



11 December 2008

His Excellency Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary General of the United Nations
United Nations,
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Mr. Ban:

We were pleased to read your five point proposal for nuclear disarmament in the stirring address you gave to the 51st General Assembly on November 23rd. We fervently hope that your appeal to the nuclear weapon states to fulfill their obligations under the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) will be heard and acted upon by them. In particular, we hope they take seriously your proposal that they examine the option to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention.

It is because of the strength of your commitment to nuclear and general disarmament that we feel compelled to ask about the recent, unpublished Joint Declaration involving the UN and NATO Secretariats. It is our perception that NATO, far from being on an equal footing with the United Nations, is no more than a regional alliance, albeit a very powerful one, within the meaning of regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

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We believe that this particular regional alliance is a major reason, though not the only one, for the failure of the nuclear weapon states to move ahead in good faith with nuclear disarmament, as urged by the 1996 Opinion of the World Court. It is our understanding, too, that NATO's current nuclear weapon policies contradict both the letter and the spirit of the NPT and the 13 Practical Steps. These policies proclaim that NATO has the right to maintain nuclear weapons indefinitely, saying they are "essential." Moreover, they allow NATO to keep nuclear warheads in non-nuclear weapon states in Europe (violating Steps 6 and 9 of the 13 Steps) and its missiles to target non nuclear weapon states (violating Article 1 of the NPT).

The Canadian Pugwash Group has long urged the government of Canada, an original member of NATO, to seek a review of the alliance's nuclear weapon policies for precisely the same purpose that you have cited in your speech: to fulfil NATO's obligation to the Treaty and to move ahead with nuclear disarmament.

We very much welcome your response to these concerns which we have expressed, and your counsel on how best civil society can add its influence to that of the United Nations in seeking a nuclear weapon free world.

Sincerely,

Dr. Walter Dorn, Chair
on behalf of the Executive Committee