

Preface

Ever since the first nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, humankind has been living under the sword of Damocles, in fear of an imminent nuclear catastrophe that could wipe out all life on planet Earth.

It has been argued that the fact that the world has not yet disappeared in a nuclear Armageddon is more attributable to good luck than good management. Some have gone on to comment that the failure to put an end to such a danger is a sign of collective incompetence.

While treaties and conventions have been signed and individual governments have taken incremental steps towards reducing their nuclear capacities or encouraging others to do so, the situation remains dire. Parliaments and parliamentarians, as the expression of the hopes and aspirations of citizens for a better and safer world, have a crucial responsibility to protect the world and its future generations.

From Kazakhstan to Costa Rica, Austria to Australia, Brazil to Bangladesh, India to South Africa and to the United States, more and more parliamentarians have been stepping up and promoting measures aimed at securing a nuclear weapon-free world. Their actions have taken on various forms: establishing their countries and regions as nuclear weapon-free zones, deciding to curb military spending and reduce nuclear forces, and reviewing national security doctrines.

In April 2009, the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted a resolution by consensus entitled *Advancing nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and securing the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: The role of parliaments*.¹ That resolution unites key aspects related to nuclear disarmament: legal, political, technical and institutional. It includes a wide range of recommendations for practical measures to be taken by parliaments to ensure universal ratification of the CTBT, promote the UN Secretary-General's five-point proposal for nuclear disarmament, and support a series of concurrent measures, including the start of negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention.

In July 2010, the 3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament concluded with a Political Declaration, in which parliamentary leaders from all over the world stated: “*We support the tireless efforts by the United Nations in pursuit of world peace and security. We applaud the renewed focus on preventive*

*diplomacy and peace-building, and remain firmly convinced that democratic, strong and effective parliaments are vital to sustainable peace. We commend the United Nations Secretary-General for his five-point nuclear disarmament proposal, and pledge to pursue efforts towards a nuclear-weapon-free world”.*²

In October 2011, the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs convened an expert panel discussion on **Nuclear weapons – The road to zero**, which further explored what parliaments and their members can do to advance the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda and ensure implementation of internationally agreed commitments.

This Handbook has been produced to assist parliaments and parliamentarians in implementing those nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament goals. It highlights a range of existing good policies and practices aimed at furthering nuclear disarmament, curbing nuclear proliferation, or safeguarding nuclear security, and explores what parliamentarians can further do to fashion the legislative agendas needed to advance these goals.

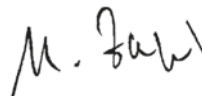
These measures should not be regarded as alternatives to the global undertaking of creating a framework for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, but should be assessed as effective complementary or incremental measures to achieve that goal. Collaboration between legislators, governments and civil society is critical to ensure success.

The recent surge in political momentum for the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons reveals that politicians across the globe, including those in the nuclear-weapon States, acknowledge that ridding the world of nuclear weapons is not only their duty, but has also become more achievable in our increasingly globalized world.

We are at a turning point for the achievement of global security through a world free of nuclear weapons. It is crucial to maintain, further build, and capitalize on this momentum so as to honour the expectations and aspirations of the citizens of this world and ensure sustainable security for future generations. The alternative of further proliferation and a potential nuclear disaster is simply not acceptable.



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