



PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR
NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION
AND DISARMAMENT

Religions for Peace 

An Official Side Event of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference

***Forging Cooperation on Nuclear Disarmament between
Religious Leaders, Legislators
and their communities***

15:00-17:30, May 8, 2015

Conference Room C | United Nations, New York

Organized by

Religions for Peace (RfP)

In cooperation with

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND)

An event to follow-up the launch of the RfP Resource Guide on Nuclear Disarmament for Religious Leaders and Communities. Copies of the publication will be available at the event

I. Multi-religious and cross-party commitment to nuclear abolition

Nuclear weapons present a unique existential threat to humanity. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists recently moved the Doomsday Clock two minutes closer to midnight, due to the increasing threats from climate change and a nuclear catastrophe, whether by accident, miscalculation or intent by government or terrorist organization.

Religious communities and legislators can play vital roles in bridging the political gaps that have prevented the global abolition of nuclear weapons. We must remind policymakers and public that we all share an interconnected world that requires cooperative security based on our common concerns, shared moral values and international law. The threat of annihilation is a false security. Nuclear abolition is a common global good which could foster peace by liberating billions of dollars for sustainable development, remove the “Sword of Damocles” hanging over our heads and support peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Religions for Peace highlights the core religious principles, roles of religious communities and opportunities for action in the Resource Guide on Nuclear Disarmament for Religious Leaders and Communities. Released at the United Nations on the occasion of the UN High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament in September 2013, the Resource Guide has been distributed globally in a number of languages.

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) works on a cross-party basis to advance practical approaches to preventing nuclear proliferation and achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. PNND produced a similar resource guide for parliamentarians, in conjunction with the Inter Parliamentary Union. It has been distributed to parliaments and parliamentarians globally, and paved the way for a ground-breaking resolution on nuclear disarmament adopted by the IPU by consensus in March 2014.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon provided forewords to both publications, calling nuclear abolition a ‘global public good of the highest value.’

II. Cooperation between *religious communities* and *legislators*

Parliamentarians and religious leaders have distinct responsibilities and arenas of operation. Parliaments are responsible for the development and oversight of national (and international) law, applicable to all citizens regardless of their religious beliefs. Religious leaders are responsible for guiding their communities according to principles and doctrines of their faith. However, there are overlaps. Legislators have a responsibility to represent their constituents, many of whom may be members of religious faiths. In addition, religious principles often relate to issues being dealt with by parliaments and cities. It thus makes sense to build understanding and cooperation between legislators and religious communities.

RfP and PNND have worked cooperatively to facilitate communication between religious communities and legislators on nuclear disarmament issues, and to engage religious communities and legislators in nuclear disarmament initiatives.

This has included the “Arms Down! Campaign,” a youth-led multi-religious campaign which collected 21 million signatures from 146 countries on six continents supporting the goals of nuclear abolition and reducing military expenditure by 10% to fund the achievement of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Endorsers included heads of state of Costa Rica and Nepal, mayors of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and more than 3000 cities worldwide supported the campaign and over two hundred Parliamentarians, along with senior religious leaders from different traditions such as Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Pope Shenouda, Rabbi Rosen of Israel and Supreme Patriarch of Tendai Buddhism.

PNND members and staff have assisted with the production, and participated in launch events, for the Resource Guide on Nuclear Disarmament for Religious Leaders and Communities. This included the launch of the Guide at the RfP 9th World Assembly in Vienna on 20-22 November 2013, special release event at the United Nations with PNND Honorary member Laura Chinchilla (President of Costa Rica), launch of the Japanese edition in Tokyo in December 2013, and launch of the German edition in Basel in December 2014. There are also plans for cooperation on the production and launch of the Arabic, French and Spanish editions.

This Side Event is intended to explore and further strengthen such cooperation, bringing together religious leaders and legislators from select countries to share their experiences, lessons learnt, and develop concrete multi-religious and multi-stakeholder actions in their respective countries and regions as well as globally.

III: Agenda

- 15:00-15:10 **Opening:**
Moderator: Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, Deputy Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*
Opening Remarks:
Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*
- 15:10-15:40 ***Forging cooperation between Religious Leaders and Legislators***
Ven. Gijun Sugitani, Chair, *RfP* International Standing Commission on Disarmament and Security; Supreme Advisor, Tendai Buddhism
Mr. Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament; Principle author, *RfP* Resource Guide on Nuclear Disarmament for Religious Leaders and Communities
- 15:40-16:40 ***Perspectives from Legislators***
Senator Laura Angélica Rojas Hernández, Chair of the Mexican Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and International Organisations
Mr. Kenzo Fujisue, Member of the House of Councilors, Japan

Mr. Aaron Tovish (Austria), Director of the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign

Perspectives from Religious Leaders

Imam Shamsi Ali, Chairman of the Al-Hikmah Mosque in Astoria and the Director of Jamaica Muslim Center in Queens (Muslim)

Ms. Rori Picker Neiss, Orthodox Judaism, USA, Director of Programming, Education, and Community Engagement, Bais Abraham Congregation, and Coordinator, *Religions for Peace* International Youth Committee (Jewish)

16:40-17:20 Discussion

17:20-17:30 *Closing:*

Final Comments:

Mr. Alyn Ware, Global Coordinator, PNND

Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General, *RfP*