

## Religious Leaders and Statesmen Agree On Goal of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons

A statement by an interfaith group of U.S. religious leaders in May 2006 and an article by four retired statesmen published in January 2007 show remarkable similarity in the goal to eliminate nuclear weapons and in the means for getting there.

The statement by religious leaders is addressed to presidential candidates and is entitled “**Global Elimination of Nuclear Weapons: A Leadership Challenge for the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S. President.**”<sup>1</sup> The four statesmen are George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn (two Republicans, two Democrats), who signed an article entitled “**A World Free of Nuclear Weapons**”, published in the Wall Street Journal on January 4, 2007.<sup>2</sup>

Here we make a comparison by inserting paragraphs from the statesmen’s article into the statement by the religious leaders.

### Introduction

#### *Religious Leaders:*

We the undersigned persons from the faith community believe that the time is long overdue to seek the global elimination of nuclear weapons. The 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, who takes office on January 20, 2009, will have an opportunity to provide creative leadership to move decisively in this direction. Therefore, we ask persons who are considering a run for the presidency in 2008 to seriously consider the following ideas.

#### *Statesmen:*

Nuclear weapons today present tremendous dangers, but also an historic opportunity. U.S. leadership will be required to take the world to the next stage -- to a solid consensus for reversing reliance on nuclear weapons globally as a vital contribution to preventing their proliferation into potentially dangerous hands, and ultimately ending them as a threat to the world.

### Our Concerns

#### *Religious Leaders:*

We reaffirm the findings of numerous religious bodies<sup>3</sup> that ***nuclear weapons are inherently immoral***. As weapons of mass destruction, their use would kill thousands, possibly millions, of innocent people and would ravage the environment. We also note that respected military leaders have stated that nuclear weapons have no legitimate military utility. Scientists and civilian leaders from around the globe want nuclear weapons eliminated. This goal reflects the highest aspiration of humankind.

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<sup>1</sup> For full text and signers see [http://www.zero-nukes.org/statement\\_to\\_presidential\\_candidates.html](http://www.zero-nukes.org/statement_to_presidential_candidates.html).

<sup>2</sup> See [http://www.fcni.org/issues/item\\_print.php?item\\_id=2252&issue\\_id=54](http://www.fcni.org/issues/item_print.php?item_id=2252&issue_id=54)

<sup>3</sup> For examples, go to <http://www.zero-nukes.org/religiousstatements1.html>.

*Statesmen:*

Leaders addressed this issue in earlier times. In his "Atoms for Peace" address to the United Nations in 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower pledged America's "determination to help solve the fearful atomic dilemma -- to devote its entire heart and mind to find the way by which the miraculous inventiveness of man shall not be dedicated to his death, but consecrated to his life." John F. Kennedy, seeking to break the logjam on nuclear disarmament, said, "The world was not meant to be a prison in which man awaits his execution."

Rajiv Gandhi, addressing the U.N. General Assembly on June 9, 1988, appealed, "Nuclear war will not mean the death of a hundred million people. Or even a thousand million. It will mean the extinction of four thousand million: the end of life as we know it on our planet earth. We come to the United Nations to seek your support. We seek your support to put a stop to this madness."

Ronald Reagan called for the abolishment of "all nuclear weapons," which he considered to be "totally irrational, totally inhumane, good for nothing but killing, possibly destructive of life on earth and civilization." Mikhail Gorbachev shared this vision, which had also been expressed by previous American presidents.

*Religious Leaders:*

We are concerned that people in the United States face **nuclear danger** from two sources:

- Nuclear material or weapons smuggled into the United States by terrorists.
- Accidental attack from the Russian nuclear arsenal.

People elsewhere, especially in the Middle East and Asia, also face the risk of nuclear war.

*Statesmen:*

Nuclear weapons were essential to maintaining international security during the Cold War because they were a means of deterrence. The end of the Cold War made the doctrine of mutual Soviet-American deterrence obsolete. Deterrence continues to be a relevant consideration for many states with regard to threats from other states. But reliance on nuclear weapons for this purpose is becoming increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective.

North Korea's recent nuclear test and Iran's refusal to stop its program to enrich uranium -- potentially to weapons grade -- highlight the fact that the world is now on the precipice of a new and dangerous nuclear era. Most alarmingly, the likelihood that non-state terrorists will get their hands on nuclear weaponry is increasing. In today's war waged on world order by terrorists, nuclear weapons are the ultimate means of mass devastation. And non-state terrorist groups with nuclear weapons are conceptually outside the bounds of a deterrent strategy and present difficult new security challenges.

Apart from the terrorist threat, unless urgent new actions are taken, the U.S. soon will be compelled to enter a new nuclear era that will be more precarious, psychologically disorienting, and economically even more costly than was Cold War deterrence.

*Religious Leaders:*

Because the nuclear danger is global, **solutions must be international**. In both the short- and long-term the United States will gain greater security by joining other nations to (a) eliminate nuclear weapons on a mutual basis with adequate verification and (b) safeguard nuclear bomb material to prevent acquisition by persons of malevolent intent.

*Statesmen:*

First and foremost is intensive work with leaders of the countries in possession of nuclear weapons to turn the goal of a world without nuclear weapons into a joint enterprise. Such a joint

enterprise, by involving changes in the disposition of the states possessing nuclear weapons, would lend additional weight to efforts already under way to avoid the emergence of a nuclear-armed North Korea and Iran.

## **Commitment Requested**

### *Religious Leaders:*

We ask candidates for the presidency to make a commitment to work vigorously to reduce nuclear danger and to make substantial progress toward the global elimination of nuclear weapons if elected president.

### *Statesmen:*

Reassertion of the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and practical measures toward achieving that goal would be, and would be perceived as, a bold initiative consistent with America's moral heritage. The effort could have a profoundly positive impact on the security of future generations. Without the bold vision, the actions will not be perceived as fair or urgent. Without the actions, the vision will not be perceived as realistic or possible.

### *Religious Leaders:*

Among measures to support are the following:

### *Statesmen:*

The program on which agreements should be sought would constitute a series of agreed and urgent steps that would lay the groundwork for a world free of the nuclear threat. Steps would include:

## **(1) Reaffirm support for international approaches.**

### *Religious Leaders:*

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is an essential instrument for reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear danger. We believe that the next president should:

- Reaffirm solid U.S. support for the NPT.
- Work with other nations to strengthen the NPT.
- Support the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency and seek to expand its authority to inspect and safeguard nuclear facilities around the globe.

### *Statesmen:*

The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) envisioned the end of all nuclear weapons. It provides (a) that states that did not possess nuclear weapons as of 1967 agree not to obtain them, and (b) that states that do possess them agree to divest themselves of these weapons over time. Every president of both parties since Richard Nixon has reaffirmed these treaty obligations, but non-nuclear weapon states have grown increasingly skeptical of the sincerity of the nuclear powers.

## **(2) Prevent terrorists and hostile states from obtaining nuclear weapons.**

### *Religious Leaders:*

In cooperation with other nations the United States should work vigorously to prevent terrorist organizations and non-nuclear states from obtaining nuclear bomb material or developing nuclear weapons. Specifically:

- Accelerate the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program (Nunn-Lugar) designed to secure vulnerable weapons and materials in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere. Complete this task by the end of 2010.
- Provide leadership to complete a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.
- Encourage and support international diplomatic initiatives to curtail nuclear weapon programs of North Korea, Iran, and any other state with nuclear ambitions.

*Statesmen:*

Strong non-proliferation efforts are under way. The Cooperative Threat Reduction program, the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Additional Protocols are innovative approaches that provide powerful new tools for detecting activities that violate the NPT and endanger world security. They deserve full implementation. The negotiations on proliferation of nuclear weapons by North Korea and Iran, involving all the permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany and Japan, are crucially important. They must be energetically pursued.

Steps would include:

- Providing the highest possible standards of security for all stocks of weapons, weapons-usable plutonium, and highly enriched uranium everywhere in the world.
- Getting control of the uranium enrichment process, combined with the guarantee that uranium for nuclear power reactors could be obtained at a reasonable price, first from the Nuclear Suppliers Group and then from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or other controlled international reserves. It will also be necessary to deal with proliferation issues presented by spent fuel from reactors producing electricity.
- Halting the production of fissile material for weapons globally; phasing out the use of highly enriched uranium in civil commerce and removing weapons-usable uranium from research facilities around the world and rendering the materials safe.

### **(3) Prevent nuclear attack on the United States from afar.**

*Religious Leaders:*

Although the Cold War is long over, the United States and Russia retain vast nuclear arsenals with thousands of warheads on hair-trigger alert. The next president should:

- Quickly work out an executive agreement with the Russian president to take all missiles off hair-trigger alert, to be achieved within one year with adequate verification.

*Statesmen:*

Steps would include:

- Changing the Cold War posture of deployed nuclear weapons to increase warning time and thereby reduce the danger of an accidental or unauthorized use of a nuclear weapon

*Religious Leaders:*

- Strengthen the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty of 2002 by (a) adding verification measures, (b) requiring missiles and warheads taken out of service to be dismantled, (c) changing the goal to no more than 200 strategic warheads in service by the end of 2012, and (d) making the treaty permanent.
- Make permanent START I (due to expire in 2008).

*Statesmen:*

Steps would include:

- Continuing to reduce substantially the size of nuclear forces in all states that possess them.

*Religious Leaders:*

- Seek mutual elimination of all tactical nuclear weapons.

*Statesmen:*

Steps would include:

- Eliminating short-range nuclear weapons designed to be forward-deployed.

#### **(4) Work with other nations to achieve nuclear disarmament.**

*Religious Leaders:*

The United States should engage in negotiations with other states possessing nuclear weapons for their elimination. To lead by example, the United States should:

- Along with other nations maintain the moratorium on testing of nuclear weapons
- Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

*Statesmen:*

Steps would include:

- Initiating a bipartisan process with the Senate, including understandings to increase confidence and provide for periodic review, to achieve ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, taking advantage of recent technical advances, and working to secure ratification by other key states.

*Religious Leaders:*

- Cease development of new nuclear weapons.
- Reverse the current policy of threatened preventive use of nuclear weapons.

*Religious Leaders:*

To deal with the political and military context of nuclear weapons, the United States should work with other nations to:

- Promote peace processes in the Middle East that seek security for all.
- Encourage peaceful resolution of India-Pakistan rivalry.

*Statesmen:*

Achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons will also require effective measures to impede or counter any nuclear-related conduct that is potentially threatening to the security of any state or peoples.

Steps would include:

- Redoubling our efforts to resolve regional confrontations and conflicts that give rise to new nuclear powers.

## Conclusion

### *Religious Leaders:*

We recognize that this is an ambitious agenda. But we believe that is achievable through effective presidential leadership and support from the Congress. We in the faith community affirm that we will promote this agenda and develop public support for it.

### *Statesmen:*

We endorse setting the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and working energetically on the actions required to achieve that goal, beginning with the measures outlined above.

## Signers

### **Global Elimination of Nuclear Weapons: A Leadership Challenge for the 44<sup>th</sup> U.S President**

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, General Secretary, American Baptist Churches in the USA

Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton, Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit

Dominic Izzo, OP, President, Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church

Most Rev. Frank Tracy Griswold, former Presiding Bishop, Episcopal Church

Joe Volk, Executive Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

Bishop Dimitrios Couchell, Ecumenical Officer, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed, Secretary General, Islamic Society of North America

Beatrice Eichten, OSF, President, Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Marie Dennis, Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

James M. Schrag, Executive Director, Mennonite Church, USA

Rev. Dr. Robert W. Edgar, General Secretary, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Bishop Gabino Zavala, President, Pax Christi USA

[Dave Robinson, Executive Director, Pax Christi USA](#)

Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory, Director, Washington Office, Presbyterian Church (USA)

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, Director, The Shalom Center

[Rev. William G. Sinkford, President, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations](#)

The Rev. John H. Thomas, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ

Bishop William B. Oden, Ecumenical Officer, United Methodist Council of Bishops

Bishop Peter D. Weaver, New England Conference, United Methodist Church

James Winkler, General Secretary, United Methodist General Board of Church and Society

Howard W. Hallman, Chair, Methodists United for Peace with Justice

[Rev. Barbara G. Green, Executive Director, Churches' Center for Theology and Public Policy](#)

Rev. Dr. Rich Pleva, Conference Minister, Iowa Conference, United Church of Christ \*  
Rev. John Blackadar, New Hampshire District Superintendent, United Methodist Church  
David Lamarre-Vincent, Executive Director, New Hampshire Council of Churches\*  
Rev. Dr. Stephen J. Sidorak, Jr., Executive Director, Christian Conference of Connecticut  
Marilyn P. Mecham, Executive Director, Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska  
Rev. George Reed, Executive Director, North Carolina Council of Churches  
Rev. John Boonstra, Executive Minister, Washington Association of Churches

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\* Organization for identification only

### **A World Free of Nuclear Weapons**

George P. Shultz, a distinguished fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford; secretary of state from 1982 to 1989. William J. Perry, secretary of defense from 1994 to 1997. Henry A. Kissinger, chairman of Kissinger Associates; secretary of state from 1973 to 1977. Senator Sam Nunn, former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

This article is also endorsed by participants in a conference held at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University to reconsider the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons that President Reagan and President Gorbachev discussed at a meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1986. They include Sidney D. Drell, Martin Anderson, Steve Andreasen, Michael Armacost, William Crowe, James Goodby, Thomas Graham Jr., Thomas Henriksen, David Holloway, Max Kampelman, Jack Matlock, John McLaughlin, Don Oberdorfer, Rozanne Ridgway, Henry Rowen, Roald Sagdeev and Abraham Sofaer.

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