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Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World

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In an article published in January 2007 in the *Wall Street Journal* a bipartisan quartet of eminent American statesmen -- George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, Secretaries of State with Presidents Reagan and Nixon; Bill Perry, Secretary of Defense with President Clinton, and Sam Nunn, long standing Chairman of the Defense Committee of the US Senate -- outlined the vision of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World (NFWF) as a desirable, indeed indispensable, goal. They cogently argued that, unless the nuclear-weapon countries -- and *in primis* the two main ones, USA and Russia -- start a process to move towards the elimination of nuclear weaponry, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by many other countries besides the eight ones that now possess them will be unavoidable. This, in turn, would entail an intolerable risk that such weapons eventually be used with catastrophic consequences. The argument was reiterated by the four one year later, in January 2008.

A growing consensus is gradually emerging worldwide. In the USA, a NFWF has been recognized as an important goal by both presidential candidates and by a majority of those who have served in key positions in the field of national security. In Russia, Gorbachev immediately expressed his agreement, while the official leadership, albeit more cautious, is not negative. In the UK, Prime Minister Gordon Brown came out in favor; the Defense Minister offered at the Geneva Disarmament Conference that a study group, including experts from the 5 official nuclear-weapon countries (USA, UK, Russia, France and China), be hosted at the British nuclear-weapon establishment, to identify methods to verify the elimination of nuclear weapons; at the end of June a bipartisan quartet, including three former Foreign Secretaries and a former Secretary General of NATO, expressed their support in an article in the London *Times*. In France, the recently issued White Paper on defense indicates the elimination of nuclear weaponry as a goal to be pursued. In Australia the government has announced the formation of a new International Commission to map the path towards a NFWF. And there have been innumerable supportive statements by Non Governmental Groups, such as the Luxembourg Forum, an international group of experts based in Moscow which convened recently in Rome.

We want to attest the broad support in Italy, both across the political spectrum and in the scientific community, for this important development.

We are of course fully aware that the route leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons is long and that to achieve this goal a dramatic change of the political climate has to take place. There are however some steps which would be very useful to promote a more favorable environment. The first is the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Treaty banning all experimental nuclear explosions, thereby consolidating the current moratorium not supported so far by the force of an international treaty and its full verification machinery. It would also be important to overcome the stalemate of the negotiation at the Geneva Disarmament Conference on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, so as to arrive at a treaty-sanctioned prohibition of the production of the basic materials to manufacture nuclear explosive devices, Highly Enriched Uranium and separated weapon-grade Plutonium. Here too a *de facto* moratorium prevails, as declared by the USA, Russia, the United Kingdom, France (and perhaps China), that needs to be consolidated in a Treaty and its verification procedures.

These two Treaties would certainly be welcomed by the Non-Nuclear-Weapon Countries and would facilitate a positive outcome of the next Review Conference of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2010, thereby reinforcing the worldwide nuclear-weapon non proliferation regime, including a universal monitoring of its respect -- both formally and substantially, in letter and in spirit.

Apart from these specific steps, a substantial improvement is necessary in the relations among the two nuclear superpowers, USA and Russia, which -- in spite of their recent reductions-- still possess among themselves more than nine tenths of all existing nuclear weapons. They must therefore take the leading responsibility to make additional reductions proceeding towards the complete elimination of nuclear weaponry. In this context the other three official Nuclear-Weapon Countries -- as recognized by the NPT: United Kingdom, France and China -- must also play a role, as indeed they declare to be eventually ready to do. And it is necessary that confrontational tensions abate in the areas where the risk of nuclear explosions is greater, maybe even by subnational terrorist groups. We refer in particular to South East Asia (India and Pakistan) and to the Middle East (Israel, Palestine, Iran). In turn, in both these contexts an indication of progress towards a NFWF is likely to have a positive influence.

Italy and Europe can and must play their role to foster initiatives and agreements which may help to create the conditions conducive to the goal of eliminating nuclear weaponry. A new way of thinking -- a new common wisdom -- is a fundamental step in this direction. We hold that on these issues, essential for the very survival of humankind, a superior, common interest must be recognized, in spite of natural political differences.

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Affairs, (1995 Nobel Peace Prize “for their efforts to diminish the part played by nuclear arms in international politics and in the longer run to eliminate such arm).” Massimo D'Alema, MP, served as Prime Minister of the Italian center-left government from 1998 to 2000, and as Foreign Affairs Minister of the Prodi government from 2006 to 2008. Gianfranco Fini, MP, served as Foreign Affairs Minister of the center-right Berlusconi government from 2004 to 2006 and is currently the President of the Italian Parliament. Giorgio La Malfa, MP, served as Minister of European Affairs of the center-right Berlusconi government from 2005 to 2006. Arturo Parisi, MP, served as Minister of Defense of the center-left Prodi government from 2006 to 2008.