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s 47E(d)

Title: Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons Conference, Oslo: Meeting Report
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To: Canberra
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References: s 47E(d)
The cable has the following attachment/s -
Chair Summary - Humanitarian Impact of Nukes.pdf
Response: Routine, Information Only

Summary

The Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons Conference held in Oslo on 4–5 March provided a forum for technical discussions on the humanitarian, environmental and developmental consequences of nuclear weapon use. The meeting also considered states' preparedness to respond to a nuclear detonation. As expected, the conference was used by civil society and some states to call for the negotiation of a convention to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. The governments of the P5, Pakistan, DPRK, and Israel did not attend.
s 33(a)(iii)

An Australian delegation (ASNO Director-General Floyd, Geneva UN Second Secretary s 22(1)(a)(ii), Copenhagen Second Secretary s 22(1)(a)(ii) attended the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held in Oslo on 4–5 March. The conference was attended by a large number of states and civil society. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the humanitarian, environmental and developmental consequences of a nuclear detonation, as well as hold technical discussions on states' preparedness to respond to a nuclear weapon detonation. The meeting took on a political dimension with several countries calling for a convention to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. s 33(a)(iii)

Technical presentations

2. Expert presentations were made by representatives from various international organisations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), governments, non-government organisations and academia. Presentations outlined, sometimes in graphic detail, the considerable health, social, climate and environmental effects of a nuclear detonation. The meeting also discussed the international community's capacity to respond to a nuclear weapon use, noting the national

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and international response capability would be overwhelmed and the inherent danger to humanitarian workers due to the radiological hazard.

3. Three key messages emerged from the expert presentations. First, no state possessed the capacity to respond effectively to the immediate humanitarian crisis following a nuclear weapon detonation. Moreover, it was highly doubtful that such a response capability could ever be achieved, even with immense investment and international coordination. Second, prevention was the only satisfactory option available to states wishing to avoid the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. And third, the indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons meant that their use would be at odds with accepted norms of international humanitarian law, for example with respect to biological and chemical weapons, cluster munitions and land mines.

4. These messages were strongly welcomed by civil society participants who, as expected, used the conference as a platform to call for the negotiation of a convention to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. We (Floyd) met with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Australian Red Cross in the margins. We reiterated Australia's commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons and noted that Australia supported the exploration of legal frameworks for the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons. We emphasised that Australia's immediate priorities are CTBT entry into force and a start to negotiations on an FMCT.

States' interventions

5. s 33(a)(iii)

Some interventions were technical and focused on emergency management and response preparedness. New Zealand recalled its response to the 2011 Christchurch earthquake and cautioned against 'false optimism' that any state could adequately prepare for a large-scale nuclear disaster. Switzerland pointed to its network of nuclear bunkers and whole-of-government disaster management plans as an indication of its higher level of preparedness, but concluded that those capabilities would not prevent it from being overwhelmed in a nuclear emergency. Ireland said the disruption to international air transport would likely far exceed that experienced from the 2010 Icelandic ash cloud and would make access to contaminated areas extremely difficult.

6. s 33(a)(iii)

Brazil and Algeria (along with Chile, Austria, Ecuador, Sierra Leone, Kuwait, Venezuela) criticised the P5 for their non-attendance at the conference – in their view, it was 'regrettable' that the possessor states had chosen to snub so many UN member states concerned by this issue. Brazil, Costa Rica and Venezuela also criticised the central role that nuclear weapons continued to play in possessor states' military doctrines; the resources needed to maintain and modernise nuclear arsenals could be better spent elsewhere.

7. A long list of states (Egypt, Jordan, Mexico, Zambia, Sri Lanka, Iran, UAE) took the floor to call for a ban on the use, stockpiling or production of nuclear weapons in line with the three pillars of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Others (Zambia, Chile, Iran, Trinidad and Tobago) went further, joining civil society's call for 'urgent' negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) on the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

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8. Turkey, Japan, Netherlands, Philippines, Iraq and Nepal argued for a world without nuclear weapons s 33(a)(iii). Germany, Canada, and India said a step-by-step approach was needed to achieve the three pillars of the NPT. Turkey, Germany, Canada and the Netherlands pointed to the Non-Proliferation Disarmament Initiative (NPT) in encouraging greater transparency of nuclear disarmament efforts. Mongolia, Philippines, Venezuela and Colombia highlighted the various nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZ) and suggested that their expansion could provide a road map to a world free of nuclear weapons. Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan each hoped for progress towards a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East.

9. The governments of the P5, Pakistan, DRPK and Israel did not attend, while India was represented s 33(a)(iii). In its only intervention, India outlined its policies on no first use and no use against non-nuclear armed states and said it supported the complete eradication of all nuclear weapons. India would be willing to convert these policies into multilateral treaties to demonstrate its commitment to a step-by-step process towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

10. s 47E(d) as the aim of the meeting was to be the presentation of technical information on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and not a forum for political statements.

11. In terms of next steps, Algeria hoped that the meeting would provide participants with a 'manual' on how to prepare for - and respond to - a humanitarian crisis caused by a nuclear detonation. It also wanted follow-up discussions to focus on an integrated humanitarian response which involved states, UN agencies and other relevant institutions.

s 33(a)(iii)

Comment

13. As we expected, civil society used the meeting as a clarion call for the negotiation of an NWC and went to a lot of effort to campaign states on this issue. They drew on the Ottawa and Oslo Conventions as the inspiration for their movement. They argued that it didn't matter if the P5 were not involved as a convention would stigmatise nuclear weapons and put pressure on possessor states to disarm.

14. Norwegian Foreign Minister Eide, who opened and closed the conference, was careful to frame the discussion as being focused on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and not about any one particular approach to achieving the elimination of nuclear

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weapons.

text ends

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Prepared by: Delegation
Approved by: Rob Floyd
Topics: ENVIRONMENT/General, HUMAN RIGHTS/General, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY/Arms Control,
POLITICAL-ECONOMIC/International Political

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Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons Oslo, Norway 4 – 5 March 2013

Chair's summary

The Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo 4–5 March 2013 has heard presentations from a wide range of experts on the various effects of nuclear weapon detonations. Presentations have covered preparedness and first-line response as well as the medium- and long-term humanitarian, developmental and environmental effects.

The objective has been to present a facts-based understanding of the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapon detonations and to facilitate an informed discussion of these effects with stakeholders from states, the United Nations, other international organisations and civil society.

Delegations representing 127 states, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and civil society participated in the conference. It is the chair's view that this broad participation reflects the increasing global concern regarding the effects of nuclear weapons detonations, as well as the recognition that this is an issue of fundamental significance to us all.

Some key points can be discerned from the presentations and the discussions:

- It is unlikely that any state or international body could address the immediate humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation in an adequate manner and provide sufficient assistance to those affected. Moreover, it might not be possible to establish such capacities, even if it were attempted.
- The historical experience from the use and testing of nuclear weapons has demonstrated their devastating immediate and long-term effects. While political circumstances have changed, the destructive potential of nuclear weapons remains.
- The effects of a nuclear weapon detonation, irrespective of cause, will not be constrained by national borders, and will affect states and people in significant ways, regionally as well as globally.

This conference aimed at presenting key aspects of the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation. During the discussions a number of states expressed an interest in further exploring this important issue in ways that ensure global participation. States expressed their interest in continuing the discussions, and to broaden the discourse on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. The chair welcomes the offer from Mexico to host a follow-up meeting to this conference. The chair also welcomes the intention expressed by other states to organise events on this subject.

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GU32888H

Title: UN Nuclear Disarmament: OEWG: outcome
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EDRMS

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Response: Routine, Information Only

Summary

Notwithstanding a final compromise attempt by the Chair on 19 August, the final draft outcome document submitted to the OEWG on nuclear disarmament

s 33(a)(iii)

and then formally requested a vote
on the text in the plenary The end result was 68
delegations in favour of the text, 22 against (including Australia), and 13 abstentions.

As foreshadowed, the final draft outcomes document of the OEWG on nuclear disarmament, submitted to delegations for action, s 33(a)(ii)

s 33(a)(iii)

This was notwithstanding a final compromise attempt by the

and then initiated a vote
on the text at the plenary in the afternoon,

Final voting on the text was 68 in favour, 22 against, and 13
abstentions.

s 33(a)(iii)

Prohibition Treaty Support

2. The outcome is a sobering wake-up call for Prohibition Treaty advocates. Final numbers in support, even with the OEWG sponsorship program in place, were 68. s 33(a)(iii)

s 33(a)(iii)

Civil Society

5. Australian leadership on calling for the vote was noted in the comments of several NGOs present, and negative publicity can be anticipated in the coming days.

s 33(a)(iii)

Role of the Chair, Thai Ambassador Thani Thongpakhdi

7. Ambassador Thongpakhdi was a capable and sincere Chair throughout the three sessions. His painstakingly consultative approach was commended by all in what was obviously a very difficult exercise. We (HOM and Dep PR) both underlined our sincere appreciation to him, and his capital based delegation, at the end of proceedings on 19 August for their hard work.

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Comment

8. We will report more fully on the OEWG process
s 33(a)(iii)

9. s 33(a)(iii)

It has done nothing therefore to reduce the polarisation that exists across the disarmament architecture and arguably, has further alienated the NWS from the main disarmament discourse dominating the disarmament landscape at the present time. s 33(a)(iii)

text ends

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