

The Committee Secretariat,
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties
House of Representatives
Parliament House, Canberra
jsct@aph.gov.au

29/1/2009

Re: Review of Nuclear Treaties

Dear Secretariat,

I welcome the Prime Minister's decision to review all treaties relating to nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament, and Australian uranium exports. I also wish to thank the Committee for its rejection of the proposed Australian-Russian uranium exports agreement.

A Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC)¹ is a clear path to nuclear disarmament, to further strengthen the original objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to address its failings. As such, Australia must advocate for commencement of negotiations towards a NWC and the International Commission on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament provides a key opportunity to promote it, a draft² of which was tabled with the United Nations in 2008.

Australia must encourage the ratification of key treaties, including gaining the outstanding signatures needed to bring the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force. A review process of all relevant treaties would only assist efforts to pursue US ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Support of Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaties by Nuclear Weapon States is also vital. This would also encourage social and political motivation to embrace and continue such moves, internationally.

Uranium exports safeguards are seriously flawed and simply cannot prevent weapons proliferation; they can merely attempt to detect some cases of diversion after it has occurred. Australia must review its uranium export agreements in light of nuclear weapons proliferation risks, and must act to reduce these risks. Nuclear power was born of the weapons race - the two are intrinsically, repeatedly and demonstratedly linked via expertise, infrastructure, covert research and the fuels themselves. Of particular concern are the facts that the present safeguards system applies only to civil – *not military* – nuclear facilities, safeguards don't guarantee (limited) IAEA inspections³ anyway, and

¹ www.icanw.org/nuclear-weapons-convention

² www.icanw.org/securing-our-survival and supporting statement by UN Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon: www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2008/10/24_ban_un_nuclear.php

³ Only 10 Chinese nuclear facilities (including reactors, enrichment plants and reprocessing plants) are currently subject to IAEA Safeguards. Of these, *only* 3 were inspected by the IAEA in 2005 (IAEA 2005 Annual Report). (As also tabled at the JSCT review on a potential Australian nuclear agreement with Russia, 2008).

safeguards do not – and cannot – prevent a nation’s diversion of existing domestic uranium reserves for military use⁴ nor address reprocessing and separation of plutonium⁵. Thus, Australia now has an opportunity to show leadership and work towards refraining from involvement in an industry which, both directly and indirectly, has been and remains intrinsically linked to nuclear weapons proliferation – 26,000 of which threaten us all, and everything we have ever fought to protect.

Additionally, Australian treaties should not permit the use of Australian facilities in the internationally provocative, unproven and expensive US Missile Defence program, in which Australia would play a crucial global role, would likely be targeted in the event of nuclear conflict, and in which the USA remains in stark defiance of the principles of the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty.

As per the recommendations of the UN Expert Group on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education, the Government must actively support peace and disarmament education and a NWC to outline the clear, urgent and achievable steps required for complete nuclear disarmament. Anything less is simply expecting a future free of the human failings of the past, and ignores the preventative-only option available to us to help protect against unimaginably dire consequences for us all in a world of complacency on nuclear weapons.

Yours faithfully,

Adam Dempsey

⁴ “While it (China) had enough uranium resources to support its nuclear weapons program, Madame Fu said China would need to import uranium to meet its power demands.” - An admission from China's Australian Ambassador Madame Fu Ying at a Melbourne mining club meeting that Australia supplying uranium to China would support their nuclear weapons program by freeing up their own uranium reserves for this purpose. ('The Australian', 2/12/05, "China warning on uranium", paragraph 10).

⁵ 'Reprocessing (of uranium fuel) provides the strongest link between commercial nuclear power and proliferation.' - US Congress, Office of Technology Assessment Nuclear Proliferation and Safeguards, June 1977.