

Ref:SB:AT/dd

20 February 2009

Committee Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on Treaties  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House ACT 2600  
Via email: [jsct@aph.gov.au](mailto:jsct@aph.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary,

## **Inquiry into Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament**

The ACTU welcomes this opportunity to make a brief submission to the Committee's Inquiry into Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

The ACTU recognises that the danger of nuclear war remains the greatest threat to global survival, security and sustainability and that the risks of nuclear war are increasing. So long as nuclear weapons exist, there is a risk that they will be used and that others will seek to acquire them. Nuclear weapons must be abolished. This abolition is the responsibility of all governments.

The ACTU believes that the abolition of nuclear weapons is achievable. Moreover, it is a legal obligation under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, affirmed by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons (1996).

The most practical approach to the abolition of nuclear weapons is the same as that adopted towards other types of weapons such as biological and chemical weapons, landmines and cluster munitions. There should be a comprehensive and legally binding instrument – a Nuclear Weapons Convention, addressing both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in an equitable and consistent multilateral framework.

.../2

The ACTU has welcomed the commitment of the Australian Labor Party and the Federal Government to increasing Australia's role in international efforts to advance nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, including through the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. We have also welcomed the Government's establishment of an International Nuclear Non-Proliferations and Disarmament Commission.

We strongly encourage Australia to take a leading role, regionally and globally in advocating for the commencement of negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention before the United Nations. We especially encourage the strengthening of bilateral relations with Japan to promote this essential work in the led up to the negotiations in 2010.

Finally, we note the importance of community engagement and education in achieving a nuclear weapons-free world. This should be encouraged in all countries. The ACTU is committed to working with government and other civil society organisations to build awareness and engagement in Australia and internationally as to the pressing need to abolish all nuclear weapons and practical measures that can be taken to achieve this objective.

Yours sincerely



Sharan Burrow  
PRESIDENT