

December 9, 2014

Message from 10 French parliamentarians from various political parties to the *International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons* held in Vienna, Dec 8-9, 2014

Delivered by Jean-Marie Collin, PNND France Coordinator, to the Parliamentary Roundtable side-event held in the Austrian Parliament

Dear Parliamentarians, members of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), and other participants in the Vienna Conference,

As I'm the PNND Director in France, I will speak on behalf of 9 Members of PNND France: M. Denis Baupin (Vice president of the National Assembly), M. Alain Bocquet (Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Committee), M. Jean-Jacques Candelier (*Vice President of the Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces*), M. François-Michel Lambert, M. François de Rugy (PNND Council Member), Mme Cécile Duflot, Mme Michelle Demessine (*Vice-President of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces*), Mme Danièle Auroi (*President of the Committee on European Affairs*), M. Philippe Plisson, and 1 non-PNND member: Hervé Morin, (Leader of the New Centre Party, former defence minister)

"First in Oslo in 2013, later in Nayarit earlier this year and again here in Vienna over the past two days, States met to discuss the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament. 157 States are present for this conference. In Oslo it was 127 and in Nayarit 146. In addition to the Diplomatic Conference, the Norwegian parliament and the Austrian Parliament organised side-events to pursue a strong and important dialogue with parliamentarians and civil society organizations from all over the world.

It is always much easier to continue using policies of the past and not change the comfort they give, so this is why this conference is a challenge for France. But in politics, if there is no movement, your political career disappears. Therefore, we the French parliamentarians are now working in our appropriate parliamentary committees on the issue of nuclear disarmament.

This conference is an opportunity for France because we should feel lucky that a Parliament, as this case in Austria, opens a space for legislators from all over the world to have a better comprehension on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapons detonation, be it by design, miscalculation, madness or human error.

France, as you know, is a Nuclear Weapons State and the third in capacity with an arsenal of 300 nuclear weapons. Nearly one hundred are currently deployed in a nuclear A ballistic missile

submarine, ready to be launched in 15 to 20 minutes. This is the nuclear deterrence, created for any potential adversary.

In France, it is possible to talk about nuclear deterrence which has different very precise expressions: "weapon of non-use", "ultimate warning", "French nuclear deterrence has "all points of the compass" (tous azimuts). This reflection is essentially held every year during the debate on the vote of the defence budget. Each weapon system is then presented, as well as projects of their modernization.

But speaking about nuclear disarmament remains complicated in our state. Former Prime Minister Michel Rocard, who is actively involved in the nuclear disarmament, used to say that "the case of France is not the most important, and perhaps not the most difficult one. It is not easy either, because France is undoubtedly one of the five states that are acknowledged by the Non-Proliferation Treaty as a nuclear weapon states, where the nuclear deterrence is deeply rooted in the overall strategic vision of the majority of the high-ranking officials and military.

The atomic bomb, unfortunately, remains a symbol of power in France. Speaking of France's nuclear weapons is an extremely delicate topic, because it affects all principles of the power on which our Fifth Republic was created.

However, we must be optimistic because although the parliamentary debates on this subject are rare in recent years, we hear voices - even if they are not opposite to the nuclear deterrence – that are questioning this arsenal. This phenomenon indicates the reflection is installed in our parliament.

For example, earlier in this year we were able to achieve a series of hearings on nuclear deterrence in the National Assembly. For the first time since the creation of the French nuclear deterrence in 1960, experts from civil society were able to address their issue on nuclear disarmament and explain the topic of nuclear deterrence, "not by the point of view of its concepts and theories, but by asking about implementation of this policy and the role of "nuclear weapons in relation to international legal norms and disarmament obligations of which France supports and by which France is bound."

Too many high ranking civilians and military officials perceive the new nuclear disarmament debate in France as, in itself, an act of treason or threat to French security. This is a wrong perception, because France is involved normally with his legal obligation like the NPT "to pursue policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons."

To reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons in Nuclear weapon States, it is necessary that France and her parliamentarians understand the positive gains of this process. But today too few of our colleagues have understood that the risks posed by the worldwide arsenal of 16,300 nuclear weapons.

- *Increase the risk of an accidental or deliberate use*
- *Increase the nuclear proliferation;*
- *Continuation of a conventional arms race in areas of the world*

As parliamentarians, it's in our responsibility to support this debate in our Parliament with the organizations of civil society, and especially PNND. With the aim that our culture of nuclear

disarmament becomes important, and for actively promote the policy of a world without nuclear weapons in France:

- We will quickly take knowledge of the conclusions of this conference in Vienna and inform our colleagues;*
- We will continue to bring more debate in the defence and foreign affairs committees to raise awareness of our colleagues;*
- We will continue to ask ministers for obtaining more transparency;*
- We will continue to promote this emerging debate on nuclear disarmament.”*

Signed by:

PNND France

M. DENIS BAUPIN

*Vice President of the National Assembly
Member of the Committee on Economic Affairs*

M. ALAIN BOCQUET - National Assembly

Secretary of the Foreign Affairs Committee

M. JEAN-JACQUES CANDELIER - National Assembly

Vice President of the Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces

M. FRANÇOIS-MICHEL LAMBERT - National Assembly

Vice-President of the Committee for Sustainable Development and Management of Territories

M. FRANÇOIS DE RUGY - National Assembly

*Member of the Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces
PNND Global Council Member*

MME CECILE DUFLOT - National Assembly

*Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee
Former French Housing Minister*

MME MICHELLE DEMESSINE - Senate

*Vice-President of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Armed Forces
PNND Global Council Member*

MME DANIELLE AUROI - National Assembly

*President of the Committee on European Affairs
Member of the Committee on National Defence and the Armed Forces*

M. PHILIPPE PLISSON - National Assembly

Member of the Committee for Sustainable Development and Management of Territories

Non PNND member

M. HERVE MORIN - National Assembly

*Leader of the New Centre Party
Member of the Committee on Social Affairs
Former Defence Minister*