

7 April 2015

The Hon. Julie Bishop MP  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
PO Box 6100, Senate  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Bishop,

I am writing ahead of the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference to share with you certain concerns and expectations for that event.

The Action Plan from the 2010 Review Conference brought some meaningful disarmament steps into the NPT process. But, five years on, progress on the disarmament actions has been very, very modest. Crises in the world are no excuse for this lack of progress. If anything, international instability makes the elimination of nuclear weapons more urgent.

Recent correspondence from the Department in reply to letters to you from our President, Rev. Prof. Andrew Dutney (25 February 2014) and the open letter from ICAN which we signed (21 January 2015) have reiterated the Government's position against a call for a ban on nuclear weapons.

However, the growing understanding of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons has been generating new energy, participation and resolve and there is increasing worldwide support for the humanitarian initiative against nuclear weapons. This precious momentum must be maintained. We therefore request that the Government reconsider its position and that during the NPT Review Conference, our representatives:

- **Stress the importance of the joint statements and conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons since 2012.** These events have done what the NPT has failed to do – empower the majority in their commitment to eliminate nuclear arms.
- **Endorse the Vienna Conference Pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition of nuclear weapons** and encourage other states to endorse the Pledge.
- **Announce that Australia now favours the start in 2015 of negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons.** Since such an instrument is for the good of all, it will require a negotiating forum that is open to all states and where no state can block progress towards such a widely shared and long-overdue goal.



for a world reconciled

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA ASSEMBLY

As the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings of Japan, 2015 is a propitious year for real progress on nuclear disarmament. To ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again, they must be eliminated. To eliminate them, they must be banned. The Uniting Church believes that a reconsidered position taken by Australia to this Review Conference would be a great encouragement to other states to take the necessary steps to nuclear disarmament.

We are associated with churches and related organisations in 140 countries through the Geneva-based World Council of Churches. World Council of Churches representatives at the United Nations will be following-up on this letter and contacting the Australian delegates at the NPT meeting.

Since 1948, the World Council of Churches has consistently promoted the international rule of law as a pillar of peace and justice. Nuclear weapons are inherently illegal and are an obstacle to the building of peace. We believe that it is time to close the legal gap that perpetuates the nuclear *status quo*.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to a response to these concerns. Please accept our good wishes for a constructive outcome in New York.

Yours sincerely

Rev Elenie Poulos  
National Director  
UnitingJustice Australia

cc Jonathan Frerichs, World Council of Churches