

## A treaty banning nuclear weapons? Preposterous!



*Comment by Sir Cuthbert Diddlesworth, Director of the Institute for Strategic Self-Interest and Special Pleading, London*

Have you heard this crackpot scheme doing the rounds of the NPT? A motley collection of NGOs, second-rate academics and third-rate countries are pushing a nonsensical and irresponsible proposal of negotiating a treaty that “bans” nuclear weapons, without any of the nuclear-armed states being involved. Now this is so patently absurd that it barely dignifies a response. But it keeps coming up in conversation, even with people who should know better, so it is high time to knock it on the head once and for all.

A treaty banning nuclear weapons will not lead to some kind of security nirvana; how could it? How could a ban treaty that does not include the nuclear-weapon states have any effect on nuclear disarmament? Answer me that! It would be totally pointless. At the same time, it would be highly irresponsible and dangerous. Pursuing such a treaty fails to take account of, and therefore jeopardises, the stability and security which nuclear weapons help to ensure! And it will damage the NPT!

Yes, this ludicrous idea will undermine the very cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. It will draw into question the good faith of the NPT nuclear-weapon states in implementing their disarmament obligations, undermining the legitimacy of the NPT. We cannot have that! Now, of course I do not know whether the P5 actually intend to eliminate their nuclear weapons or not, but if they do not, this fact must remain secret or the NPT will be irreparably damaged. And nobody wants that.

Furthermore, this ridiculous ban treaty will distract attention from the practical, sustainable steps necessary to make real progress on nuclear disarmament. If countries go running off willy-nilly to negotiate some silly new treaty on their own, the vital work of the Conference on Disarmament will grind to a halt! Negotiations on a fissile material treaty will not even get started! Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-test-ban Treaty will be delayed, perhaps indefinitely! And efforts to achieve universal membership of the NPT

will be set back by decades! Is this progress? No!

Then there is this absurd notion of putting the cart before the horse and banning weapons before eliminating them. Were chemical weapons banned before they were eliminated? Were biological weapons? Total nonsense! The way to do it is very clear; there is simply no alternative to verifiable, step-by-step disarmament. First you eliminate the weapons, then you verify their elimination, then you reduce their role in your strategic doctrine, and then you prohibit them.

Some of the more soft-headed advocates for this ban treaty have even been drawing comparisons with the treaties banning landmines and cluster munitions. This is utter balderdash. Nuclear weapons are *completely different* from landmines and cluster munitions! The huge explosive force and vital strategic role of nuclear weapons mean that ordinary international law does not apply. You cannot just go off and make laws about nuclear weapons! They are different!

And if nothing else, the nuclear-weapon states and their allies will oppose this imbecilic treaty on the grounds that it will be contentious and divisive. And why will it be contentious and divisive? Because the nuclear-weapon states and their allies will oppose it, of course! The logic is absolutely watertight. It is time everyone else recognized that.

Let us have no more talk of this ban treaty nonsense.