

Astana Declaration

Editorial Note

No one who has witnessed the human suffering inflicted by nuclear radiation at the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site in Kazakhstan can justify the continued existence of nuclear weapons for a single moment longer than is needed to destroy all of them. Statistics do not tell the story, but if ever a statistic makes a compelling narrative, then the 1.5 million Kazakhstanis who have suffered from the fallout of nearly 500 nuclear tests over 4 decades must be more than sufficient to convince even the most skeptical. None of these victims were targeted by a nuclear weapon, but many have suffered a fate worse than death. A single intentional detonation of a modern nuclear weapon on a civilian population today would inflict even greater human suffering.

A powerful and irrefutable message emerges from the international conference “From a Nuclear Test Ban to a Nuclear Weapons Free World” held in Astana, Kazakhstan on the International Day Against Nuclear Tests 29 August 2012. Continued reliance on nuclear weapons is pure madness. These weapons can only be utilized for one purpose – to target defenseless civilian populations. As the International Court of Justice made abundantly clear in its 1996 Advisory Opinion, any such usage would constitute a crime against humanity. But we also recognize that the continued existence of these weapons and the implicit or explicit threat of their use or proliferation is itself a crime of the highest order being perpetrated by nuclear weapons states and their satellites on a hapless world.

The more than 100 foreign participants in the Astana conference unanimously concur with their Kazakhstani hosts, the first nuclear power country to voluntarily renounce possession of nuclear weapons and destroy their entire arsenals. It is time to end the insanity and abolish nuclear weapons from the face of the earth.

The Declaration:

Legislators and governments have a responsibility to protect the security of citizens living within their jurisdictions and to protect their respective localities and the global commons for future generations.

The catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences from the nuclear tests in Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan – and from other nuclear test sites around the world – demonstrate that the effects of any use of nuclear weapons are uncontrollable in time and space.

The possession of nuclear weapons generates a threat of their proliferation and use that pose risks to current and future generations that are unacceptable, unnecessary, unsustainable and contrary to basic ethical considerations and international humanitarian law.

The approximately \$100 billion spent annually on nuclear weapons by a few States consumes intellectual, scientific and financial resources desperately required to meet the environmental, social and human security needs of the 21st Century.

Some nations, like Kazakhstan, have decided to unilaterally abandon the possession of nuclear weapons and achieved greater security and prosperity as a result. Many nations, including all those in the Southern Hemisphere and a number in the Northern Hemisphere such as in Central Asia, have enhanced their security through establishing regional nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The United Nations General Assembly and the States Parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty have called on States to establish the framework for a nuclear-weapons free world through negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has circulated a Five-Point Plan for Nuclear Disarmament which includes a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention as a guide to such negotiations. The UNSG's plan has been supported by unanimous resolution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union representing over 150 parliaments and by various resolutions in national parliaments.

We commend President Nursultan Nazarbayev and the Republic of Kazakhstan for leadership in the global nuclear disarmament process including the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site on 29 August 1991, and the decision to voluntarily renounce the fourth largest nuclear arsenal in the world.

We also commend Kazakhstan for initiating the UN International Day Against Nuclear Tests, which was established by unanimous resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, with the aim to contribute to the goals of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, a worldwide ban on nuclear tests, and a world free from nuclear weapons.

We welcome moves by the Nuclear Weapon States to complete the ratification process for the protocols to nuclear weapon-free zone treaties, as steps to significantly strengthen the architecture of regional and international security.

We welcome in particular the negotiations between the Central Asian States on one side, and China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States on the other side, on the protocols to the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, and call for its early completion.

We support the new initiative of President Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan for the adoption, within the UN of a Universal Declaration on the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world, as another important step towards the adoption of a nuclear weapons convention.

We are strengthened in our resolve to advance nuclear disarmament measures, by having visited the former Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site, where Soviet nuclear weapons were tested for more than forty years. 468 surface and underground nuclear tests were conducted from 1949 to 1989. One 50 megaton test alone was several thousand times more powerful than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The tests have caused immeasurable medical and economic related suffering and death to millions of people.

Further progress needs to be made with concrete actions to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons, according to a multilateral, transparent, irreversible and verifiable schedule.

Therefore, we call on parliaments and governments to:

- a. maintain existing moratoria against nuclear tests, and fully support the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, including full ratification and entry-into-force, financing and support for the international monitoring network;*
- b. halt any further production of nuclear weapons;*
- c. operationalize the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines;*
- d. establish prohibitions against nuclear weapons through action in their own legislatures;*
- e. establish guidelines that prohibit investment of public funds in enterprises engaged directly in manufacturing nuclear weapons or their delivery systems;*

- f. establish additional regional nuclear weapon free zones, as appropriate, especially in the Middle East, North East Asia and the Arctic;*
- g. commence preparatory work to build the framework for a nuclear weapons free world including through negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements.*
- h. We are all stand united in our common determination to build nuclear-weapons-free world.*
- i. We pledge to act on and share this Appeal with legislative forums, decision makers and society.*
- j. Adopted in Astana on 29 August 2012.*