

The Real Dangers of Nuclear War: Will the UN General Assembly Resolution To Prohibit Nuclear Weapons “Change Anything Before It Is Too Late”?

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Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#), [United Nations](#)

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The Charter of the United Nations opens with the words: *“Determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought sorrow to mankind.”*

This week the United Nations General Assembly will vote on Resolution A/C.1/71/L.41 which states:

“12. Calls upon States participating in the conference to make their best endeavours to conclude as soon as possible a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.”

The glacial speed with which General Assembly resolutions are implemented is notorious. This new resolution, entitled “Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations” can be considered, at least, cosmetic progress.

Nevertheless, General Assembly resolutions do not have the force and legally binding status of Security Council resolutions, nor the capacity to impose sanctions or further punitive measures in case of violation.



Austria announces UN General Assembly resolution to prohibit nuclear weapons in 2017

September 22, 2016

Austria's foreign minister, Sebastian Kurz, **announced** on Wednesday that his country would join other UN member states in tabling a resolution next month to convene negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons in 2017.

Speaking in the high-level debate of the UN General Assembly in New York, he said that "experience shows that the first step to eliminate weapons of mass destruction is to prohibit them through legally binding norms"

Ignoring its own "determined" words, the United Nations still appears to be conspicuously in denial of the deadly trajectory that the US, the UK and Germany are spearheading, as the US invests one trillion dollars in development of advanced nuclear weapons in coming years. This investment is paid for by US citizens who are currently enduring increasing poverty, economic inequality, homelessness, astronomical increases in the cost of education (which makes advanced education prohibitively expensive, and, indeed inaccessible for many Americans), inadequate health care, infrastructure deterioration, etc.

The UK announced a 60 billion dollar investment in upgrading nuclear weapons, as their own citizens also endure a deplorably lowered standard of living, and Germany has been applauded by NATO countries for its recently announced 150 billion dollar investment in a military buildup.

It defies comprehension that the mere mention of the problems created by grossly increased investment in nuclear weapons causes many United Nations officials to squirm,

and at best give lip service to disarmament, while simultaneously delivering bellicose statements at the Security Council, demonizing Russia and the tiny DPRK as justification for this astronomically profitable increased investment in the deadliest of all weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons.

When I have raised questions, with some United Nations officials, concerning the implication of the huge investments in nuclear weapons by NATO states, some reply defensively that the subject of reduction of military budgets “threatens certain powerful interests,” and one official more candidly replied that this problem of nuclear weapons buildup cannot be resolved as long as the present ideological conflicts exist.



Throughout over one hundred meetings held during the first week of the 71 Session of the General Debate, at which most Heads of State and Heads of Government were present, from September 19 through September 24, there were, of course, numerous laudable meetings on Gender Equality, Climate Change, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, Refugee and Migrant Crisis, Public-Private Partnerships, Progress Toward LGBT Equality, and of course the inevitable contentious Security Council harangues on Syria, all of which are important subjects of great concern to all 193 member states of the UN.

However, during that first Star-Studded week not one meeting focused upon the imperative need for nuclear disarmament and the threat that the renewed nuclear arms race poses to the survival of the human species and to all other living species on the planet, including the dangers of a nuclear winter which will obliterate all progress made on the hundreds of issues which were attended to and by the highest government officials in the world. Though on September 23 there were meetings on “Alliance of Civilizations,” and “Activating the Jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, “Open Government Partnership,” etc., there was only one meeting on September 21 at 11:30AM, the “Eighth Ministerial Meeting of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Finally, it was only after the highest level government officials had left, at the very end of the General Debate, on September 26, in commemoration of the “International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons,” that an “informal” meeting was held, almost as an afterthought, addressing what should have earlier been a top priority. The few remaining higher level government officials and permanent representatives finally addressed the subject of the “Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons,” and the outrage of the current potential victims of this horrifically unjust global nuclear imbalance, (where a few nuclear armed states have the power to demolish the entire world), was finally expressed.

It is stupefying that nuclear weapons, the most destructive of all weapons, are the only weapon of mass destruction which have never been subjected to a legally binding treaty prohibiting their use and prohibiting their possession. The delegations of South Africa, Morocco, Chile, and innumerable other non-nuclear weapon states deplored the fact that

there is no international instrument banning nuclear weapons. Where there has been an alphabet soup of partial and paltry attempts to control the use of nuclear weapons, including the CTBE, the NPT, START, SALT, ABM treaties, etc., the fact that nuclear weapons not only still exist, but are actually being upgraded at exorbitant cost, financially, psychologically politically geo-strategically, socially, is a global crime, and the failure of the United Nations to successfully address this problem is so great that it may ultimately result in the violation of the United Nations pledge to save humanity from the “scourge of war” that the United Nations was created to prevent.

Among the most powerful speeches at that September 26 meeting for the “Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” was the address given by H.E. Ambassador Olof Skoog of Sweden, who stated:

“We cannot continue to commemorate the victims of nuclear weapons year after year while at the same time accepting that these weapons still remain in existence. Sweden’s position is clear. The only guarantee that these weapons will never be used again is their total elimination...My Government is deeply concerned by the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament. While we should be seeing real progress on disarmament, in reality 16,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world, each and every one of them posing a real threat to humanity. There is a risk that these weapons could be used by accident, miscalculation or design. Rather than engaging in disarmament, we see that the states possessing nuclear weapons are modernizing design. Some states even talk about using them and some are expanding their nuclear arsenals. All this is utterly unacceptable. It is also economically irrational. Consider the cost of these weapons and put it next to the constant shortfalls in financing for development and humanitarian needs. A truly mind-boggling discrepancy....During the past years there has been a serious and dangerous loss of momentum and direction in disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.”

On Friday, October 14, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons gave a briefing at the United Nations Correspondents Association, and stated: “a cross-regional group of nations formally submitted a draft resolution to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly to establish a mandate for negotiations in 2017 on a “legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. ...More than 100 nations participated in the working group, with an overwhelming majority expressing their support for the prohibition of nuclear weapons as a first step towards elimination....Most nations agree the prohibition of nuclear weapons is the only appropriate course of action in light of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use.”

On October 10, Ambassador Wang Qun, Director-General of the Arms Control Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China stated at the First Committee 71 Session:

“China has always stood for complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, and adhered to the policy of no-first use of nuclear weapons at any time and under any circumstance.” (China’s is not an economy seeking the massive profits which the military-industrial complex provides its supporters in the United States . Indeed, investment in the military distorts the very socialist basis on which the Chinese economy rests.) The Soviet Union had also stated their commitment to “no-first use of nuclear weapons,” and had hoped to invest their resources in social programs, but since its collapse, and capitalist Russia’s current encirclement by hostile NATO powers in the West, and the THAAD missile system in the East, Russia has, inevitably,

abandoned that no-first use policy. Perhaps if the United States was committed to a "no-first use" of nuclear weapons, there might be hope of reaching a nuclear free world.

If the General Assembly this week adopts L.41, leading toward a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons, that may, at least, make possible the stigmatization of nations investing huge sums of their budgets in modernization of nuclear weapons. However, it remains to be seen whether stigmatization will have the power to persuade such weapons manufacturers as Lockheed, Northrup-Grumman, etc., to forego the exponential profits they are accruing from the manufacturing of advanced nuclear weapons, and the even more gargantuan profits they will reap from using these monstrous weapons in a war. Are they oblivious to the consequences of this trajectory?

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