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New proposals to reduce threats by weapons of mass destruction

After two years' work, the independent international Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, WMDC, chaired by Hans Blix, has put forward a number of concrete proposals on how the world could be freed of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

The report entitled 'Weapons of Terror' analyses the threats under which the world is living today – above all, 27 000 nuclear weapons and efforts by individual states and perhaps terrorist groups to develop or obtain different kinds of weapons of terror. The report discusses how these threats and risks can be addressed, including current issues such as Iran and the Middle East, North Korea, India and Pakistan.

The Commission's 14 members from all continents state that common global efforts to achieve arms limitation and disarmament have stagnated. After 50 years of cold war, we even see the risk of arms races involving new types of nuclear weapons, space weapons and missiles.

It is high time to revitalise global cooperation on disarmament and the Commission presents a list of 60 recommendations. At the top are the recommendations that all governments must accept the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that was agreed ten years ago, that states currently possessing nuclear weapons must reduce their arsenals and that they must stop producing plutonium and highly enriched uranium for more nuclear weapons.

The world must aim at achieving a ban on both possession and use of nuclear weapons, in the same way as bans that apply to biological and chemical weapons. All states – even the great powers – must prepare to live without nuclear weapons and other weapons of terror.

As part of a new, concerted effort, the Commission proposes that a world summit be called at the United Nations in New York on disarmament, non-proliferation and terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction. The summit should also discuss and decide on reforms to make the UN disarmament apparatus more effective.

To break the deadlocks at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, the Commission proposes that unanimity should no longer be required for issues to be put on the agenda, but that a two-thirds majority should suffice.

Commenting on the Commission's work, Dr Blix says that although existing international treaties have shown weaknesses, a policy based on unilateralism and military actions has failed and has been costly in terms of lives and resources. Efforts to jointly create global security must now be intensified. All states – especially those with nuclear weapons – have a responsibility and must contribute to the process, says Dr Blix.

WMDC

The Commission's 14 members have unanimously endorsed the report which, after having been presented to the UN Secretary-General in New York on 1 June, will be presented to governments, non-governmental organisations and the general public around the world.

Members of the Commission, all of whom have participated in their personal capacity:

Hans Blix, Chair

Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Indonesia

Alexei G. Arbatov, Russia

Marcos de Azambuja, Brazil

Alyson J. K. Bailes, United Kingdom

Jayantha Dhanapala, Sri Lanka

Gareth Evans, Australia

Patricia Lewis, Ireland

Masashi Nishihara, Japan

William J. Perry, United States

Vasantha Raghavan, India

Cheikh Sylla, Senegal

Prince El Hassan bin Talal, Jordan

Pan, Zhenqiang, China

Commission website: www.wmdcommission.org