Introduction

1. The Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is a specialist section of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. We have been campaigning for a nuclear weapons-free among the Christian community in the UK since 1960\(^1\). Christian CND believes that nuclear weapons are contrary to the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament, and that the experience of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the countless nuclear tests throughout the 20\(^{th}\) century demonstrate their destructive power and the urgency with which we must work to eradicate them.

2. Christian CND is also a partner organisation of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, which received the Nobel peace Prize in 2017 for work on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

3. Christian CND representatives have been attending international meetings on nuclear disarmament for many years. We attend both the Review Conferences and the Preparatory Committees of the NPT and in 2017 sent a delegate to the United Nations for the negotiations around the TPNW. In addition to these meetings we hold an annual event in London where we visit various diplomatic missions to discuss issues around nuclear disarmament.

4. We welcome the Committee’s enquiry and hope that it will lead to a fresh discussion in Whitehall on the best route to the world free of nuclear weapons, a policy which successive UK governments have ascribed to. Our response to the Committee will focus on our experience of attending these meetings and set out our vision for the future. In addition to the questions set out by the Committee we will also make some general comments.

General Comments

5. Christian CND works for a nuclear weapons-free world. We believe that the only way this will be achieved is by states working together under the auspices of international agreements. Ultimately this will be a decision for those states in possession of nuclear weapons to take individually. We do not have a preference as to which Treaty or what type of agreement brings about a world free of nuclear weapons.

6. We have always supported, and continue to support, the Non-Proliferation Treaty, whilst being disappointed at the lack of progress that has been made since it entered into force. We welcome the TPNW as a vehicle to give fresh impetus to efforts for

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\(^1\) Many Christian denominations in the UK have made statements against nuclear weapons – see [http://christiancnd.org.uk/church-statements-on-nuclear-weapons/](http://christiancnd.org.uk/church-statements-on-nuclear-weapons/)
nuclear disarmament and allowing the non-nuclear states to reiterate their opposition to nuclear weapons.

7. As important aspect of the TPNW is the fact that, for the first time, there is reference to the victims of nuclear weapons in international law. Whilst the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are remembered, all too often victims of nuclear tests are forgotten. The TPNW places a duty on states to make reparations not only for the victims of tests, but the environmental damage caused too.

8. The agreement of the TPNW was a success for civil society, and demonstrates the strength of feeling around the world against nuclear weapons. In the UK all the major Christian denominations have already expressed their support of the TPNW, including the Church of England, where a motion in support was passed at General Synod in July 2018.

Questions

Nuclear risk
What is your evaluation of the current level of risk that nuclear weapons, of any type, could be used?

9. We believe that the risk of nuclear weapons being used is currently higher than at any point since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. The erosion of international norms and long-standing treaties increases the likelihood of a new arms race between the United States and Russia, which would inevitably drag in other nuclear-armed states including China. At the same time diplomatic relations between many of the nuclear-armed states are at a low point, with a trade war between the United States and China and on-going sanctions against Russia.

10. We also have deep concerns about the moves within the United States to loosen current constraints on the use of nuclear weapons and develop ‘low-yield’ warheads for Trident missiles. There may be a belief in some quarters that low-yield nuclear warheads would mean that nuclear incidents could be ‘contained’, which again may encourage their use.

11. It is also important to consider the role of technology in nuclear weapons infrastructure around the world. It is not unimaginable that a sophisticated cyber attack could penetrate the defences of a nuclear-armed state and launch a malicious nuclear attack without the states’ knowledge. Governments repeatedly assert that this is impossible, but the advances in technological capabilities of hackers continue to develop at speed.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
Ahead of the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), what are the biggest challenges facing global nuclear diplomacy?

12. There are clearly many challenges facing global nuclear diplomacy. The United States’ decision to both violate the terms of the Iran nuclear deal at the same time as withdrawing from the
Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty means that no state can currently be assured that any international agreement on arms control or disarmament will be honoured. The on-going diplomatic difficulties between nuclear-armed states, including the trade war between the United States and China, and deteriorating relations with Russia, also poses an enormous challenge to collaborative working.

To what extent do states still view the NPT as relevant?

13. We believe that some non-nuclear weapons states do still consider the NPT to be relevant to controlling nuclear weapons and bringing about the conditions for disarmament. When we meet diplomatic missions and discuss these issues with diplomats we are often told that there are still chances for progress to be made under the auspices of the NPT. One thing that we often hear is the frustration that states like the UK continue to modernise their system, which they see as contrary to Article 6 of the NPT. It is a separate question as to whether the nuclear weapons states still consider the NPT to be relevant. With talks having been deadlocked for many years and little prospect of a breakthrough, certainly at the upcoming Review Conference in 2020, there is an increasing risk that the NPT is being used as a mechanism for the nuclear-armed states to hold on to their nuclear weapons at the same time as giving the impression that they are working for disarmament.

What are the prospects for other components of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT)?

14. We believe that the prospects for the CTBT to enter into force are low. At a time when other Treaties and international agreements are being discarded, and the chances of a new nuclear-arms race are increasing, it is unlikely that the international community will be able to come together in this way.

How important are these agreements to the wider rules-based international order?

15. The international order is based on Treaties being agreed upon and upheld by the majority of states, who can then work to engage those who refuse to do so in a positive manner. The fact that the CTBT has yet to enter into force is a concern for the future, as states that are not currently engaged in practices outlawed by the Treaty may wish to do so in the future.

To what extent does the existence of three nuclear-armed states outside the NPT (India, Israel and Pakistan) destabilise the overall regime?

16. We believe that any state outside the NPT destabilises the nuclear disarmament regime, and once the TPNW enters into force states outside of that framework will do the same. It is deeply disappointing that India, Israel and Pakistan continue to operate outside the remit of the NPT. The UK, along with all responsible
states should be making it a major priority to engage these states in dialogue about signing and ratifying the NPT and immediately entering into discussions about nuclear disarmament.

What prospects are there for a Middle East WMD free zone?

17. We believe that the Middle East and the whole world would benefit from a WMD free zone being created, but the prospects are not good. One of the biggest hurdles to such an agreement being reached is the relationship between Iran and Israel, which shows no signs of improving. This is on top of the fact that Israel continues to refuse to confirm or deny that it has nuclear weapons and, unlike Iran, refuses to sign the NPT or take part in discussions around it. There are of course other issues that would need to be overcome, but this appears to be the most entrenched position. There have been media reports in recent months about the desire of other states in the region, including Saudi Arabia, to develop their own nuclear arsenals, and any such move along those lines would of course hinder attempts to create a WMD free zone.

The United States
To what extent will the United States’ withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, as well as US efforts to achieve the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, affect the wider nuclear non-proliferation regime?

18. Christian CND is disappointed that the United States chose to violate the Iran nuclear deal, which was an achievement of years of diplomacy and should have provided a model for other states that may have had aspirations for a nuclear weapons programme. There was no evidence that Iran was not complying with the conditions set out in the agreement and so the violation by the United States means that any state seeking to enter a similar agreement in the future will no longer be assured that all parties will comply with the conditions of such a deal for the long term. This may have the unintended consequences that states seeking to develop a nuclear weapons programme may, rather than seek a diplomatic route, simply move ahead with developing a nuclear weapon.

Nuclear arms control
4. To what extent and why are existing nuclear arms control agreements being challenged, particularly the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), and what prospect is there for further such agreements? What prospects are there of progress in negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT)?

19. The INF is on the brink of collapse after the decision of the United States to withdraw. This is a reckless decision that leaves Europe at risk of a nuclear exchange. The INF took more than 2000 nuclear weapons out of commission and it would be a dangerous mistake if even one more nuclear weapon were put into service as a result. We understand there are issues on both sides of the Treaty, but we strongly believe the way through is for dialogue and discussion with openness. We are especially concerned that the UK squandered the
chance to play this role between Russia and the United States and instead sided wholly with the latter.

20. There is discussion in the United States about the future direction of the New Start Treaty, with some lawmakers seeking to limit the steps available to be taken in the future. This is a risk and we hope that it will not put the brakes on the Treaty. There appears to be such a lack of trust between Russia and the United States that it is difficult to see how there could be meaningful progress on New Start.

21. At a time when there is such distrust and when international agreements and Treaties are being so undermined, it seems unlikely that progress on the FMCT could be made. This does not mean that the UK and others shouldn’t be working to bring states together for dialogue, and we hope and trust this is what they will do.

Nuclear modernisation programmes
5. What effect will nuclear renewal programmes have on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime? To what extent could technological developments—including in missile capabilities, warhead strength, and verification—undermine existing non-proliferation and arms control agreements?

22. We believe that the decision taken by the UK government to replace the UK’s current nuclear weapons system is a breach of Article VI of the NPT, which calls on nuclear-armed states to enter into negotiations to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. The UK is not the only state taking steps towards modifying their arsenals however, with the United States, Russia and China are only engaged in significant modification programmes. There is a clear conclusion to be drawn that whilst states are exerting efforts on updating and enhancing their nuclear capabilities, spending significant sums of money in doing so, they are unlikely to be considering entering into negotiations around disarming their nuclear weapons. There is also a real danger that states will see others modifying their own arsenals and come to the conclusion that they must also acquire a nuclear weapon in order to guarantee their own safety.

23. As Christians we believe in “swords into ploughshares” and the diversion of public funds to build up weapons of mass destruction is the very opposite of this.

New technologies
6. To what extent will technological developments, both directly relating to nuclear weapons and in the wider defence and security sphere, affect nuclear diplomacy?

24. We do not have the technical expertise to be able to answer this question.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
If it were to enter into force, how would the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (commonly referred to as the Ban Treaty) affect efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and bring about disarmament?

25. The TPNW will come into force once it has been ratified by 50 states, expected to happen at some point in 2019 or early 2020. As with any international agreement, the success of the TPNW will depend on states signing and ratifying and then continuing to adhere to the articles contained within it.

26. One undoubted success of the TPNW has been to reinvigorate civil society in the campaign against nuclear weapons and for total disarmament. This was mainly achieved under the ICAN umbrella, which continues to bring together a diverse mix of groups around the world. The TPNW entering into force will be a major victory for civil society and will be a major boost for those who continue to seek a world without nuclear weapons in the future.

27. We believe the UK government should adopt a much more constructive approach towards the TPNW, having not participated in any of the meetings or discussions on the Treaty so far. There are a number of steps which the UK government can take to this end: the government should attend future meetings of the TPNW as an observer state, this would allow developments to be followed and misconceptions to be challenged; technical expertise and other input within the TPNW framework can be provided; a dialogue can be overseen with states and organisations working on the TPNW, to discuss how the Treaty can make a positive contribution towards disarmament.

28. We also believe there is a role for the UK Parliament to take in scrutinising the TPNW and the approach the government has taken towards it. Parliament can also play a role in raising public awareness of both the TPNW and the government’s existing obligations towards nuclear disarmament under existing Treaties.

29. We believe that in the long term the UK government must work towards becoming a signatory of the TPNW.

The P5
8. What are the policies of other P5 countries (China, France, Russia and the United States), and the UK’s other partners, on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and on nuclear weapons more generally? Have these policies changed, and if so, why? How effective has the P5 process been, and what role will it have in the future?

30. The UN is in need of wide-ranging reform, part of which would need to include a review of the P5 and the role they play in international relations. Basing the future of the UN on the victors of the Second World War is increasingly out-dated. Our attendance at, and monitoring of, discussions around the NPT lead us to believe that the policies of the P5 and NATO members on the NPT is to keep it in deadlock for as long as possible. This gives them the ability to
publically state they are working for a nuclear weapons-free world whilst at the same time they are able to continue to hold on to their nuclear weapons, extending and modifying their arsenals. This appears to have been the policy towards the NPT ever since it entered into force, and the prospects for change look small.

_The role of the UK_

9. How effective a role has the UK played in global nuclear diplomacy in recent years? How could the UK more effectively engage on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament? What should the UK Government’s priorities be ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference?

31. The UK does not appear to have played a particularly prominent role in nuclear diplomacy in recent years. Whilst the UK was one of the states involved in the Iran Nuclear Deal, when the United States choose to unilaterally violate it the UK was unable to change the position, despite efforts from the Foreign Office. The UK has also boycotted the processes around the agreement of the TPNW, which saw the vast majority of states enter into negotiations and then vote for a Treaty that will ban nuclear weapons. As the United States prepares to withdraw from the INF Treaty the UK has decided to follow the position taken in Washington rather than work to bring the parties together for dialogue.

32. The best way for the UK to engage effectively on nuclear non-proliferation would be to cancel the current programme to replace Trident. We have no moral authority to talk about nuclear disarmament at the same time as we are preparing to be a nuclear-armed state for the next 40 years, spending billions of pounds in the process. The UK could even host a Conference on nuclear weapons and engage all states on disarmament talks. The minimum that we would urge the UK to do is make itself available for negotiations under the auspices of the UN on disarmament, as is incumbent upon it through the NPT.

33. Ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference the priority of the UK must be to engage all nuclear-armed states in negotiations on reducing and ultimately eliminating their nuclear arsenals, as is our obligation under the NPT. Anything less than this must be seen as a failure to comply with the NPT.

34. The UK has the chance to take a lead on nuclear disarmament. This is an opportunity as we look for a new role in the world after leaving the European Union. As Christians we believe that nuclear disarmament is our moral duty as well as our calling given by God. We pray that this inquiry, the report and the subsequent actions will bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons.

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