

For a Nuclear Free World

by Janet Jagan - Dec. 20, 2008

Global disarmament is a goal that some countries and many peace organizations and humanitarians aim at. Unfortunately, not all countries have this goal. A world without war is but a faint hope. Right now, it is hard to count all the wars going on, as well as all the potential wars that exist. The latter may have been reduced by the defeat, in the USA, of the Republican Party at Presidential and Congressional elections last month. Bush and his associates had been heading for a confrontation in Iran and Syria, but it seems to be an accepted view that, now, this will not happen.

At this time, 148 countries have signed the comprehensive nuclear Test Ban Treaty, since it was first signed in 1996. However this treaty cannot come into effect until the USA signs it. That was unlikely during the Bush regime, but there are high hopes that the new President, Barack Obama may send it to Congress for ratification. However, the reality is that it may be putting too much pressure on the new president to expect him to correct all the mistakes of the past. The various forces and pressure in Washington are realities that have to be faced by all those hoping for very early changes.

The mere presence of nuclear weapons in a number of countries creates its own problems, particularly with neighbours and the various alliances and areas of power in this world. Russia, which has nuclear weapons, is being surrounded by anti-missile military stations in Europe at the behest of the USA. Iran is constantly under pressure to stop its nuclear activity which it claims is for domestic use – to provide cheap electricity. Israel has been allowed to build nuclear weapons because it is an ally of the USA, whereas Iraq was invaded on the excuse that it had weapons of mass destruction (nuclear weapons). India and Pakistan have gone ahead and created nuclear weapons while the two nations have demonstrated increasing hostility to each other.

The answer, really is not only to ban nuclear testing, but to ban all nuclear weapons which endanger every living organism on this earth. The vast sums of money spent on the development of nuclear weapons – 20,000 exist – is done at an unbelievable cost to humanity.

When we examine statistics from the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) we see how disastrous to humanity is the expenditure on nuclear weapons and other weapons of war. The FAO has stated that some 923 million (nearly one billion) people were suffering from hunger in 2007, up from 848 million in 2003-05 and 842 million in 1990-1992. The FAO also estimated that 14% of the world's population was undernourished this year, up from 12.9% in 2003-05.

The champions of peace have calculated that world hunger could be curtailed if the money spent (wasted) on armaments, nuclear and otherwise, could be used for humanitarian purposes and assisting poor nations to be self sufficient in food production.

A columnist in the Guyana Chronicle, Gwynne Dyer, commenting on the subject of nuclear weapons wrote that "If Barack Obama sent the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to Congress for ratification early in the new session that would be an excellent start."

He also wrote about a new initiative launched recently in Paris under the title “Global Zero” in which more than 100 global leaders endorsed the goal of abolishing nuclear weapons completely. That, of course, is a noble ambition which many people throughout the world could hope for.

But it could never happen until the Number One nuclear power faced the reality that nuclear weapons are not the answer to a nations’ protection and/or ambitions. A nuclear free world would create more stability and fewer crises that rock the world and create fear and poverty.

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