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To the Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in New York and Geneva of states that have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons

30 September 2015

Dear Ambassador

Along with 116 other nations, your country has joined the Humanitarian Pledge “to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons in light of their unacceptable humanitarian consequences and associated risks”. I am writing to ask your government to consider joining other supporters of the Pledge in taking a specific, practical action to advance its goals.

You may be aware that the Netherlands is a candidate for election to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2016. As the Security Council is the paramount body of the global community responsible for international peace and security, it is important that its membership reflects the growing global commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons. And since the five permanent members of the Council all possess nuclear weapons and have been widely criticized for their lack of progress on disarmament, it is all the more important that the non-permanent members are genuinely committed to nuclear disarmament, and are prepared to pursue effective measures to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

Although the Netherlands is a non-nuclear-weapon state party to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), and claims to support nuclear disarmament, it is a member of the NATO nuclear alliance, relies on nuclear weapons for its security, and retains NATO nuclear weapons on its territory. The Netherlands has not joined the Humanitarian Pledge, and has criticized and actively opposed moves to stigmatize and prohibit nuclear weapons. It has publicly denied that there is a “legal gap” with respect to the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

In addition, although the Netherlands is a prominent member of the Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), which regularly calls for reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies and for providing transparency on nuclear arsenals, the Netherlands has taken no steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in its own defence doctrine, and provides no transparency whatsoever on the nuclear weapons held in the Netherlands.

This kind of hypocrisy undermines the international trust and cooperation necessary to make progress on nuclear disarmament, and assists the nuclear-armed states in maintaining the status quo. Worse, by resisting efforts to stigmatize and prohibit nuclear weapons, the Netherlands is helping to preserve their legitimacy as a means of pursuing national security, thereby inciting proliferation and weakening the NPT.

You might also wish to contrast the double standards of the Netherlands’ stance on nuclear weapons with the values it proclaims in its Security Council campaign material: “All people

deserve to live in a fair and just world. We believe an international legal order is in the interests of all countries. It forms the best guarantee for a level playing field, with clear and predictable rules for all.”

For all these reasons, we would respectfully suggest that you inform the Netherlands that your government will only be prepared to consider voting for the Netherlands in the 2016 Security Council election if the Netherlands:

(a) Joins the Humanitarian Pledge;

and/or

(b) Announces specific, concrete steps to begin reducing the role of nuclear weapons in the Netherlands’ security strategy and defence doctrine (in accordance with the NPDI’s own recommendations);

and/or

(c) Undertakes to provide to the 2017 NPT preparatory committee (or earlier) a comprehensive transparency report on any nuclear weapons in the Netherlands (in accordance with the NPDI’s own recommendations).

We understand that governments must take many factors into account in deciding which candidates to support for election to the Security Council. And we are aware that the competing candidates in the 2016 election – Italy and Sweden – may not have much better records than the Netherlands in supporting the objectives of the Humanitarian Pledge (although Sweden’s foreign minister has undertaken to join the Pledge, and Italy at least has not actively opposed it).

Nevertheless, we strongly believe that by placing these conditions on their support for the Netherlands, the 117 pledging states have an historic opportunity both to achieve a small but significant change in policy in a key nuclear alliance state, and to demonstrate the influence and strength of the community of nations that are committed to prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons on humanitarian grounds.

The Humanitarian Pledge has given you the power to start changing the game on nuclear disarmament in practical ways; we urge you to consider using it.

For further information and updates on this campaign, please visit www.nlinunsc.org.

Yours sincerely



Richard Lennane
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Wildfire>_