nuclear weapons and yet the Defence White paper published last year still speaks of an ‘extended nuclear deterrence for decades hence.

United States leadership is vital if we are to achieve a safer future. President Obama has overcome considerable obstacles to change America’s nuclear posture. He has recognised that the greatest threat to global security is now nuclear terrorism by extremists and nuclear proliferation to an increasing number of states. He has also accepted that American national security and fulfilment of allied obligations can be increasingly fulfilled by conventional military capabilities.

The President has announced that, for the first time, preventing nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism is top of America’s nuclear agenda. 47 nations meeting in the United States have taken steps to secure vulnerable nuclear materials over the next four years.

More important, the United States has declared it will not use or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against non nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with that Treaty.

He has also stated that the United States will not conduct nuclear testing and will seek ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and that the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads or pursue new military capabilities in nuclear weapons.

Taken together, these are significant steps.

They are a remarkable change from America’s earlier nuclear postures. One would expect to see these changes reflected in the direction of United States Defense spending over coming years. His military budget for 2011 requested before these decisions were taken, [represents a staggering \\$708 billion](#). That includes 13.4% increase in funds for the National Nuclear Security Agency. These figures indicate the size of the task remaining before the United States President.

It also underlines the need for governments around the world, who believe in a nuclear weapons-free world, to do what is within their power to increase the momentum towards the zero option.

I am glad therefore to see that a motion supported by all parties passed in the German Bundestag as recently as 26 March. That motion establishes objectives and sets out a strategy. The Bundestag has urged a reduction in the role of nuclear weapons in the NATO strategy and the promotion of nuclear and conventional disarmament. This is an example that should be followed by all states in alliance with a nuclear power.

Perhaps the most important question before us is to find effective ways of building momentum towards a treaty regime that will work verifiably to dismantle nuclear weapons and delivery systems, secure fissile materials, implement effective global safeguards and monitoring, and dismantle and clean up the vast radioactive and toxic legacy of nuclear weapons production and testing?

On the one hand it is easy to be pessimistic.

While overall nuclear weapon numbers have declined from close to 70,000 in 1986 to close to 23,000 today, so bloated are these arsenals that the danger to global health, security and survival remains essentially undiminished. The risk of use of nuclear weapons has not gone away since the end of the Cold War; it has

grown. Any use of nuclear weapons would pose very real and unstoppable dangers of escalation, including in unpredictable directions.

In addition, for the past 15 odd years, nuclear disarmament has been stalled. For the first time, a major nuclear arms control treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, was abandoned. The only new nuclear weapons agreement over this period, the Moscow or SORT agreement, is not verified, does not involve warhead dismantling, and expires at the same time the reductions envisaged are due to be implemented. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has produced nothing since it negotiated the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty in 1996, which is yet to enter into force; and nuclear tests continue in North Korea, which has walked away from the NPT, with little consequence.

On the other hand there is much that can be done and, in the first instance, I return to an enduring theme, and that is the equitable and consistent application of the rule of law because double standards in relation to nuclear weapons proliferation are breathtaking and fuel the problem.

While Israel's substantial nuclear arsenal arouses virtually no international sanction and they continue to refuse to allow the IAEA to inspect their facilities, the issues and lack of transparency around Iran's nuclear program continue to be antagonistic. At the same time many states are scaling up ostensibly civilian nuclear programs and this always entails the potential for proliferation.

In 1974, India detonated a plutonium bomb, violating agreements to use, only for peaceful purposes, nuclear fuel supplied by the US in a heavy water reactor provided by Canada. This led to the establishment of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), aiming to prevent such diversion in the future. Yet in 2008 the 45 members of the NSG approved a nuclear deal

between the US and India which effectively rewards India's initiation of the nuclear arms race in South Asia and strikes a body blow at the already crumbling NPT. The deal trashes a founding principle of the NPT. The sharing of nuclear technology should be limited to non-nuclear weapon states that have foresworn nuclear weapons by joining the treaty. India has gained access to nuclear technology and materials which is arguably more generous than if it were a compliant member of the NPT.

India's capacity to divert nuclear materials from civilian to military purposes had been made much easier because it can designate which facilities are civilian and subject to safeguards. However, it has not committed to make safeguards on civilian facilities or materials permanent or unconditional. A number of power reactors will not, therefore, be covered by safeguards. It is also worth noting that India have made

- no binding nuclear disarmament commitments,
- has not committed to stop nuclear tests,
- has not signed or ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty,
- and it has not stopped production of highly enriched uranium or plutonium for weapons purposes.

India has not committed to full safeguards and as a consequence of the arrangements with the United States and subsequently also France and Russia, will clearly be able to divert more of its own uranium to weapons purposes.

Not surprising is the response by Pakistan, which is now building two new plutonium production reactors, and expanding its capacity to produce highly enriched uranium. When,

after 13 years of paralysis, the Conference on Disarmament finally agreed last year to begin negotiations on a treaty limiting production of fissile materials, Pakistan and China prevented any substantive work. In January Pakistan ruled out joining such a treaty because of nuclear disparity with India. The possibility that some of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal could fall into the hands of the Taliban is a real and urgent concern.

Establishing an open, transparent, effective non-proliferation regime is an essential measure on the road to zero nuclear weapons if we want the world to be a safer place. These needs are reinforced by scientific evidence from state of the art climate models which indicate that even a limited regional war in South Asia, for example, involving less than 1% of the weapons and less than one half of 1% of the explosive power of the world's current nuclear arsenal would kill tens of millions immediately and cause severe climatic consequences which would persist for a decade or more. These would result in global starvation on a scale never seen before.

There is no question that an inequitable, increasingly population, resource and climate-stressed world is an ever more dangerous place for nuclear weapons. Preventing any use of such weapons and establishing an irreversible process that will get us to, and keep us at zero are imperative for the security of every current and future person.

The question before us is how best to seize the current opportunity to abolish nuclear weapons? How best to establish a comprehensive, verifiable, irreversible, universal process towards zero nuclear weapons, linking all the interrelated aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation into an integrated package; applying consistent standards and binding rules for all?

The START and INF treaties have already shown that it is feasible for nuclear weapons to

be verifiably reduced and classes of weapons to be eliminated. The experience of other inhumane weapons which have been or are being abolished – from dum dum bullets way back in 1899, through biological and chemical weapons, to landmines and cluster munitions most recently – has been that a comprehensive treaty is required.

The joint steps taken by Japan and Australia to establish a roadmap for the substantial reduction of nuclear weapons are positive steps towards these objectives.

In October 2008 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon proposed a five-point plan linking nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. He circulated a model nuclear weapons convention to all UN members suggesting it offered a “good point of departure” for achieving total nuclear disarmament.

There can be no doubt that a comprehensive treaty architecture will be needed to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons and end production of fissile material which could be used for weapons and to secure and where possible eliminate existing stocks. We should all be asking ourselves what we can do and what all governments might do to advance this objective.

In just over 2 weeks the 5 yearly Review Conference of the 189 states party to the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty takes place in New York. This is a crucial meeting. If the nuclear weapon states come to the conference having delivered little further on disarmament, and agreement is not reached on substantial disarmament and non-proliferation measures, it can be expected that a tipping point of escalating nuclear proliferation may be crossed.

The Australian-Japanese sponsored International Commission on Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament has made useful recommendations on a package of measures for



the Review Conference. The report and recommendations from the High Level Expert Meeting a few days ago will provide more detailed proposals for your consideration, but there are some steps that can be clearly defined:

- There is a need for a comprehensive nuclear abolition treaty such as a nuclear weapons convention, as outlined by the UN Secretary General. The nuclear weapon states should agree and state that they would not be the first to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against each other, and that they would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons in any conflict with a non-nuclear weapon state. This may serve to reduce the imperative, as some states see it, to gain nuclear weapons;
- All nuclear weapons should be taken off high level alert, and not deployed outside the territory of a possessor state;
- The nuclear weapon states should declare that they will not first design, develop, or produce new nuclear warheads or modify existing warheads to create new military capabilities, or second, increase their nuclear arsenals;
- In the recently signed New START Treaty, Russia and the United States have committed to modest but verifiable and binding reductions in deployed nuclear weapons. Both countries should be commended for this significant step. However, the momentum to nuclear disarmament should be further developed and we must

hope that the next Treaty will cover all nuclear warheads, both tactical and strategic, as a significant step on the road to abolition.

There are many other steps that can and should be taken. The upcoming Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference comes at a crucial time and I hope the work of this Council, and its long-standing support for the abolition of nuclear weapons – as well as the communiqué of this particular conference, will provide further momentum to that objective.

We stand at a historic moment in world affairs.

We can take steps which will contribute to security and to peace and to the advancement of human kind, or we can abdicate our responsibilities and allow the world to slip into chaos.

We need to understand the challenge for humankind. For the first time in this world we have the capacity to destroy civilisation and the planet as we know it. This could come first by continued argument and inaction over climate change and refusal to recognise the role that our own development has in that equation.

Second, by a nuclear conflict with most disastrous and terrible consequences. It makes the challenge in front of today's leaders more urgent and more important. President Obama has shown that he understands this critical necessity. Where are other leaders rallying to his support, either in his own country or worldwide?

I remain an optimist, and am hopeful that peoples and their governments around the world will respond to this most urgent need.

*This is an abbreviated version of Malcolm Fraser's keynote speech to the Interaction Council, Hiroshima, on 18 April 2010. The*

*Interaction Council is comprised of former heads of state and government. Its co-chairs are former Swedish Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson and former Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien.*

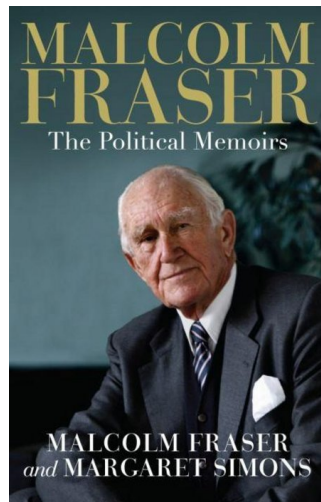
*Malcolm Fraser served as Prime Minister of Australia from 1975-1983.*

*See Malcolm Fraser's complete keynote speech*

[here.](#)

*He is the author of [Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs](#) by Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons.*

*Recommended citation: Malcolm Fraser, "Abolishing All Nuclear Weapons. Necessary, feasible and increasingly urgent," [The Asia-Pacific Journal](#), 22-2-10, May 31, 2010.*



Click on the cover to order.