

Open Letter to the United Kingdom's Prime Minister asking for a reversal of the decision to increase its nuclear arsenal

Dear Prime Minister Johnson,

We, the signatories of this letter, are asking you to back away from your Government's recent decision to increase the number of nuclear warheads in the UK nuclear arsenal and to expand the role of nuclear weapons to address potential threats from chemical weapons, biological weapons and emerging issues such as cyber-attacks.

We see the new UK nuclear posture as a global threat affecting every person and every country in the world. Humanity and the integrity of our planet is under an unprecedented threat due to the climate and biodiversity crisis which is being worsened by the ongoing armed conflicts raging around the world and the current COVID-19 pandemic. Nuclear weapons are completely useless in addressing those real human security issues, and the new nuclear posture increases the risks that nuclear weapons might be used by miscalculation, conflict escalation, accident or intent. In addition, it is vital that we tackle the climate, biodiversity, human rights and health challenges in a spirit of global equity and cooperation rather than promoting nuclear re-armament and escalating military threats, armed forces deployments and military exercises aimed at 'enemy' states.

As a depositary state of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) the UK has failed to abide by its Article VI obligations to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race. Instead, the UK has modernised its system to make it a more threatening and effective mass killer. Such policy not only breaches the NPT but is also in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law which is binding on the UK and which prohibits the threat or use of nuclear weapons and which requires the elimination of nuclear weapons as affirmed by the International Court of Justice in 1996 and the UN Human Rights Committee in 2018.

In addition, the UK has been in breach of Article 1 of the NPT since its entry into force by engaging with the United States, under the Mutual Defence Agreement, in the exchange of nuclear weapon materials as well as scientific and technical expertise and continues to do so. Similar breaches are being carried out between France and the UK as they cooperate on military nuclear defence research through the Franco-British Teutates Treaty.

Not only is the new UK policy a breach of their obligations under international law, it is also a dangerous and provocative step. It affirms a broad role for nuclear weapons to address chemical and biological threats and expands this role to respond to emerging threats, including cyber-attacks, thus providing an excuse for any other nuclear-armed state wishing to make its own disastrous contribution to the nuclear arms race, further increasing the risks of nuclear weapons being used. In addition, if the nuclear armed states continue to ignore their NPT disarmament obligations, this provides political cover for any non-nuclear state contemplating the possibility of withdrawing from the NPT and building their own nuclear arsenal.

Lastly, we hold that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force on January 22nd 2021, is a welcome action to assist the fulfilment of the NPT's Article VI and is an important and necessary process for nuclear disarmament.

We therefore urge the United Kingdom to:

- Align with its obligations under international law including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
- Acknowledge the reality of the TPNW as a legitimate UN Treaty that is consistent with the NPT and has considerable support;
- Seek observer status at the first Meeting of State Parties of the TPNW;
- Accede to the TPNW, or commence negotiations with other nuclear armed states on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements to eliminate nuclear weapons under strict and effective verification and enforcement; and
- Start the dismantling of all UK nuclear weapons as soon as practically possible and encourage all other nuclear armed states to do so.

Sincerely,

Angie Zelter for Trident Ploughshares, United Kingdom, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2001*

Alyn Ware, New Zealand, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2009* and Councillor, World Future Council

Raul Montenegro, Argentina, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2004* and Coordinator, Right Livelihood College Cordoba

Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera, Uganda, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2005*

Hunter Lovins, United States of America, *Right Livelihood Laureate 1983*

Sima Samar, Afghanistan, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2012*

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Basil Fernando, Hong Kong, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2014*

International Baby Food Action Network, International, *Right Livelihood Laureate 1998*

Friends of the Earth Malaysia, Malaysia, *Right Livelihood Laureate 1988*

Fernando Rendon, for International Poetry Festival of Medellin, Colombia, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2006*

David Suzuki, Canada, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2009*

Michael Succow, Germany, *Right Livelihood Laureate 1997*

Tony Rinaudo, Australia, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2018*

Theo van Boven, the Netherlands, *Right Livelihood Laureate 1985*

Ida Kuklina, for the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia, Russia, *Right Livelihood Laureate 1996*

Bianca Jagger, Nicaragua, *Right Livelihood Laureate 2004*

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