

Background

In 2006 NCCD held a very successful Conference 'Threats to Peace and Disarmament - the Way Forward'. We were very grateful to Bob Rigg, former Chair, for his energy and enthusiasm in making this happen. The papers from the Conference were published and distributed in 2007.

Earlier this year NCCD decided to hold a follow up Conference focussing on what the optimists amongst us see as a "window of opportunity" for gaining some momentum on the urgent need to move toward a nuclear weapon free world. For more than 60 years, there has been widespread public opposition to nuclear weapons - here and overseas - with many NGOs and grassroots campaigns aimed at eliminating them. Our seminar / workshop will explore ways to build on this momentum and move nuclear disarmament forward.

The visit of Prof Hans Blix (Chair of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission) to New Zealand last year created considerable interest and many took away copies of the comprehensive report. Since then George Schultz, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn and William Perry have again called for the elimination of nuclear weapons – as being in the US's best interests – and written detailed proposals as to how this could be achieved. The Hoover Foundation and the seven nation initiative developed this further at a Conference in Oslo and the Australian and Japanese Governments have now set up a Commission to make further recommendations and hold an International Summit in October 2009.

It is therefore important that we as New Zealanders contribute in any way we can.

The original intent of NCCD was to hold a Conference in October but with the impending election and availability of speakers we now plan to hold this in the first half of next year. In preparation for this we are holding a Seminar / Workshop on October 18th at Turnbull House Wellington – see flyer attached - and have invited our Australian colleagues to report on the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Australia/Japan Commission brief. Other topics to be covered include the Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference 2010 preparations, other UN initiatives including the Blix Report, and the feasibility of an Oslo / Ottawa type process for nuclear weapons.

On the evening before the seminar, we are inviting political party spokespersons to discuss their party policy and any proposed initiatives re disarmament - Friday, 17 October, also at Turnbull House.

We would therefore like your organisation and any interested individuals to attend and will send out papers for study beforehand and follow this up with full reports of the findings and recommendations. There is also a proposal that small study groups be formed in different parts of New Zealand to consider the recommendations and develop them further for the major Conference in 2009. These will then be sent to our government, to the Australian/Japanese Commission, and to other international fora.

Some analysts consider nuclear disarmament to be the most urgent issue facing the world today. Even in a post cold war world and after some initial important strides we still have 27,000 warheads many of them on full alert. That the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons has in the last forty years only gone from 5 to 9 is evidence that they are not acceptable and indeed the majority of people living in those nine countries do not support their continued existence.

So come and encourage others to come and say ICAN imagine a world without nuclear weapons.

A registration form is attached, and online at www.converge.org.nz/pma/nccd1008.htm - background papers will be available on the web page and sent to you when you register for prior reading and consideration. We do need numbers attending for catering purposes but payment can be made on the day. **Please register, or RSVP by email to rhalliday@paradise.net.nz by Tuesday, 14 October.**