

Policy Forum 09-037: The ICNND and Japanese Civil Society



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The ICNND and Japanese Civil Society

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By Kawasaki Akira

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I. Introduction

Kawasaki Akira, Peace Boat Executive Committee member and ICNND NGO Advisor, writes, "There are several evident tasks for Japanese civil society in relation to its upcoming engagement with the ICNND. Firstly... civil society efforts to ensure the participation of Diet members and key party policy-makers as part of its engagement with the ICNND will be key... The second task is to utilise

ICNND debates as the first step towards a reexamination of Japan's nuclear disarmament policy in the leadup to the 2010 NPT Review Conference... The third task is... [that] civil society engagement with the ICNND must not be limited to just Japan, but also spread to Korea, China, and the whole of Northeast Asia."

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Nautilus Institute. Readers should note that Nautilus seeks a diversity of views and opinions on contentious topics in order to identify common ground.

II. Article by Kawasaki Akira

- "The ICNND and Japanese Civil Society"

By Kawasaki Akira

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) was launched in 2008 as a joint initiative of the Governments of Australia and Japan, and is now preparing to submit recommendations to the international community. Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced the proposal for this initiative after his visit to Hiroshima in June 2008, and its establishment was formally agreed upon at the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit the following July by Mr Rudd and the then Prime Minister of Japan, Fukuda Yasuo.

The Commission is co-chaired by Gareth Evans and Kawaguchi Yoriko, both former Foreign Ministers of their respective countries. 13 other Commissioners, all with high-level political or military experience, join Evans and Kawaguchi to form the ICNND. Within this group are Commissioners from the five nuclear weapon states - US, Russia, UK, France and China - including former US Secretary of State William Perry. Furthermore, the Commission also features members from the nuclear armed states of India and Pakistan, and an Advisory Board member from Israel. In order to work towards and continue beyond the 2010 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Commission, defining steps the international community must take for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the Commission plans to engage policy makers and set its recommendations "in terms that are not only technically sound but also compelling for political decision makers." [1] Within this process, the goal to ensure that "the nuclear armed states outside the NPT can be fully integrated into global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts" is particularly emphasised.

Thus far, the Commission has held two meetings - first in Sydney in October 2008, and the second in Washington, D.C. in February 2009. The third meeting will be held in Moscow in June 2009, followed by the fourth in Hiroshima in October of this year. The report will be largely compiled at the Hiroshima Meeting, and the recommendations then announced in late 2009 or early 2010. A series of regional meetings will also be held, with the Northeast Asian meeting planned for Beijing in late May 2009.

While the ICNND's Secretariat is financially supported and administered by the Governments of Australia and Japan, all Commissioners are participating within their own personal capacity. Although the Commission is thus a so-called "Track Two" initiative, the Commission's activities and final report are likely to have a great influence on both the Australian and Japanese Governments.

Australia-Japan Initiative

A global trend towards nuclear disarmament as never seen before was created by the 2007 - 2008 calls of Kissinger, Nunn, Schultz and Perry for a "nuclear weapon free world." US President Barack Obama has also publicly committed to the same goal, and to the ratification of the CTBT while

reviewing the US nuclear posture.

Other nuclear weapon states and their allies are also following this US-led trend. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy have also announced their nuclear disarmament policies; Norway's Foreign Minister has initiated the staging of an international conference on nuclear disarmament, and a former Prime Minister of Italy, together with other prominent political figures, published an op-ed endorsing the vision of a "nuclear weapon free world." Likewise in Germany, a group of statesmen including a former President and Chancellor published an article also declaring similar support.

The ICNND was established through Japan's joining an initiative made by Australia as part of this global wave. After its launch, other efforts in Australia were also made, including a joint essay published by former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser and a group of former political and military leaders advocating a Nuclear Weapons Convention.[2]

Australia and Japan have traditionally taken similar positions regarding nuclear disarmament. At the United Nations, they have annually co-sponsored a resolution for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament diplomacy at the United Nations always develops along a number of State groups - the nuclear weapon states; the New Agenda Coalition including Sweden; the non-nuclear NATO countries such as Germany; the European Union; and the non-aligned movement (NAM). It could be said that Australia and Japan form another independent group within this system. This stance is known for its close cooperation with the United States, with an aversion to "radical" approaches. For example, although both countries appeal for the elimination of nuclear weapons, they have continued to abstain from the UN resolution calling for the commencement of negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The international community must pay attention to whether this new bilateral initiative will indeed add a new strength to the global trend toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Australia and Japan have two significant commonalities. One is that they are important allies for the United States within the Asia Pacific region, and that their security is based upon the so-called "nuclear umbrella," dependent upon US nuclear weapons. The other is that Australia exports uranium to the world, while Japan has accumulated huge stocks of plutonium and will shortly commence its commercial production. In this sense, these two countries together form the front and back ends of the nuclear fuel cycle - making both of these non-nuclear weapon states the bearers of grave responsibility for the world's nuclear fuel cycle.

In light of these two points, while it is of course important for the ICNND to reaffirm general goals for the abolition of nuclear weapons, there are also two important questions that the Commission must at the same time examine. Firstly, to what extent can the role of nuclear weapons for security, including in the Asia Pacific be reduced? And secondly, how much can the arbitrary spread of nuclear energy and technology, which link to risks of nuclear proliferation, be prevented?

Civil Society Participation

A certain level of civil society participation is being permitted by the ICNND, albeit quite limited. Two NGO Advisors were appointed by Co-Chairs Gareth Evans and Kawaguchi Yoriko, being Australian representative of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Tilman Ruff and the author. The NGO Advisors are continuing to exchange opinions with the Co-Chairs, as well as fulfilling the role of promoting dialogue between civil society and the Commission in both Australia and Japan.

In Japan, a regular roundtable between Co-Chair Kawaguchi Yoriko and Japanese NGOs began in

December 2008. A diverse range of Japanese groups working towards the abolition of nuclear weapons assembled to launch the "ICNND Japan NGO Network" in January 2009, and information exchange and joint policy advocacy efforts as part of this process have begun.[3] The Network is advocating four important points: 1) international frameworks to outlaw nuclear weapons, including a Nuclear Weapons Convention, 2) the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in security policies, 3) new efforts to prevent proliferation responding to civil use of nuclear energy, and 4) the creation of a regional non-nuclear, peace system for Northeast Asia.

As a result of cooperation with Japanese civil society groups, a discussion session between ICNND Commissioners and Hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombs) was realised at the Commission's second meeting in Washington, D.C. The one hour session featured testimonies by three Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, followed by questions and answers. Co-Chair Evans spoke of the session as "moving and devastating", saying that these testimonies "made a very big impression on the Commission." [4] While the Japanese Government did make efforts to support this Hibakusha Session, all arrangements for this session, including travel expenses of the three Hibakusha, were prepared through the resources of Japanese civil society, funded by donations from the general public.

In Australia, the ICAN network is continuing to engage with the ICNND, centering its efforts on the need for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The Australian Parliament Joint Standing Committee on Treaties is holding an ongoing public hearing programme in regards to Australia's nuclear weapons policies, and civil society groups have actively engaged in this process, using the opportunity of the public hearings to stimulate both Parliamentary and public debate.[5]

At the Moscow meeting (and likely the Hiroshima meeting also), the ICNND is preparing opportunities for NGOs to participate in a direct opinion exchange. A session with the civil nuclear industry is planned for Moscow. At this stage, there seem to be no plans for NGO participation at the various regional meetings.

Ways Ahead

According to media reports, the ICNND final report is likely to include a disarmament plan featuring three stages for a nuclear weapon free world. The initial stage of the coming few years is to be led by the US, Russia and other nuclear weapon states; the middle stage coming up to a "vantage point" where a nuclear weapon free world will be in sight, and the final stage will entail working to get down to zero from this vantage point.

The "Mayors for Peace" initiative promoted by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is leading a campaign for "Nuclear weapons abolition by 2020", attracting broad support from both domestic Japanese and international civil society. From this perspective, many observers are tepidly evaluating the position currently being considered by the ICNND as overly cautious.

On one hand, in regards to the "nuclear umbrella" issue Co-Chairs Evans and Kawaguchi have already recommended to the United States that the role of nuclear weapons should be limited, and a declaration that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter the nuclear weapons of others should be made.[6] Even in relation to these cautious steps, within Japan the emerging response is that for the sake of Japan's security, the US nuclear deterrent must not be reduced. With an image of Japan's future security in sight, a broad and constructive discussion involving politicians, experts, NGOs, Hibakusha, the media and industry is required.

There are several evident tasks for Japanese civil society in relation to its upcoming engagement with the ICNND. Firstly, the general election for the Lower House will be held sometime before the

autumn of 2009, and a change of government and restructuring of the political sphere is predicted. This can provide an opportunity for public debate over Japan's nuclear and security policies, potentially leading to a shift in policy. Thus, civil society efforts to ensure the participation of Diet members and key party policy-makers as part of its engagement with the ICNND will be key.

The second task is to utilise ICNND debates as the first step towards a reexamination of Japan's nuclear disarmament policy in the leadup to the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Foreign Minister Nakasone has already announced his proposal to hold a "Nuclear Disarmament Conference" in Japan in early 2010, following the ICNND Hiroshima meeting. [7] The 2009 ICNND process must be effectively utilised so as to ensure that such initiatives will move global nuclear disarmament efforts forward substantially.

The third task is in relation to Northeast Asia, including difficult aspects such as the DPRK's rocket launch, its announcement of departure from the Six-Party Talks, and its declaration of once again starting reprocessing activities. However, the ICNND debate will hopefully contribute to rebuilding the Six-Party Talks, and forming the foundations for non-nuclear-dependent security in Northeast Asia. For that purpose, civil society engagement with the ICNND must not be limited to just Japan, but also spread to Korea, China, and the whole of Northeast Asia.

III. Notes

[1] Joint Statement by Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, New York, 25 September 2008
http://www.icnnd.org/news/releases/080925_js_evans_kawaguchi.html

[2] Fraser, Nossal, Jones, Gration, Sanderson and Ruff, 'Imagine there's no bomb,' The Age, 8 April 2009, <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/imagine-theres-no-bomb-20090407-9zj0.html?page=-1>

[3] The ICNND Japan NGO Network is sharing information over the internet through its bilingual Japanese and English blog: <http://icnndngo-japan.wordpress.com/>

[4] Joint Press Conference between Mr Gareth Evans and Ms Yoriko Kawaguchi, Washington, D.C., 15 February 2009 http://www.icnnd.org/news/transcripts/090215_jpc_evans_kawaguchi.html

[5] Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, Parliament of Australia. Inquiry into Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament:
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/nuclearnon_proliferation/

[6] Joint Press Conference between Mr Gareth Evans and Ms Yoriko Kawaguchi, Washington, D.C., 15 February 2009

[7] Statement by Hirofumi Nakasone, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 'Conditions towards Zero - "11 Benchmarks for Global Nuclear Disarmament" -' 27 April 2009,
http://www.mofa.go.jp/u_news/2/20090427_204141.html

IV. Nautilus invites your responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send responses to: napsnet-reply@nautilus.org . Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

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