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On International Affairs / Sur les affaires internationales

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The Honourable Chrystia Freeland,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
125 Sussex Drive,
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2
Email: chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca

19 March, 2019.

Dear Minister Freeland,

Re: GOC Response to Recommendation 21¹ of the NDDN Committee NATO Report

This letter is further to our respective letters of 9 October to you and to the Standing Committee on National Defence, wherein we urged the GOC to respond “promptly and positively” to Recommendation 21 of the Report on Canada and NATO of that Committee. We wish now to comment on your response to this Recommendation, included below for ease of reference.

***Nuclear Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament
Recommendation 21***

That the Government of Canada take a leadership role within NATO in beginning the work necessary for achieving the NATO goal of creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons. That this initiative be undertaken on an urgent basis in view of the increasing threat of nuclear conflict flowing from the renewed risk of nuclear proliferation, the deployment of so-called tactical nuclear weapons, and changes in nuclear doctrines regarding lowering the threshold for first use of nuclear weapons by Russia and the US.

The Government of Canada agrees with this recommendation. Advancing nuclear disarmament in a concrete and meaningful way remains a priority for the Government of Canada. Canada absolutely recognizes the grave consequences of a nuclear detonation,

¹ As stated in our original letter our focus is only Recommendation 21. We take issue with other aspects of the NDDN report, such as the regrettable failure to call for NATO to adopt an unequivocal No First Use of nuclear weapons policy, but that is not the subject of this letter.

which are clear and beyond dispute. Canada remains fully committed to pursuing pragmatic initiatives to help realize a world free of nuclear weapons.

Recognizing the current challenging global security environment, Allies recognize that arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation have made and should continue to make an essential contribution to achieving the Alliance's security objectives and for ensuring strategic and collective security. NATO has a long track record of doing its part on disarmament and non-proliferation. After the end of the Cold War, NATO dramatically reduced the number of nuclear weapons stationed in Europe and its reliance on nuclear weapons in NATO strategy. While NATO will remain a nuclear alliance as long as nuclear weapons exist, Canada continues to support the maintenance of nuclear weapons at the lowest levels of alert, noting that the circumstances in which NATO might have to use nuclear weapons are extremely limited.

Fifty years since the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) opened for signature, it remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and has an essential role in the maintenance of international peace, security and stability. Allies are strongly committed to full implementation of the NPT in all its aspects, including nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. NATO's nuclear arrangements have always been fully consistent with the NPT.

Canada also believes that NATO's deterrence and defence posture must be balanced with support for confidence-building measures that can help advance, step-by-step, the nuclear disarmament agenda. Canada's current priority is to advance progress toward the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). Canada is pleased with the consensus report achieved by the Canadian-chaired UN Expert Group that lays out in plain language a menu of potential provisions regarding a future treaty's scope, definitions, verification, and legal and institutional arrangements. NATO members recognize that negotiations on a FMCT should begin without further delay within the Conference on Disarmament.

In addition, Canada, along with many NATO Allies, is helping to build global nuclear disarmament verification capabilities through support to the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV).

This work exemplifies Canada's commitment to practical and inclusive measures to unite nuclear and non-nuclear armed states in working towards advancing nuclear disarmament.

[End of GOC response to Recommendation 21]

Recommendation 21 is a call for *new* efforts to be undertaken by Canada *within NATO* on an *urgent* basis to identify how NATO might contribute to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. The key insight underpinning the Committee's recommendation is, in our view, that the stated NATO goal of "creating the conditions for a world free of

nuclear weapons” will never be achieved without concerted, dedicated efforts by NATO members to this end.

While the Government of Canada’s response to Recommendation 21 begins with the words “[t]he GOC agrees with the recommendation”, it offers no new actions within NATO or elsewhere, on any basis let alone an urgent one. Instead, there is a reiteration of current Canadian actions in the Conference on Disarmament and at the UN General Assembly. There is not even an acknowledgement of the key concerns raised by the Committee, namely the increasing threat of nuclear conflict, the pending deployment of new tactical nuclear weapons in Europe and destabilising changes in the Russian and US nuclear doctrines.

Since the tabling of the Report, there have been more extremely destabilizing developments with Russia’s withdrawal from the INF treaty in response to the U.S. notice of withdrawal, coupled with a concerted effort by NSC Advisor John Bolton to avoid talks on a New START treaty extension until the time runs out. That would leave no legally binding limits on the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals for the first time since 1972, all the while that major nuclear weapons modernization programs are underway. And the USA and Russia would both be in blatant violation of their obligation under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament....”.

We respectfully call on the Government of Canada, through you Madame Minister, to reconsider its response in a manner that respects the work of the Committee and, even more importantly, is commensurate with the scale of the challenges the world now faces in seeking to scale back a growing nuclear menace as an indispensable step toward their ultimate, complete and verifiable elimination.

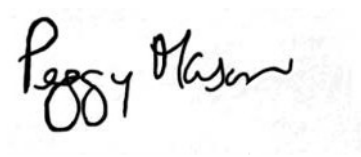
In particular we call on the Government to:

- **Begin an urgent dialogue with select NATO member states including Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, on how to forestall the permanent unravelling of the landmark INF Treaty, whether through recourse to its compliance review provisions or other diplomatic measures; and**
- **In the lead-up to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, use existing NATO mechanisms, including the appropriate committees on nuclear non-proliferation and arms control, to revitalize debate on the role of NATO in facilitating progress towards meeting the NPT Article VI disarmament obligation of *all* NATO member states.**

This is an opportunity for Canada to contribute in a tangible way to reducing global tensions and nuclear risks as the National Defence Standing Committee has recommended. We urge you to act on it.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues in person at your earliest convenience.

Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Mason". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "M".

Peggy Mason,
President, Rideau Institute

Alphabetical List of Supporting National Organizations

Canadian Peace Initiative, Chairperson Saul Arbess

Canadian Pugwash Group, Chair Paul Meyer

Group of 78, Chair Roy Culpeper

Project Ploughshares, Exec Director Cesar Jaramillo

Religions for Peace Canada, President Pascale Frémond

Rideau Institute, President Peggy Mason

Science for Peace, Rob Acheson

Soka Gakkai International Association of Canada (SGI), General Director Tony Meers

World Federalist Movement – Canada, Exec Director Fergus Watt

Cc. Stephen Fuhr, Chair, Stephen.Fuhr@parl.gc.ca, Vice-Chair James Bezan, james.bezan@parl.gc.ca and Vice-Chair Randall Garrison, Randall.Garrison@parl.gc.ca; Cindy.termoshuizen@international.gc.ca