



25 June 2010

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

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Re: A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

We write this letter to encourage you and your Government to give renewed and urgent attention to nuclear disarmament. From time-to-time Prime Ministers in Canada have received written representations on this issue from individual Canadian churches and church bodies. Now we are pleased to address you collectively as members of The Canadian Council of Churches (CCC), representing 23 churches of Anglican, Evangelical, Free Church, Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant, and Eastern Catholic and Roman Catholic traditions.

Our Call

We are especially grateful to be addressing these issues at a time of growing hope and conviction that the international community both desires and is in reach of a world without nuclear weapons. Such a world has long been promoted by the disarmament movement in Canada and beyond, and it has more recently been re-envisioned through an extraordinary accumulation of statements and appeals by eminent figures on the global security stage. We urge you to reinforce this sense of expectation through your own personal endorsement of the vision of a world without nuclear weapons and by publicly and prominently recommitting Canada to the energetic pursuit of the early elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The Earth is God's

Our call for the elimination of nuclear weapons is rooted in our certain knowledge that the Earth is God's and that all that is in it is under both God's love and judgment. We know that God has placed before us and all people in all generations the choice between life and death, desiring for all people not only life but the abundant life of peace with justice.

Nuclear Weapons Must Be Rejected

We are called to love our enemies, and we are convinced that this cannot be accomplished through the build-up of nuclear arsenals. Nuclear weapons have only one capacity, and that is for mass, indiscriminate destruction with a power so great that it threatens the very existence of the human community and the environment that sustains it. Nuclear arsenals cannot defend against attack or protect humanity or any part of God's Creation. We believe that to rely on nuclear weapons, to threaten nuclear attack as a foundation for security, is to acquiesce to spiritual and moral bankruptcy. We say without reservation that when measures employed to defend nation states and human institutions undermine God's gift of abundant life, threatening humanity and the planet itself, such measures must be unequivocally rejected. We cannot conceive how the use of nuclear weapons could be justified and consistent with the will of God, and we must therefore conclude that nuclear weapons must also be rejected as means of threat or deterrence.

Stewards of Creation

To choose life is to acknowledge that we are called not so much to be rulers but stewards of creation. And because we have regard for the security of the Earth, now and for succeeding generations, we cannot accept as "defence" any measures which threaten the planet itself. Instead, we believe that the world is ready for, indeed is deeply in need of, an approach to global security that safeguards the well-being of the human community and of our fragile planet through international cooperation and the rule of law rather than the destruction that is promised by the world's nuclear arsenals.

We address this letter to you, confident that you share these beliefs. We understand that the application of these principles to national and international security policy is not a simple matter. We trust the following comments will be of assistance to you in providing leadership on behalf of Canada in the pursuit of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Canada's Contribution to Nuclear Disarmament

As Canadians we are proud that Canada has in the past made significant and constructive contributions to disarmament and durable international peace and security and we believe there continue to be obligations and opportunities to undertake such efforts in the current context.

Through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), 189 states are legally committed to the elimination of these instruments of massive and indiscriminate destruction. We are therefore especially grateful for the diplomats from around the world who, over decades of difficult but persistent and painstaking effort, have assembled a clear and achievable disarmament agenda. Canada's diplomats have played an important part in that process.

Through consensus agreements at NPT review conferences in 1995, 2000, and 2010, through resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly, as well as through Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon's Five Point Plan, the path to zero nuclear weapons has been clearly marked. The challenge now is to act.

Nuclear Weapons States

The United States and Russia carry the heaviest weight of responsibility to set an ambitious pace for disarmament. We are therefore especially pleased that Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev have jointly and unequivocally affirmed a common goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons. They now face the challenge of bringing their respective national policies and postures into alignment with that vision. The new US/Russia strategic arms treaty signed on 8 April 2010 is an important step. US ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty is similarly essential. For this vision to become reality, critically important steps need to be taken by cooperative and committed political leadership from legislators in both countries – politicians who honour the vision and who dare to reject the inevitable attempts to negotiate trade-offs for weapons-renewal programs that undermine the central goal of disarmament. We believe that Canada, along with the international community, has a vital role to play in encouraging the United States and Russia to persist in disarmament efforts.

All other States that possess nuclear weapons also have an obligation to progressively and verifiably reduce their arsenals, to end all planning for new systems, and to reshape their security architecture in accord with the vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

Non-Nuclear Weapons States

Non-nuclear weapons states have an obligation to conduct their nuclear energy programs in complete openness and with an unqualified willingness to meet the most stringent and reliable inspections requirements. We therefore urge Canada to foster verification efforts and technologies and to ensure that the International Atomic Energy Agency has the resources it needs to carry out its critically important monitoring and inspections work.

NATO and Nuclear Weapons

NATO has a special responsibility to end its nuclear dependence. We urge your Government to take advantage of the current review of the Alliance's Strategic Concept to add Canada's voice to those insisting that NATO end its erroneous claim that nuclear weapons are "essential to preserve peace." Instead, NATO should be challenged to declare that nuclear disarmament is

essential to preserve peace and enhance global security. That new commitment should be sealed with a decision to honour the longstanding call to return all nuclear weapons now in Europe to the territories of the nuclear weapons state that owns them.

International Nuclear Disarmament Processes and Agreements

Unfortunately, action on a key element of the nuclear disarmament agenda – that is, negotiations on a Treaty to ban production of fissile materials for weapons purposes and to eliminate existing stockpiles – continues to be blocked by more than a decade of inaction at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva. It is a deeply troubling dysfunction in the global disarmament machinery that humanity cannot afford. Indeed, it has become urgent that the international community pursue every possible avenue to overcome this dysfunction.

Nuclear disarmament, both the objective and a timeframe within which to achieve it, will ultimately have to be codified in a series of binding instruments under a single umbrella convention to verifiably ban nuclear weapons. While the political timing for concluding such a convention must be carefully considered, we are convinced that now is the time to mount a vigorous new effort to set out the technical and legal details for total nuclear disarmament and to set specific timelines for achieving the realistic goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

The Need for Urgent Action

Collective global action to verifiably ban nuclear weapons will yield tangible economic and security benefits and it will release political, psychological, and spiritual resources on which humanity can draw to address the other daunting challenges that confront us, such as structural injustice, poverty and exploitation, economic crises and climate change, energy deficits, burgeoning pollution, acute water shortages, unrelenting hunger, grossly inadequate health services, and chronic armed conflict.

As Christian leaders we also understand our own obligation to encourage our respective faith communities to become part of a great global movement for nuclear disarmament. We pursue this through our respective denominations and through Project Ploughshares, the ecumenical peace centre of The Canadian Council of Churches, through which the churches address issues of international peace and security, including questions of nuclear disarmament.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns and wish to assure you of our prayers as you exercise your responsibilities.

Sincerely,

+ Fred

The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz
Archbishop and Primate
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His Grace Bishop Bagrat Galst'anyan
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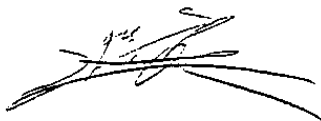
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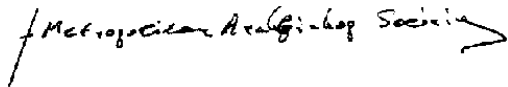
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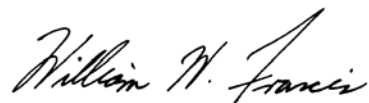
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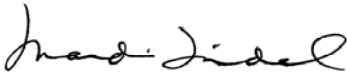
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CC: The Honourable Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
The Honourable Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Quebecois
The Honourable Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party

Members of Parliament

The Canadian Council of Churches is the largest ecumenical body in Canada, now representing 23 churches of Anglican; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox; Protestant; and Catholic traditions. Together we represent 85% of the Christians in Canada. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944.