

**Open letter from Wildfire>_ to Ambassador Pedro Motta Pinto Coelho,
Permanent Representative of Brazil to the Conference on Disarmament**

Geneva, 11 February 2014

Dear Ambassador

Welcome to Geneva. We are pleased that the Government of Brazil has renewed its longstanding commitment to disarmament by again appointing a dedicated disarmament ambassador here.

We listened with interest to your initial statement to the Conference on Disarmament on 28 January. We had hopes of movement, action, boldness and resolve. So we were rather disappointed to find your statement was very similar to the one delivered by your distinguished predecessor in January 2012.

Brazil has long been at the forefront of calls for nuclear disarmament. A large country facing a complex international security environment, Brazil has shown both strong moral leadership and a compelling practical example in renouncing nuclear weapons and committing itself to the NPT. Brazil's arguments against nuclear weapons have been eloquent, clear and persuasive. As your colleague Ambassador Carlos Antonio da Rocha Paranhos said at the High-level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament in New York on 26 September 2013, "For Brazil, nuclear disarmament is not only an obligation under international law. It is an urgent moral and humanitarian imperative".

Yet these arguments have led nowhere. The unflagging dedication of Brazil and many other non-nuclear-weapon states to implementing the NPT has helped that treaty achieve remarkable success in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In return, however, you have received nothing from the nuclear-weapon states but endless hectoring on the need to do yet more to reduce proliferation risks.

We admire the dignity and restraint consistently shown by your Government in the face of this exasperating and, frankly, insulting behaviour from the nuclear-weapon states. What we do not admire — what we cannot understand — is Brazil's unwavering devotion to the status quo that enables and perpetuates such behaviour.

The cold hard truth is this: the nuclear-weapon states will never join in comprehensive negotiations of the type advocated by Brazil and the "New"* Agenda Coalition. Both the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT are tools that the nuclear-weapon states use to prolong their possession of nuclear weapons indefinitely. It does not matter whether this is a deliberate strategy or is due to the kind of procrastination and rationalization shown by addicts everywhere. Progress on nuclear disarmament will never be achieved through the CD, the NPT, or any forum where nuclear-armed states enjoy veto power. This has been demonstrated for decades now. How much longer will you continue the experiment before you are persuaded? Ten years? Twenty? Two hundred?

*Now getting rather old and stale

Your commitment to the existing UN disarmament “machinery” no doubt stems from the highest principles, but in this case it simply cannot deliver results. We believe it is time to change your approach. The only way to make progress on nuclear disarmament is for the non-nuclear-weapon states to move ahead on their own, to take control by negotiating a treaty banning nuclear weapons. This is what Wildfire>_ advocates (read more at www.wildfire-v.org).

It may seem counterintuitive, pointless or even absurd to negotiate such a treaty without the participation of any of the nuclear-armed states. But in fact it would change the game profoundly. You have seen the irrational, muddled reaction of the P5 nuclear-weapon states to the movement to examine the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Never in the history of the nuclear age have the weapon states betrayed such consternation, weakness, confusion and fear. They are rattled by the determination of the non-nuclear-weapon states to claim even a minor stake in the global nuclear game. Their reaction reveals an historic opportunity for fundamental change. Do you dare to seize it?

Brazil is uniquely placed to lead a movement towards a ban on nuclear weapons. With your involvement, the multilateral disarmament landscape could be transformed within a matter of months. And the effects of a multilateral movement outflanking the P5 would reach far beyond the sphere of disarmament: it would have implications for broader questions of global governance, such as Security Council reform.

So we put the question to you, Ambassador. Is nuclear disarmament really “an urgent moral and humanitarian imperative”, for which Brazil is willing to take bold and decisive measures? Or will you find yourself back in Brasilia after three or four empty, pointless years, while your successor reads to the Conference on Disarmament yet another version of your statement of 28 January?

Yours sincerely

Wildfire>_