



**Asia Pacific Leadership Network for  
Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament**

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **ASIA PACIFIC LEADERS CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

**CANBERRA 22 OCTOBER 2013.** Thirty political, diplomatic, military and scientific leaders from fourteen Asia Pacific countries – including twelve former prime ministers, foreign and defence ministers – have signed a joint statement strongly supporting a nuclear weapons free region and world, and calling on policymakers to urgently re-energize the disarmament agenda.

The statement (attached) expresses grave concern that the Asia Pacific is the only region in the world where the number of nuclear weapons is actually now growing, and challenges the “Cold War habits of mind” which are leading policymakers to place far too much reliance on unsubstantiated or highly questionable arguments about the utility of nuclear weapon, and far too little on the risks associated with them.

The statement calls for very specific steps toward disarmament to be taken by each of the nuclear armed states in the region – the US, Russia, China, India, Pakistan and North Korea – and the US allies and partners who shelter under its nuclear umbrella.

The Convenor of the group, former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, said in releasing the statement:

The optimism generated by President Obama’s 2009 Prague Speech, and successful initial US-Russia disarmament negotiations, has begun to fade. It is critical that we recapture a sense of urgency about the scale and gravity of the risks posed by the world’s 17000 remaining nuclear weapons. APLN leaders have shown the way in this very strong and sharply worded statement. It’s time for leaders to listen, and act.

#### **About the APLN**

The Asia Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN) is an advocacy group, formed in 2011, of former senior political, diplomatic and military and scientific leaders from around the region, from South Asia to East Asia and Australasia. The objective of the network is to inform and energize public opinion, and especially high-level policymakers, to take seriously the very real threats posed by nuclear weapons, and do everything possible to achieve a world in which they are contained, diminished and ultimately eliminated.

The network is modelled on a European counterpart (the ELN), established in 2010 and convened by former UK Defence Minister Lord Des Browne, which has already been active and visible in calling for urgent changes to NATO nuclear policy. The creation of both networks, and a more recently established Latin American Leadership Network (LALN) has been made possible by seed grants from the US-based Nuclear Threat Initiative, co-chaired by former Senator Nunn.

APLN is convened by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, who previously served as co-chair of the International Commission for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICCND) with Yoriko Kawaguchi, former Foreign Minister of Japan, also a member of APLN, and is designed to build upon the work of that Commission.

APLN members contribute to the nuclear debate by making public statements from time to time, engaging in direct advocacy with regional governments as both public and private opportunities arise, commissioning research and hosting regional seminars and conferences as resources permit, and maintaining an active website ([www.apln.org](http://www.apln.org)) through its Secretariat based at the Australian National University in Canberra.

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## Media Enquiries

Media enquiries should be addressed in the first instance to the Convenor, Professor Gareth Evans at [ge@gevans.org](mailto:ge@gevans.org) or the Head of Secretariat, Professor Ramesh Thakur at [ramesh.thakur@anu.edu.au](mailto:ramesh.thakur@anu.edu.au) Tel +61 447 727 797

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## **HO CHI MINH CITY DECLARATION ON DISARMAMENT**

**October 2013**

*We the undersigned* members of the Asia Pacific Leadership Network on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament,

*Noting with grave concern* that the Asia Pacific is the only region in the world where the number of nuclear weapons is growing,

*Declaring* our strong continuing commitment to a region and world free of nuclear weapons, for the reasons that

- nuclear weapons are the most indiscriminately inhumane weapons ever invented, their use an affront to every fundamental principle of international humanitarian law;
- so long as any state has nuclear weapons, others will want them; so long as any nuclear weapons remain anywhere, they are bound one day to be used – by accident or miscalculation if not design – by state or non-state actors; and any such use would be catastrophic for life on this planet as we know it; and
- the risks associated with the possession of nuclear weapons in today's world far outweigh any deterrent utility they may have had in the past or continue to have,

*Expressing* our strong continuing concern that nuclear policymaking in this region and elsewhere continues to be dominated by Cold War habits of mind, in which far too much reliance is placed upon unsubstantiated or highly questionable arguments about the utility of nuclear deterrence, and far too little on the risks associated with any state acquiring or retaining them, and

*Expressing* our strong belief that a world free of nuclear weapons is achievable, through a step-by-step process involving

- in the short to medium term – freezing and reducing existing nuclear weapon stockpiles, minimizing their deployment, and amending nuclear doctrine to dramatically minimize reliance upon them;
- in the longer term – overcoming the technical (verification and enforcement), geopolitical and psychological barriers which presently stand in the way of their final complete elimination,

*Call upon* policymakers in the Asia Pacific region to recognize the gravity of the risks associated with the possession of nuclear weapons by any state, the urgent need to re-energize the nuclear disarmament agenda, and to act accordingly as follows:

*In the case of both the United States and Russia*

- negotiate a follow-on agreement to New START designed not only to dramatically further reduce the number of deployed strategic weapons, but to make major reductions in the number of *all* nuclear weapons in their respective stockpiles;
- dramatically reduce the number of nuclear weapons deployed with launch-on-warning alert status;
- embrace the principle of 'No First Use' in their respective nuclear doctrines;

*In the case of the United States*

- intensify efforts to secure Senate ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) as soon as possible;
- seriously address the concerns that have been raised by Russia and China about the potentially destabilizing impact of its Ballistic Missile Defence program, and the further development of conventional capability, in particular Conventional Prompt Global Strike,

*In the case of China*

- reaffirm its commitment to a 'minimum nuclear deterrence' and maintenance of a 'No First Use' nuclear posture;
- continue to keep its nuclear weapons arsenal at its present level, relatively low as compared to the U.S. and Russia;
- persuade the National People's Congress to ratify the CTBT without waiting upon the US or any other necessary party to complete that process first, or at least seek to negotiate simultaneous ratification with the U.S.;
- continue to take all possible and appropriate steps, together with other participants in the Six Party Talks, to persuade North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities and capability to achieve the permanent denuclearization of, and sustainable peace on, the Korean peninsula;
- enter into sustained and serious high-level official dialogue on strategic issues with India and Pakistan;

*In the case of India*

- enter into sustained and serious high-level official dialogue on strategic issues with China and Pakistan;

- commit to not increasing its nuclear arsenal from its present level, with no further development of any new nuclear weapon systems, including battlefield nuclear weapons, new missile delivery systems and ballistic missile defence;
- ratify the CTBT without waiting upon the US or any other necessary party to complete that process first, or at least seek to negotiate simultaneous ratification with the US, China and Pakistan;
- revert to the unqualified statement of the principle of 'No First Use' in its nuclear doctrine;

*In the case of Pakistan*

- enter into sustained and serious high-level official dialogue on strategic issues with India and China;
- commit to not increasing its nuclear arsenal from its present level, with no further development of any new nuclear weapon systems, including battlefield nuclear weapons, new missile delivery systems and ballistic missile defence;
- ratify the CTBT without waiting upon the US or any other necessary party to complete that process first, or at least seek to negotiate simultaneous ratification with the US, China and India;
- cooperate in the commencement of serious formal negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, designed to halt further production of fissile material for weapons purposes;
- embrace the principle of 'No First Use' in its nuclear doctrine;

*In the case of North Korea*

- immediately freeze the production and testing of fissile material, nuclear weapons and delivery systems;
- enter into serious negotiations, and complete them expeditiously, to dismantle its nuclear weapons capability, in the context of achieving the permanent denuclearization of , and sustainable peace on, the Korean peninsula;
- rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state;

*In the case of U.S. allies and partners*

- accept a significantly reduced role for nuclear weapons in their security protection, in particular by accepting and encouraging moves by the U.S. toward embracing the principle of 'No First Use' in its nuclear doctrine (including in the first instance by clearly stating support for the U.S. declaring that the 'sole purpose' of its nuclear weapons is, so long as nuclear weapons exist, to deter their use by others).

*APLN members recognize that nuclear disarmament is only one element in a nuclear policy agenda which must include strong continuing commitment to strengthening, regionally and globally, nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear security and nuclear safety regimes.*

*We strongly believe that movement toward disarmament should not be held hostage to improvement in the overall geopolitical situation, globally or within our region: the two developments should be seen as complementary and mutually reinforcing, and should properly be pursued in tandem.*

*The real and immediate threat posed by nuclear weapons can no longer be ignored or downplayed by policymakers. The time for serious action on disarmament is now.*

*Ho Chi Minh City, 13 October 2013*

SIGNED

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