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Chair

Mr. Bernard Patry

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● (1540)

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC)): Good afternoon. We'll call this meeting to order. We are resuming our study on disarmament issues.

Today we welcome witnesses from the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. We are told they will be speaking in the order as follows, but we do welcome all of them here: Debbie Grisdale, executive director, Physicians for Global Survival (Canada); Beverley Tollefson Delong, chairperson, and the president of Lawyers for Social Responsibility; Sarah Estabrooks, program associate, Project Ploughshares; and Douglas Roche, former ambassador for disarmament.

Welcome, all. If you would proceed in that order, we look forward to hearing what you have to say.

Ms. Debbie Grisdale (Executive Director, Physicians for Global Survival (Canada), Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Physicians for Global Survival is supported by thousands of Canadians coast to coast. We are deeply concerned that the current taboo against the use of nuclear weapons that has existed since 1945 is in serious danger of being broken. The spread of nuclear weapons as countries seek to acquire them and the nuclear weapons states fail to disarm, and in some instances seek to add new nuclear weapons to their arsenals, means the risk of a nuclear war, either by accident or design, is increasing.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin. The failure to disarm only feeds proliferation. There are about 30,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. The annual probability of the use of a nuclear weapon, although quite low, is not negligible. “The proposition that nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity and never used—accidentally or by decision—defies credibility”, said the 1996 Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

The health impact of nuclear weapons is orders of magnitude above that of chemical and biological weapons. In the event of a nuclear attack, the resulting blast and subsequent firestorm and radiation will cause immediately large numbers of deaths and injuries. The effects of the radiation will be felt for subsequent generations.

There is no medical response in the event of a nuclear war. Even if one bomb were to explode in the centre of a city, all of the downtown hospitals would be destroyed. There would be no water. There would be no electricity. Even if there was some infrastructure left standing, there would be too few health personnel capable of doing anything. The only reasonable and rational approach to address this potential catastrophe is prevention, and the most effective preventive measure is nuclear disarmament.

The fact that cities are the targets is the genesis of the Mayors for Peace Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons, which is proposing a reasonable timetable for achieving a nuclear-weapons-free world by the year 2020. A number of Canadian cities, at the urging of their residents, are supporting the Mayors for Peace campaign.

The world is right to criticize Iran and North Korea, but why is it okay for some countries to retain their nuclear arsenals while calling other countries that seek to acquire nuclear weapons rogues? There can be no stopping the spread of nuclear weapons technology—which is called horizontal proliferation—until there is tangible evidence that nuclear weapons states are undertaking verifiable nuclear disarmament. The United States, while taking steps internationally to curb the spread of nuclear weapons by others, is itself seeking funds for the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. This is vertical proliferation.

A nuclear war can be set off either by intention or by accident. Despite the end of the Cold War, both U.S. and Russia retain a launch-on-warning policy regarding thousands of their nuclear warheads. Launch-on-warning policy is the launch of a retaliatory nuclear strike while the opponent's missiles or warheads are believed to be in flight, but before there is any detonation from the perceived attack. This policy is one of the most likely causes of an unintended nuclear war.

Both the U.S. and Russia have over 2,000 nuclear warheads ready to launch before the incoming rockets have arrived, enough to destroy either country many times over. Once launched, the warheads cannot be recalled or neutralized. A no-launch-on-warning stance is not the same as de-alerting. It requires simply the abandoning of a policy of launch on warning, and it does not reduce the alert status of nuclear forces.

We still have the opportunity to prevent another nuclear catastrophe. Nuclear disarmament is the only path we can take, and we must start on it immediately.

Finally, surely the enormous resources, human and financial, that are put to maintaining nuclear arsenals today could instead be used for the benefit of humankind. The United States alone spends almost $100 million a day to maintain its stockpiles. To put this in perspective, the WHO campaign that eradicated small pox cost $300 million, or 3 days' worth of the U.S. budget for nuclear weapons. Theirs was a preventive health campaign that generated over $27 billion in cost savings over a 20-year period through mortality reduction, creating a more productive workforce, and increasing economic investment. The rate of return for HIV prevention in Thailand is estimated at 12% to 32% annually, meaning that for every dollar invested in HIV prevention, a $12 to $32 cost saving occurs. Surely, then, we can put this money to better use than for nuclear weapons.

● (1545)

Within civil society there is a groundswell of concerned and caring individuals who are calling for no more war and for an end to the most deadly weapons of all. This same civil society is also urging the Canadian government to refrain from participating in the U.S. missile defence program, a system that is diverting valuable time and energy at all levels away from the most pressing, urgent issue, nuclear disarmament. Canadians do not want a closer relationship with a wrong-headed superpower that actually intends to use a nuclear weapon.

The unequivocal undertaking of nuclear disarmament requires political will, leadership, and a detailed plan. Canada is in a position to contribute on the global stage, and I urge this committee to study this issue carefully and to ensure that Canada takes that role.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Ms. Delong.

Ms. Beverley Delong (Chairperson of the Network, President, Lawyers for Social Responsibility, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons): Thank you.

I'm here to do a very brief overview of the law regarding nuclear weapons. The first question would be, is the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons illegal? The central agreement regarding nuclear weapons is the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is just simply called the NPT. It was a bargain, struck back in 1968, whereby the then nuclear weapons states promised that they would not transfer their nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states. In return, non-nuclear weapons states promised they would not acquire nuclear weapons. Most importantly, in article VI of this treaty, all state parties agreed that they would pursue negotiations for nuclear disarmament.

The legality of nuclear weapons was the subject of an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. They concluded that:

> the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law.

The judges advised that the rules of international humanitarian law apply at all times. The court said there are two cardinal principles to apply in choosing weapons. The first rule is that states cannot make civilians the object of attack and therefore cannot use weapons that cannot distinguish between combatants and civilians. The second rule prohibits the use of weapons causing “unnecessary suffering” or “uselessly aggravating” the suffering of combatants.

The weapon must also be proportionate to the initial attack and necessary for effective self-defence. Weapons must not affect neutral states. The environment must be considered when determining whether a weapon is necessary and proportionate. Thus, for all practical purposes, the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons has been declared illegal by the International Court. The International Court also confirmed unanimously that all states must “pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament”.

Does NATO's nuclear policy comply with international law? I think not, for these reasons: first, instead of pursuing negotiations for nuclear disarmament, NATO states have a policy that supports the maintenance of nuclear weapons; second, NATO's policy of first use of nuclear weapons is unlawful because that type of usage would not be proportionate or necessary and would violate international law; third, NATO's policy of second use of nuclear weapons would also breach international law due to the extremely extraordinary effects of the use of these weapons.

Does American nuclear policy comply with international law? No. First of all, in breach of their obligation to disarm, the U.S. government is instead maintaining 10,000 nuclear weapons and is resisting all pleas for negotiations for disarmament.

Second, the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review named particular states that the U.S. would target for an attack with nuclear weapons. This is a breach of the U.S. negative security assurances, which are promises that were given by all nuclear weapons states that they would not target non-nuclear weapons states that adhere to the NPT. In fact, the U.S. has made four nuclear threats just within the last ten years.

Third, the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review proposes nuclear use in response to chemical or biological weapons or in response to “surprising military developments”. Again, these are breaches of the negative security assurances and are clear violations of international law.

Fourth, the deployment of interceptors under the missile defence plan may encourage other states to respond by increasing their numbers of nuclear arms. Therefore, the plan encourages states to maintain and acquire nuclear weapons instead of adhering to their legal obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament.

What is Canada doing? Canada does not host nuclear weapons and has been a leader in calling for nuclear disarmament. But the Government of Canada provides financial, moral, political, and diplomatic support for NATO's maintenance and possible use of nuclear weapons. The government permits nuclear-armed submarines, aircraft, and vessels in our airspace and waters, and it permits the production and export of components for nuclear-capable delivery systems.

● (1550)

What could Canada do?Just suppose Canada took really seriously the threat of nuclearweapons and began focused work on their elimination. Canada could adopt diplomatic positions as proposed by the middlepowers initiative. Within NATO, Canada could call for an immediate review of NATO nuclear policy and ask for that policy to be consistent with international law and with the obligations defined by the International Court of Justice. Failing changes in policy, Canadamay need to reduce its role in NATO to one of observer on the Nuclear Planning Group, as Iceland hasdone, or perhaps even withdraw from that planning group. Finally, Canada could beginpreliminary work with like-minded states to discuss language proposed for the modelnuclear weapons convention, and Canada could begin, with others, the technical work necessary for a globalverification system.

Thank you for your time.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

We'll next go to Ms. Estabrooks.

Ms. Sarah Estabrooks (Program Associate, Project Ploughshares, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons): Thank you very much.

As an agency of the Canadian Council of Churches, Project Ploughshares has, during the pastfour years, supported an international church initiative to encourage non-nuclear states withinNATO to support a review and revision of NATO's nuclear doctrine in order to bring it moreclosely into line with the obligations of the NPT.

The context for a series of recent visits by church leaders to non-nuclear NATO states and of the following comments is the growing concern that the NPT is in serious peril. Non-nuclear weapons states party to the treaty are criticalof the lack of progress by nuclear weapons states on disarmament and on implementing thecommitments agreed to in the final document of the 2000 NPT review conference. Nuclearweapons states, in turn, are critical of what they cite as the treaty's failure to prevent horizontalproliferation. There is a real danger that the forthcoming review conference couldend in stalemate or worse.

At the 2000 NPT review conference, a set of thirteen practical steps toward disarmament wasagreed to. While all are relevant to NATO policy and the actions of its members, step 9.5 isparticularly germane and calls for “a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination”. This action mirrors the first recommendation made by this very committee in its 1998 report *Canada and the Nuclear Challenge*, and later affirmed by the Government of Canada’sresponse that called on Canada to “work consistently to reduce the political legitimacy and value of nuclear weapons in order to contribute to the goal of their progressive reduction and eventual elimination”.

Fifteen years after the end of an era of Cold War, however, NATO continues to affirm thepolitical importance and legitimacy of nuclear weapons through a nuclear doctrine that declaresthe retention of nuclear weapons as essential to preserve peace. I'd just like to quote some of this policy within the 1999 strategic concept:

> To protect peace and to prevent war or any kind of coercion, the Alliance will maintain for the foreseeable future an appropriate mix of nuclear and conventional forces based in Europe and kept up to date where necessary, although at a minimum sufficient level. ... But the Alliance's conventional forces alone cannot ensure credible deterrence. Nuclear weapons make a unique contribution in rendering the risks of aggression against the Alliance incalculable and unacceptable. Thus, they remain essential to preserve peace.

These indefinite commitments to nuclear weapons and the affirmation that they are essential tosecurity are contrary to the objectives of article VI of the NPT and to commitments made inthe year 2000. The NATO language is especially provocative for non-nuclear states that are incompliance with the NPT, and it does little to encourage potential proliferators to adhere to non-proliferationobligations. Despite widespread concern about countering proliferation threats,NATO’s own policy provides the rationale used by other nuclear weapons states, both within the NPTregime and, most importantly, outside of it, to retain their weapons indefinitely—and Russiacomes to mind in this context. Finally, NATO’s nuclear doctrine underminesthe arms control and disarmament leadership of key non-nuclear NATO states, includingCanada.

NATO’s nuclear sharing arrangements are also inconsistent with the NPT, which, in articles Iand II, prohibits transfer of nuclear weapons from a nuclear to a non-nuclear weapons state. Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the U.K., five of which haveno national nuclear weapons capacity, currently host U.S. tactical weapons, while only recently weaponswere removed from Greece.

In practice, NATO has taken steps to reduce both the number of and the role for the U.S. non-strategicnuclear weapons on European territory. The most recent figures suggest that 480 gravitybombs for delivery by dual-capable aircraft remain in Europe, down from a high point of some7,300 warheads using 13 delivery systems in the early 1970s. There has also been a reduction of 80% in the number of storage facilities for these weapons.

NATO has statedthat its nuclear forces have no predetermined targets and are at a low readiness level measuredin months, yet NATO's nuclear policy is not even consistent with its own actions of significantlyreducing the size, readiness, and distribution of its nuclear forces. The potential for their use isconsidered extremely remote, and at the same time these weapons are called essential to preserve peace.

● (1555)

Although the political value of these nuclear weapons is considered the primary reason for keeping them, the political value of a policy shift or, better still, elimination of the remaining tactical nuclear weapons is ignored. NATO has a leadership responsibility to bring its strategic concept into line with the NPT and to take demonstrable steps towards nuclear disarmament. Such actions demonstrating compliance with already agreed to commitments would be a significant confidence-building measure for other NPT member states.

NATO itself has recognized the importance of confidence-building measures in its December 2000 *Reporton Options for Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs), Verification, Non-Proliferation,Arms Control and Disarmament*. Among other things, the report endorsed the NPT and the entire final document of the 2000 review; it called for improved transparency regarding NATO decision-making; and it encouraged dialogue with Russia on tactical nuclear weapons and arms control generally.

There are specific actions that Canada can take in the lead-up to the 2005 NPT review conference to seek a reduced role for nuclear weapons in the strategic doctrine of NATO. Canada should encourage a review of NATO's nuclear policy, considering the time lapsed since the 1999 strategic concept and developments in that time. Commitment to a transparent review, with civil society involvement, would send a positive message that NATO is serious about reducing the political value of its nuclear weapons.

Canada should encourage its European partners in NATO to advocate for the elimination of the remaining U.S. tactical nuclear weapons stationed on their territory. NATO's nuclear sharing arrangement contradicts the commitment of all NPT states parties not to transfer nuclear weapons to non-nuclear weapons states. Reciprocal action by Russia to account for and eliminate the tactical weapons in its arsenal should also be encouraged by Canada as an important non-proliferation initiative.

Finally, Canada should continue to strive for the retention to commitments made at the 2000 NPT review and a successful 2005 review conference. The 2005 review represents a critical milestone in the nuclear arms control and disarmament regime, and NATO is in the position to positively impact the outcome. Canada should focus its energies on encouraging NATO and its membership to take demonstrable steps toward unambiguous compliance with the treaty.

Thank you.

● (1600)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

And last, but certainly not least, Mr. Roche.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C. (Former Ambassador for Disarmament, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I believe my testimony has been distributed to the committee. Respectfully, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to ask you to take it as read.

Statement by the Hon. Douglas Roche: Canada has long tried to establish a "balance" in its nuclear weapons policies: it has strongly supported the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its 13-Step Program leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons; and it continues to be a loyal member of NATO, which holds that nuclear weapons are "essential" for the security of its members. Canada has lived with this ambiguity and has tried to reach out in both directions at the same time: it has three years in a row voted at the U.N. for more rapid implementation of the 13 Steps; and it has tried to get NATO to at least review its nuclear weapons policies.The actions of Canada have enabled this country to become a sort of "bridge" between the NPT and NATO.

The heart of my testimony today lies in my belief that the most constructive contribution Canada can now make to upholding the Non-Proliferation Treaty is to take a leadership role and become pro-active in working with like-minded States to press the nuclear weapons States to fulfill their commitments to the NPT.

Former Senator and former Ambassador for Disarmament, Hon. Douglas Roche appears before the Committee on behalf of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. He is Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative and author of "The Human Right to Peace."

In my capacity as Chairman of the Middle Powers Initiative, I have attended all three preparatory meetings for the 2005 Review Conference of the NPT. As Ambassador for Disarmament, I led the Canadian delegation to the 1985 Review. In my experience, the present crisis is the worst in the 34-year history of the NPT.All five nuclear weapons States are modernizing their nuclear arsenals. Much attention has been paid to the new U.S. "bunker-buster" research program. But attention must also be paid to what Russia is doing. On November 17, 2004 Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country would soon deploy new nuclear missile systems that would surpass those of any other nuclear power. Moreover, the Russians are perfecting land-and-sea based ballistic missiles with warheads that could elude the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defence System.

It is truly shocking that there are still more than 34,000 nuclear weapons in existence, 96 percent of them in the hands of the U.S. and Russia. The reductions both those countries have engaged in are illusory because they are retaining huge stocks and modernizing existing arsenals. This is tempting other countries to join the "nuclear club." Israel, India and Pakistan are now in. Libya and Iraq tried to get in. North Korea has already left the NPT and Iran has thumbed its nose at it.

The Second Nuclear Age has begun and a new nuclear arms race is underway.The good will and trust of the past are gone largely because the nuclear weapons States, led by the U.S., have tried to change the rules of the game. At least before, there was a recognition that the NPT was obtained through a bargain, with the nuclear weapons States agreeing to negotiate the elimination of their nuclear weapons in return for all other States shunning the acquisition of nuclear weapons. Now the U.S. is rejecting its previous commitments and asserts that the problem of the NPT lies not in the actions of the nuclear powers in entrenching nuclear weapons in their military doctrines but in the lack of compliance by States such as North Korea and Iran.

The whole international community, nuclear and non-nuclear alike, is concerned about proliferation, but the new attempt by the nuclear weapons States to gloss over the discriminatory aspects of the NPT, which are now becoming permanent, has caused consternation. Many States see a two-class world of nuclear haves and have-nots becoming a permanent feature of the global landscape. Brazil, among many States protesting this situation, said: "Disregard for the provisions of Article VI (of the NPT) may ultimately affect the nature of the fundamental bargain on which the Treaty's legitimacy rests." In such chaos, the NPT is eroding and the prospect of multiple nuclear weapons States, a fear that caused nations to produce the NPT in the first place, is looming once more.

Compounding the nuclear risk is the threat of nuclear terrorism, which is growing day by day. It is estimated that 40 countries have the knowledge to produce nuclear weapons, and the existence of an extensive illicit market for nuclear items shows the inadequacy of the present export control system. Despite the arduous efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (which is seriously underfunded relative to the inspection responsibilities it has been given), the margin of security is, as IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei put it, "thin and worrisome."

Here is what Canada should do immediately. It should work closely with the New Agenda Coalition (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden) and with the other NATO States (Germany, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium) which also voted for the New Agenda resolution at the U.N. this fall calling for more speed by the nuclear weapons States in implementing commitments to the NPT. This group of important States can build up the "moderate centre" of the nuclear weapons debate and get action to save the NPT in 2005.

This action has been spelled out by the New Agenda:

•No move by anyone to a new nuclear arms race and universal adherence to the NPT.

•Early entry-into-force of the CTBT.

•Reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons and no development of new types of nuclear weapons.

•Negotiation of an effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty.

•Establishment of a special body at the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament.

•Compliance with the principles of irreversibility and transparency and verification capability.

This list is achievable if the nuclear weapons States are truly in the "good faith" called for by the NPT. Canada has an opportunity – and a duty – to help build a bridge to nuclear disarmament through this agenda. The dire circumstances of the nuclear weapons threat compel Canada, a country respected around the world, to replace ambiguity with a pro-active policy for nuclear disarmament.

● (1605)

● (1610)

I'll just make three points with my testimony on the record.

I want to talk first about the crisis of the non-proliferation treaty, particularly as it relates to the subject of nuclear terrorism. Second, I want to make some points about what I think Canada should do in the short range for the NPT review in 2005. Third, I want to address the subject of this committee and the potential it has for making an influence on government policy.

First, you've heard so far about the crisis of the non-proliferation treaty. I think I will permit myself to say, Mr. Chairman, that when I was ambassador for disarmament for the Canadian government, I led the Canadian delegation to the 1985 review. There is a review every five years, and I've been to every subsequent review and have written extensively about the subject of the non-proliferation treaty. I have attended every minute of the three two-week long conferences over three years in preparation for the 2005 review. In that context, I would like to say, sir, that in my view the crisis the NPT is facing now is the most severe I've ever seen.

I say that for this reason. When nuclear weapons were held during the Cold War, they were held for reasons of deterrence, mutual assured destruction, and so on. Now we have moved into what I call the second nuclear age, in which nuclear weapons are being retained not as instruments of deterrence, but actually as instruments for war-fighting strategies. They are being entrenched into the military doctrine of the major powers.

Much attention, of course, has been given to the United States because of the Nuclear Posture Review of that country. I would like to call your attention to the statement by President Putin of Russia on November 17, a few days ago, in which he said his country would soon deploy new nuclear missile systems that would surpass those of any other nuclear power. Moreover, he said, the Russians are perfecting land- and sea-based ballistic missiles with warheads that could elude the U.S. ballistic missile defence system.

Here, I will of course answer questions on BMD if you wish, but I don't want to go down that avenue precisely at this moment. All I want to do is say that the nuclear arms race has been regenerated as a result of the development and intended deployment of ballistic missiles by the U.S. We ought not, parenthetically, to forget the role of China, the United Kingdom, and France in this respect. They are all engaged in modernizing their nuclear weapons also.

The non-proliferation treaty, which came into effect in 1970, was a bargain between those countries that had nuclear weapons—namely the United States, the Soviet Union of the day, Britain, France, and China—that they would negotiate the elimination of their nuclear weapons in return for non-nuclear states not acquiring nuclear weapons. That was the bargain. Here we are 34 years later, and there are as many nuclear weapons today—more than 34,000 nuclear weapons in existence—as there were when the NPT came into existence. Does this mean the NPT is a failure? Definitely not. The NPT has done a lot of good things, but I don't want to take the time to go down that avenue right now.

What is happening is that the non-nuclear weapons states are saying that if you're going to make nuclear weapons permanent, if you are the five permanent members of the Security Council and you have the political power in the world, and if you think nuclear weapons are essential to your security, then we're going to think so too. Of course, cases in point are India and Pakistan, which have joined the nuclear club. And we've now seen North Korea, Iran, and Libya trying to break into this club. So we're having a proliferation of nuclear weapons, and this is a crisis that is augmented by the prospect of nuclear terrorism.

Mr. Mohamed El Baradei, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is the main body of the UN that is supervising and safeguarding nuclear material systems so that they don't get into nuclear weapons, said just recently that the prospect of terrorists acquiring nuclear materials as a result of insufficiently guarded systems is deeply disturbing, and he said, “Clearly, the margin of security this affords is thin, and worrisome.” Those are his words, and I think we should take this very seriously.

Nothing could be simpler for a would-be terrorist to acquire, first of all, the technology of nuclear weapons. It's not hard to get that technology. What is hard to get are the materials. But in the situation in which we are now living, there are leakages of nuclear materials, and the prospect of a nuclear terrorist committing an act we would like to think is unthinkable is, I'm afraid, sir, all too real. Thus, as my colleagues have been saying, it behooves the governments to get on with what they're supposed to be doing to fulfil their legal obligations to negotiate the elimination of nuclear weapons. Nobody thinks nuclear weapons can be eliminated overnight. It's too technically hard and so on, but what is important is for them to signal politically that they are going down that avenue.

Here, I would like to commend the Government of Canada for its work in trying to build a bridge between the policy of the countries of NATO—the fact that NATO has a policy that states nuclear weapons are essential has been referred to already—and the policies of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, whose signatories said at the 2000 review that they would give an unequivocal undertaking to the elimination of nuclear weapons via a program of thirteen practical steps. We can talk about the thirteen steps if you wish.

The Canadian government has voted at the United Nations three years in a row to support the coalition of countries called the New Agenda Coalition. These are the countries of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and Sweden, a real mix of countries in the world. I think the heart of my testimony before this committee—if I could put it that way—is my belief that the most constructive contribution that Canada can now make to upholding the non-proliferation treaty—which, as I've said, is in crisis—is to take a leadership and a proactive role in working with like-minded states to press the nuclear weapons states to fulfil their commitments to the NPT. The like-minded states I have in mind are Germany, Norway, and Belgium. Those are countries that voted with Canada most recently at the UN this fall. Canada, working with those countries and working with the New Agenda Coalition countries, has a real role to play in multilateral diplomacy to shore up the non-proliferation treaty.

I would like to just briefly put a few points on the record in regard to what kinds of actions the Canadian government ought to espouse at this moment. The first is no move by anyone to a new nuclear arms race, and universal adherence to the non-proliferation treaty. Within that, of course, would be no testing, maintaining the moratorium presently in place, and absolutely no testing of nuclear weapons by anyone in the future; reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons—and those are the tactical nuclear weapons referred to; no development of any new types of nuclear weapons; negotiation of an effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty—and Canada has taken some leading steps in this respect; establishment of a special body at the Conference on Disarmament to deal with nuclear disarmament; and compliance with the principles of irreversibility, transparency, and verification capability.

Mr. Chairman, this is not an exhaustive list by any means, but it's a list of what I would call priority items that are achievable if the major powers acted in good faith with respect to their obligations to the NPT.

Finally, sir, this committee has done yeoman work, distinguished work, in the past in the reports you have issued, particularly on nuclear disarmament itself. Now, because we're at this turning point, as I say, this second nuclear age, I think the Government of Canada, the Parliament of Canada, and the people of Canada would be well served by this committee speaking out in a report that would be based on the evidence you're hearing.

I do not ask you to listen only to my evidence and that of my colleagues. You gather it from different sources. But I think the distilled wisdom of the committee ought to go forward in the form of a report that would be in time to be of help—and perhaps, one would say, of influence—to the Government of Canada preparing its policies for the non-proliferation treaty review conference that will go on for the entire month of May 2005. Thus, to be effective and to feed into policy, I suppose the report should go forward perhaps no later than February, but I leave that to you.

The point I'm making is that I think the time has come for the committee to speak out on the concerns raised by the nuclear weapons dangers today. In speaking out, directly aimed at the non-proliferation treaty review conference of 2005, you would also be making a contribution to the long-range development of Canadian foreign policy, which is now coming down another track.

Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you to all our witnesses.

We will now go into the first round of five minutes each. That includes the question and the answer, so keep the questions tight and the answers short.

First up is Mr. Day.

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to each of the presenters.

I should advise members here that I had the opportunity when I was in New York at the UN last month, not to see Mr. Roche, but in fact to hear his presentation there to representatives from all around the world. As Canadians, we can be duly proud of his diligence on this file. He's incredibly well informed, clearly passionate on the issue, and a fine spokesperson for Canada.

I just wanted to advise my colleagues here of that, Mr. Roche.

I don't think that comes off my five minutes, does it?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Yes, it does.

Mr. Stockwell Day: I think I can also say with some degree of certainty that the official opposition, my colleagues, share the goals of one day—it may sound like an impossible dream—seeing the world nuclear-free. I think colleagues who are here, including our honourable vice-chair, the member for Newmarket—Aurora, can safely vouch for our colleagues on that issue.

There can be some small consolation on the part of the work of some of you that there has in fact been some reduction in the overall number of nuclear weapons, specifically because of the agreement between Presidents Bush and Putin to begin, instead of mutually assured destruction, a process of mutual destruction of the weapons. But clearly there's enough nuclear weaponry in the world today to eliminate this planet many times over. So there's some small comfort but still concern.

Could you address the strategic difficulty, Mr. Roche? Obviously, I don't think anybody is proposing that the west, be it NATO or the United States, would just unilaterally disarm. I think you realize the difficulty with that. Essential equivalence is somehow recognized as being necessary for a while.

When we're talking to our American allies in NORAD, how do we square this issue of reducing nuclear weaponry—which we all want to do—with, at the same time, telling our ally we don't want to see them build a missile defence system? And I am familiar with the argument that this will supposedly encourage proliferation on the other side, Mr. Putin's remarks notwithstanding.

How do you say, okay, we're going to reduce the weapons and at the same time defend ourselves, especially when the commitment is—and I guess time will tell—that as that system is developed—I think the U.S. is going to go ahead and develop it, with or without us; it's faulty now, but it may become more perfect—the United States has also said they will share it with any other country that also wants to defend itself? How do we square this thing of getting rid of the nuclear weapons, which we all want to see happen, with, at the same time, not building up any defence against somebody who might not agree?

● (1615)

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Thank you, Mr. Day, for your question. I'll try to answer as briefly as I can. There's a lot in your question.

In 1972, when Presidents Nixon of the United States and Brezhnev of the Soviet Union signed the anti-ballistic missile treaty, it was not out of friendship. It was because they both recognized that a missile defence system would inevitably gear up and restart the nuclear arms race. Defences, by definition, provoke new offensive weaponry, and thus they saw a never-ending spiral going upward in arms.

So we've come into a new era, but the principle obtains, namely that if any one area of the world—one country or one region—attempts to make a fortress around itself, it will provoke other offensive systems. China and Russia have warned western countries. They've been right here in Ottawa and warned the Canadian government that the ballistic missile defence system will restart the arms race. It won't work—that's the whole technological part of my answer—and it will inevitably lead to the weaponization of space.

A missile defence system is like a house. Would you build a house where you put the foundation in and the first storey but don't put a roof on? With the missile defence system now, the foundation is going in. They're putting the first storey on, and there are 40 land interceptors, which are being placed now in Alaska and then going into California. That stage is inextricably intertwined with the intention to go to space. It's in all the literature, the websites, and so on. So the dangers of the ballistic missile defence system are horrendous in respect of the future.

Finally, I want to underline what you said in the very first words of your comment, Mr. Day, and that is on the question of unilateral. No, and let us repeat it, no, none of us here or the people who we work with are espousing unilateral disarmament. That's not in the cards at all. What we're talking about is mutual, assured, and verifiable disarmament under legal regimes. That's the only way as a civilization that we can proceed. That's why the non-proliferation treaty was brought into place in order to have a legal regime to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. That's in the interest of every human being in the world.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Roche.

Is there anyone else who...? All right, we'll go to the next questioner.

Monsieur Paquette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you as well to all of the witnesses for their presentations. Obviously, the Bloc Québécois is an advocate of nuclear disarmament. It's a matter of now bringing pressure to bear on the Canadian and indeed on all world governments to work toward this goal.

Mrs. Delong, you read from the report issued by Lawyers for Social Responsibility. Specifically, you quoted the following excerpt from the Advisory Opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice:

> ...the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law...

I was wondering if this was a general truth and under what circumstances the use of nuclear weapons would not be contrary to the rules of international law.

Perhaps Senator Roche or someone else could answer the next question. Canada is pressing for an immediate review of the nuclear weapons policy, failing which it is thinking about withdrawing from NATO. It's clear that where this matter is concerned, we will not have an easy time convincing our US counterpart President Bush, who has just been re-elected for another four years. This review could take several years. However, I'm wondering if it would be in our best interest to pull out of NATO. Would we not be running the risk of cutting ourselves off from a forum in which we can debate nuclear disarmament? Clearly, as many of you have mentioned, to continue the debate, Canada needs to take a firm stand in favour of nuclear disarmament.

Those were my two questions.

● (1620)

[*English*]

Ms. Beverley Delong: They are the most difficult questions one can ever face, I believe. Thank you for your questions.

To use nuclear weapons lawfully—I don't usually do the reverse argument like that—a state would have to be the subject of an armed attack, to comply with the UN charter. The Security Council would not be engaged in the situation. They would not, as yet, have intervened. The weapon would have to be proportionate, so it would have to be in response to a nuclear attack. It would have to be necessary.

I think for it to be necessary.... It's unimaginable to me that the conventional weapons that the U.S. or other major states have would not be sufficient to respond to any form of attack, but a nuclear weapon would have to be necessary for use. It would have to be not directed at civilians, not directed at civilian targets, which for me is almost unimaginable when you consider the effects of radiation floating around the world. With Chernobyl there was radiation worldwide. So it would have to be an incredibly small weapon. You would not be able to have the effects of the weapon causing unnecessary suffering to combatants. Again, I'm not sure how you'd ever comply with that with a nuclear weapon because they're so extraordinary in their effect. You can't affect neutral states, which are states not party to the conflict. And certain players, like Canada, cannot be involved in the use of a weapon that causes severe widespread and/or long-term damage to the environment. Again, I'm not sure how you'd comply with that.

When this case was before the International Court of Justice, the major nuclear weapons states did not lead evidence on the effects of their weapons, and as a result the court said it simply could not address the issue but thought there might be a possibility you could comply, and by that, they meant presumably if the weapon was small enough. But we're not aware at this point that there's any weapon in the world that is that small and could be used in that circumstance. People have joked about how you could use it on a desert island or something bizarre like that, but even then I think it would damage the human and natural environment.

I'll let Senator Roche take over.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Once the senator has responded, I'd like you to get back to the strategy which involves pressing for an immediate review of NATO policy and, if this request is denied, sitting as a mere observer at the NATO table.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: If I may, I'll answer in English.

[*English*]

On the question of NATO, the Government of Canada a few years ago caused there to be a review of the strategic concept of NATO. The result of that review was that NATO maintained the status quo. The status quo is that NATO holds that nuclear weapons are essential. Even though they are diminishing their political value, they are still retaining them in six European countries. A lot of people forget that, that there are United States missiles in six European countries—tactical nuclear weapons.

On NATO, first of all, I'm coming at this in a political approach. I do not mean a partisan but a politically thinking approach, and thus I do not counsel Canada leaving NATO, certainly at this time, as long as there is an opportunity for Canada to have an influence on the policy of NATO. Here we are beginning to see a breakthrough. I spoke earlier of a bridge. A bridge is being built by Canada working with close NATO countries—Germany, Norway, Belgium—those three particularly. We are bridging with the new agenda countries that stand for the implementation of the 13 steps toward nuclear disarmament. Canada can work with NATO if we will exercise a political will to do so.

I think the opportunity that Canada has to introduce this subject has been enhanced by the recent appointment of General Henault, but this is essentially a political decision by the Government of Canada. The Canadian government must recognize that we can't go on much longer trying to serve two masters at the same time. On the one hand, Canada says we support the non-proliferation treaty that very clearly puts a legal obligation forward toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, we support NATO, and NATO says that nuclear weapons continue to be "essential". That word is in quotes. It's from the strategic concept.

This is incoherent. You cannot say something must be gotten rid of and then say it's essential. What you can do is work to close the gap, and thus Canada needs to put a strong foot forward. And if I may say so again, Mr. Chairman, as my last sentence here, this committee I think is well placed to draw this dichotomy to the attention of the government with a view to getting action.

● (1625)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): No more, Mr. Paquette, but we can go back to Ms. Delong for a very short answer to Mr. Paquette's question.

Ms. Beverley Delong: I'd be grateful if Mr. Paquette would clarify. Are you wanting to know what our strategy would be with respect to NATO or generally getting rid of nuclear weapons?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: I was talking about a strategy where NATO is concerned. You state the following in your brief:

> 2. Second, within NATO, Canada could call for an immediate review of nuclear weapons policy to ensure that policy is consistent with international law and compliant with the International Court's Advisory Opinion. Failing changes in their policy, Canada may need to become only an observer in the Nuclear Planning Group, as Iceland has done, or simply withdraw.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): We're at nine minutes on a five-minute round, so it will have to be a very short answer.

Ms. Beverley Delong: I would simply urge that Canada start raising discussions and ask for another review of NATO policy, because it clearly contradicts the undertakings of the NATO states under the NPT regime.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I want to thank you very much for your presentation. I had the pleasure of having a briefing prior to this meeting, and I want to thank you once again for that as well.

I want to follow up on your serving two ministers theory. Play that out for me. Keep talking about it.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: You should never, Mr. Bevilacqua, ask a politician to keep talking.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: You'll notice I was very short.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Look, the Canadian government is trying to do the right thing; that's my view. The Canadian government has long supported the non-proliferation treaty as a central element in its security policies. The non-proliferation treaty says nuclear weapons have to go. It has a legal obligation. That legal obligation has been upheld by the International Court of Justice, which ruled in 1996 that not only must nations pursue nuclear disarmament but they must also conclude those negotiations. Canada has supported that and the 13 steps that go into the program for nuclear disarmament. At the same time, Canada is a loyal member of NATO, an alliance of the western states—or at least that started out to be an alliance of the western states.

Here, since you've asked me, I'll just have to add a sentence. The danger increases in the sense that NATO is expanding; NATO is going into a whole bunch of new countries and now has 26 members. It's true that NATO is not going to put nuclear weapons in any of those new countries, but those new countries are coming under a nuclear umbrella. As a matter of fact, we now have a sixth of humanity who are living under the NATO nuclear umbrella, and at the heart of the NATO nuclear umbrella is the insistence on the strategic concept saying that nuclear weapons are essential—and they're going to keep them.

As I said earlier, this is incoherent, and then I did say, and you picked up on it, that Canada is serving two masters. It's pretty tough to do this. Maybe you could float it for a little while, but now that we're in the second nuclear age and the danger of the non-proliferation treaty is so extreme—I've made this point and my colleagues have—Canada should take a responsible leading role, working, as I've said, with like-minded states and shoring up the middle of this debate. You can define the middle as the following: on the one side you have the nuclear weapon states being recalcitrant and not fulfilling their obligations; and on the other hand, there is NAM, the non-aligned movement. I'm not speaking against the NAM here, but their policies are to have a nuclear weapons convention with time bound nuclear disarmament in effect tomorrow morning. That's what they want. Well, so do I, in a way.

But anyway, between these polarities there's a middle, and Canada has identified this middle, which needs to be shored up, and the time to shore up this middle is at the time of the non-proliferation treaty review conference next May.

● (1630)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Ms. Grisdale wanted to answer that as well, but Mr. Bevilacqua has the time.

Ms. Debbie Grisdale: I just wanted to make reference to a poll in the late nineties where 92% of Canadians supported the Canadian government's leadership role in the abolition of nuclear weapons. A more recent poll took a reading of Canadian support for NATO; this was within the last couple of months, and I believe the number of Canadians supporting NATO is perhaps somewhere in the fifties or sixties. But I think in terms of the Canadian public, they do not distinguish between Canada's involvement in NATO and the whole nuclear weapons issue.

I'm not a betting person normally, but I would wager perhaps that a lot of Canadians don't realize that one-sixth of humanity lives under this nuclear umbrella. If Canadians were to appreciate the difference, then they would urge Canada to be taking a more aggressive role within NATO to address this problem of two masters.

So the Canadian public is not aware of it. They do support NATO and they do support the abolition of nuclear weapons, so it's a sort of teasing apart of what the polls are telling us is needed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Thank you very much for being here today. There are so many questions one could ask, but I'm going to just quickly pick up on Senator Roche's reference to the yeoman work of this committee in previous times on nuclear disarmament.

Basically, if I understood, you were urging that we distill some of the work we've done on this over time and bring it forward for the government's consideration in the run-up to the end of a non-proliferation treaty review. Given that there actually hasn't been much work done around this in recent times, do you have any advice about other possible witnesses we might want to hear from, on which we could build on the foundation of previous work?

There are two suggestions I want to raise for your comment. First is the possibility of hearing from the Russian ambassador to Canada, who actually has been, it seems to me, fairly bold and visionary in some of his comments. Second, I believe your successor, Peggy Mason—I'm not certain of this—who appeared before the Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament, suggested the possibility of hearing from weapons inspector Commissioner El Baradei. So that's one question.

Second, I think it's fair to say—and I'd be surprised, although we may not all be in agreement—that all parties might agree that the issue of nuclear disarmament seems to have been pushed somewhat into the background by the immediacy and seeming greater urgency of the decision around Canada's participation in Bush's missile defence program. I'm wondering if you could comment on the extent to which a decision by Canada to participate could influence and perhaps lessen our credibility, our influence, our ability to work in a really constructive, credible way with the other middle powers that share these concerns, and perhaps the new agenda countries' coalition.

I wonder if you could make a link between those two, because as we struggle with the issue of Canada's participation in missile defence, we need to have some better understanding of how it could impact on the broader non-proliferation treaty review and the outcome, because the outcome is the real concern.

● (1635)

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Thank you, Ms. McDonough, for inviting my advice, but I don't want to put myself in the position of coming here to advise the committee. I think that's maybe an inappropriate role.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Except we'd like you to.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Also I don't want to take up the time of the committee while I do my thinking out loud about names. But I will undertake to answer your question by sending to the clerk of the committee a letter in which I will give some consideration over the next day or so on some names. You've mentioned the Russian ambassador. I think that would be an outstanding choice, and so would my successor, Peggy Mason, who was an ambassador for disarmament.

You mentioned Mr. El Baradei, the outgoing Director General of the IAEA. He would be excellent if you could get him. If he wasn't able to come himself, then one of his right-hand persons, Tariq Rauf, who is well-known here in Canada.... So I would certainly come in behind the principle of what you're saying, namely that the committee is certainly capable of drawing in some outstanding figures that I think could be of help to you as you go forward.

With respect to Canada, nuclear disarmament, and credibility on the BMD, I would say that one thing is for sure. If Canada goes ahead with the BMD, and it being so well established that BMD is going to be connected to weapons in space, Canada's credibility in henceforth espousing no weapons in space will be shot. In other words—and I'd like to repeat what I've just said—it is my view that if Canada joins the BMD we will no longer be able to argue from a really strong, credible position that we're against weapons in space. We know that the BMD is going to be integrally and inextricably intertwined—and I repeat that—with weapons in space.

Does that mean we can't do any work on nuclear disarmament? Of course not. We must go on. We have the whole non-proliferation treaty, which is a centrepiece of our international security policy, to be upheld. I don't want to repeat myself here, but whatever happens on BMD, Canada must go forward, and the NPT review of May 2005 offers an excellent opportunity to do so.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

We're going to the next round. I'm going to take a few liberties here and ask a question on behalf of our side.

Ms. Grisdale, in your submission you talk about the United States asking for more money to go into this robust nuclear earth penetrator, which was the nuclear bunker buster. Some of the good news—that you may take as good news—is that Congress has said no to that. What do you take from that? Do you take some solace from that? Are you excited about that?

On the other question I would like to ask Ms. Delong, you said that the United States has made four nuclear threats in the last 10 years. Which countries were threatened? Maybe I have that information, but who made the threat on behalf of the U.S. government?

● (1640)

Ms. Debbie Grisdale: Thank you, Mr. Sorenson, for pulling that out of the document. I didn't refer to it in trying to be brief with my remarks.

You are quite correct that this part of the appropriations bill was removed, so for 2005 there will be no new funding going toward the robust nuclear earth penetrator and the advanced concept initiative. It might be fair to say that they're gone for 2005, but not forgotten.

In the world of taking the good news where you can find it, that's definitely good news. The arms control community in the United States worked very hard on this issue, and there was good leadership from Congress. Yes, it's terrific, but it's the sort of longer view. Knowing that the U.S. administration is committed to this whole idea of bunker busters and developing a new generation of nuclear weapons sort of tempers the longer-term enthusiasm. So in the short term it's good news, but we're probably just going to see it again in a different form.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): All right.

Ms. Delong.

Ms. Beverley Delong: Thank for your question, sir.

Jackie Cabasso, who's the executive director of the Western States Legal Foundation, in a speech that I have put in footnote 14, is the source of my information on the threats. There was one against Libya in April 1996 and one against North Korea in July 1994. The U.S. threatened Iraq in 1991 and 1998. I'm trusting that the details of exactly who it was are in her speech. These were spokesmen in the state and defence departments in the U.S. The Institute for Energy and Environmental Research has a much longer list. If you simply do a Google search under “chronology of nuclear threats”, it lists at least 25 threats. The bulk of them are U.S., but there are some Russian threats as well.

That's the research we have available on threats.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): So you're saying that high government officials are making these threats, and not just someone who happens to work for the government who in a passing speech says if Iraq does this we will respond with a nuclear.... Did any of those threats say that if there were ever a nuclear attack on one side, we would respond with nuclear weapons—or was it a pre-emptive nuclear strike?

Ms. Beverley Delong: My understanding is that they are high officials. If you look at their actual policy it says, “In the event of attacks by chemical or biological weapons, or in the event of surprising military developments, we will use all our options.” Any time you see “all our options” they're talking about nuclear threats. Those documents are footnoted here. Both the Nuclear Posture Review and the National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction specifically say they will use nuclear weapons, and in some instances against which states.

Ms. Sarah Estabrooks: On the issue of the appropriations bill, I think Debbie addressed this well.

I wanted to raise one more point, which is that the cut did have bipartisan support. It was actually spearheaded by a Republican, Congressman Hobson from Ohio. I think that's notable.

I think Debbie is right that this is a short-term victory, but it does set a precedent for a new government. It had significant cuts for bunker busters, the advanced concepts initiator, which are also called mini-nukes, in colloquial terms, and two other programs were cut. The modern pit facility was reduced from...I think the request was $27 million, and it was funded at $7 million. And $30 million was cut from the request to lower the time required to renew testing.

This package of things I think we would consider quite a significant victory. Congressman Markey of Massachusetts has called it the greatest victory in arms control since 1992 when the test ban treaty passed Congress, but without Senate approval.

So I think we definitely consider it a good omen for the beginning of a new government. Mind you, in a time of fiscal prudence and budget cuts, these are the kinds of programs that would get targeted, because they are over the top a bit—maybe that's not the best word.

Thank you.

● (1645)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Ms. Estabrooks.

Is there anybody who has a question?

Mr. Desrochers, do you have a question?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, BQ): Good day. Welcome and thank you for agreeing to share with us your views on as contentious an issue as nuclear disarmament.

Senator Roche, judging from your presentation, you are fairly pessimistic about the situation. You stated that for many years, Canada served as a sort of bridge between the NPT and NATO but that , given the rapid changes taking place in our society, the present crisis is the worst in the 34-year history of the NPT.

Do you still believe that the NPT is an effective instrument? As a participant in the preparatory meetings for the 2005 Conference, I'd like to know, given the current world situation, what can be done to restore the leading role of the NPT?

[*English*]

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: I think Canada is well placed to play an important role.

First of all, we have high moral standing in this field. We were the first country in the world to have the technological capacity to build a nuclear weapon—we were a member of the Manhattan Project in the 1940s. We were the first country to have the capacity to build a nuclear weapon and to renounce it. The manner of our diplomacy over the years has certainly made a distinct contribution to the non-proliferation treaty as it has gone along.

Whether I'm optimistic or pessimistic is really not the point here. I think I am being realistic when I recall, for the benefit of this committee, what the international community is saying in the non-proliferation treaty review context. They are protesting significantly.

I have a lot of documents on this. Countries like Brazil, just to name one, says that the undermining of the treaty, which is now going on as a result of the nuclear weapons states modernizing their nuclear weapons and not fulfilling their obligations to enter into comprehensive negotiations.... It's eroding the treaty. We're seeing proliferation occurring now.

All I can do is say that in my experience, Canada has the credibility to work actively and effectively. What I have to ask is, do we have the political push now that is required?

This is the heart of my testimony, that Canada should take a proactive position in working with like-minded states to bring into effect this list of items that I gave earlier that are achievable. That would be a contribution to what we're talking about here.

● (1650)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you, Mr. Roche.

Mr. Bevilacqua.

Oh, Mr. Desrochers. We're on a three-minute round now, but go ahead, if you have another question.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Senator Roche, you talked about modernization and about the fact that some countries could join with Canada in pressing other countries to uphold their commitments. Which countries are you referring to, aside, naturally, from the five major players on the UN Security Council?

[*English*]

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: I think I would have to make a clarification here. There are five permanent members of the Security Council that are not cooperating. They are the ones that are maintaining their nuclear hegemony over the rest of the world.

With respect to who Canada can work with most effectively, I would say the following countries: Germany, Norway, Belgium, and the Netherlands. This is not an exhaustive list, by any means, but those four countries did vote for the new agenda resolution at the UN two or three weeks ago. Thus, they have signalled that they want to work on this agenda of items I referred to that were contained in the New Agenda's resolution. The other countries of the New Agenda Coalition that Canada can work very closely with are Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, and Sweden.

So Canada has good credentials with both sets of countries—one from the New Agenda and one from NATO. I don't want to repeat myself endlessly here, but it can work with them, call meetings, work strategy, go in to shore up what's achievable in the NPT review of 2005.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Ms. Grisdale.

Ms. Debbie Grisdale: I would like to answer your first question, Monsieur Desrochers.

This past year I was on the Canadian delegation to the preparatory committee meeting, and I must say, as a member of civil society I was very proud to be part of the Canadian delegation there. They had their hands up constantly on issues, suggesting new approaches. It really made me feel very proud to be a Canadian, and it made the job of being on the committee a pleasure.

So just to underscore what Senator Roche said, the issue is the political will. It's not at the time of the NPT prep com or the review conference; it's the political will that gives the mandate to these people to do what needs to be done for nuclear disarmament.

I would like to applaud the officials at Foreign Affairs, who I think are working hard in this direction, but they need the political will to carry the ball even further.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

I have just one announcement for the members of this committee. There will be an urgent debate called in the House starting at 6:30 p. m. until midnight tonight about the situation in the Ukraine. So if you weren't aware of that, it will be coming soon.

Now, the next question, Ms. McDonough.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: I'm sure witnesses will be aware that next week President George Bush is going to be visiting Canada. It's not clear whether parliamentarians are going to have a chance to hear an address from him, and it's even less clear whether we're going to have an opportunity to present our views to him, but I'm wondering what message, on behalf of a lot of Canadians who have worked endlessly, persistently, and passionately on the issue of nuclear disarmament, you would wish for Canadians to convey, through whatever means, to President Bush when he visits us here in Canada next week—taking into account the considerable confidence you've expressed in the credibility that Canada still retains as a player in this whole global public policy issue.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Thank you.

I think this is an extremely important point you've touched on. It's very sensitive for Canada, Ms. McDonough, as we all know, the relationship between Canada and the United States.

Canada has two essential policies in this area and we have to work on them both. The first policy is to work in the world through the UN and the NPT system to express ourselves internationally through that set of things, the UN and so on. The second policy is our bilateral relationship with the United States that governs so many aspects of our life, which I hardly need to elaborate on here.

When the United States is in reasonable compatibility with the goals of the UN and international law, Canada can sort of keep doing both—working the UN route and working the U.S. route. But when you enter a period when the United States undermines international law—and the facts speak for themselves; it has. I always feel a little bit sensitive on this question myself because I don't want to be accused of anti-Americanism. I am not anti-American. I spent eight happy years of my life in the United States. Three of my children were born there. It is the policies of the government in place that are deeply disturbing in respect of the upholding of international law, which is the only way we're going to be able to get global stability and security. So Canada has to be able to work with the United States as well as working in the UN system.

What does a neighbour say to another neighbour who's a friend? Well, I think you speak respectfully, but I think you don't do your own principles any service if you hold back from speaking appropriately, in the right setting, to draw attention to the undermining of international law that is going on. The rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Iraq War, the Kyoto Protocol, the whole international criminal court, the land mines—there's a list.

It is, then, the policies that the current and re-elected United States government is espousing that are injurious to the very interests of Canada. Canada has held these principles and these interests for a long time, and I don't think Canadians—certainly in Toronto, and I only speak for myself. I don't want to see an undermining of what Canada stands for just so we can get along with the United States. Within the United States there are millions of people who would say amen to everything we've been saying here today, but they're not in the administration.

This calls for a good deal of political deftness and diplomatic skill in order for our country to retain the principles of global security we stand for and continue to work with the United States.

I close by saying that I think as neighbours we have to speak politely and frankly and continue to do our job. That's the message I would convey. We must tell the United States that the continued policies of the nuclear weapons states, of which they are *primus inter pares*, the chief, the hyper-power of the world, are undermining the whole global security network today. They are leading and causing proliferation of nuclear weapons. And this cuts to the absolute heart of who we are in our country occupying the top half of North America. We have a right and an obligation to speak out.

● (1655)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Are there any other questions?

Ms. Stronach.

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you. What you've said so far has been very informative.

I guess one of the reasons we're sitting here and evaluating the pros and cons of a proposed missile defence plan is, is there a real threat out there? If there was no threat then there would be no need to even discuss it.

I'd be interested in your opinion. Is there a credible threat, where is it coming from, and how do you propose to go forward?

● (1700)

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: I'll start the answer, but I would like my colleagues to join in, so I'll try to be brief.

Is there a threat? Any country that has nuclear weapons is by definition a threat. The threat to use nuclear weapons is a threat. I suppose what you mean is a threat to us. Well, I would have to say that any country that has or is aspiring to get nuclear weapons could be considered a threat. The question is how to deal with it.

If a ballistic missile defence system was in the back of your mind as a way to deal with the threat of nuclear weapons, I think I would simply repeat that such a system is not going to work technologically. As for terrorism, the threat is probably not going to come from ballistic missiles. Even if terrorists do use a nuclear weapon, it'll be smuggled in or made within the country where it's going to be exploded.

It is the strengthening of the legal regimes, of verification, all those things that make up the body of law...if we're going to give up on this, then how would we avoid going back into a jungle? We have to build up the body of international law. That's the most appropriate way for Canada to deal with the threats.

Ms. Debbie Grisdale: There are threats out there. I think, though, on balance, if one were to examine what the biggest threat would be in terms of a nuclear weapon, it would be a small one smuggled in, in a backpack or in a container on board ship. Missile defence is going to do nothing to protect the United States or anybody else against a bomb that comes in in that way. In effect, it's a "useless scarecrow"; that's a term that's been used to describe missile defence.

I think missile defence has the effect of lulling people into a false sense of security, that it would create this bubble. In fact, the use of the term "shield" is such a misnomer. It's not a shield. It's a one-on-one takeout of a missile by an interceptor. The environment of fear that's created, I think largely in the United States, has the effect of making people search for what they think might be easy answers, when in fact, as you well know, missile defence, with all the points against it in terms of the technology and cost—and I'm sure you're well informed on those—is not going to address the real threats.

My second point would be to also hold up what Senator Roche just said about the body of international law and international agreements. If we don't observe those, we're going to have total anarchy in the world. I think in some sense that's what we have now. We have one loose cannon, which is our neighbour to the south.

Canadian sovereignty is so important on this issue, as it has been on other recent issues. I think the Canadian government should not be joining with a fully armed neighbour as a way of protecting itself and ratcheting up the whole military response to threats in the world. That's not going to bring us any kind of a sense of real security.

Ms. Sarah Estabrooks: Just briefly on the issue of threats, one other major concern in terms of nuclear threats is an accidental launch from Russia. I think the most effective way to deal with an accident in terms of the Russian context would be the approach we're taking through the G-8. It's the project to fund elimination and disarmament in Russia.

Canada is taking a leadership role there, putting significant funding into this program, and the U.S. has the global threat reduction initiative, which is doing similar work within the national context and through the G-8, funding major initiatives to disarm decaying Russian subs and retrain Russian technology experts and scientists.

This approach is, first of all, much cheaper, though it's also a very costly approach. But secondly, it's a constructive, progressive approach, rather than an antagonistic and provocative system that may never work and certainly would never address the depth of nuclear threat out there. It would cover only a fraction of the nuclear warheads that could conceivably be launched at the U.S. It certainly doesn't respond to the question fully. Technical, verifiable, transparent, non-proliferation initiatives exist that are far more constructive and effective.

● (1705)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: I'd like to go back to our two masters, the support of the non-proliferation treaty on one part and then the support of NATO. You mentioned that NATO says nuclear weapons are in fact essential. Why do you think it says that?

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: They say that the ultimate guarantee of security is the ability to respond to any attack with the overwhelming force that a nuclear weapon represents. There are several paragraphs that go around that sentence. They say that the technological power of the weapon is so important that they need it to withstand any attack. Even during the Cold War, NATO said they needed nuclear weapons because the Soviets had conventional superiority and they needed to reserve the right to respond with a nuclear weapon to a conventional attack by the Soviets.

Now that we're living in an entirely new set of circumstances in the world, it's time to get rid of Cold War strategies. If nuclear weapons can be said to have served any purpose in the Cold War—I do not admit that was the case, but if it can be said they did, certainly that time is over. We can't go forward in a world in which it's becoming unified in so many aspects. I know all about the disparities and all that, but technologically we're coming together as a planet. We can't do this, I would say, while certain states are arrogating unto themselves the power to decimate whole populations, whole regions of the world. That's not a formula for peace and security, let alone stability.

Thus, while these states are holding on to their capacity to wreck such devastation, other states are trying to get into the club. I use India as an example. India says—and I've been to India many times and I'm very familiar with India's foreign policy—they need weapons for security. That's the cover they've used. But what they really mean and at the heart of their policy is that if the five permanent members of the Security Council think they need nuclear weapons for their security, then India's going to say they need it also. In other words, they have to get into the nuclear club, if you're not going to abandon that club. So the club is going to grow.

John F. Kennedy, when he was President, foresaw perhaps the day when there would be 25 nuclear weapons states in the world. Thus, he said, we had better do something about it. That led to discussions, which led to the non-proliferation treaty coming into existence in 1970.

This is the kind of answer that could go on, and I think the chairman will object, and rightly so.

But, Mr. Bevilacqua, this provokes really serious thinking about where we're going to go as a country and as a people. I don't want to live and, I tell you this, sir, I don't want my grandchildren living under the increased threat of nuclear dangers that nuclear weapons are posing.

● (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): I really should go to Ms. McDonough here, before I go back.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Very briefly, it's probably not fair to ask Senator Roche this question, but perhaps the other presenters.... In a way we're asking you to help us do our homework here, but it's very obvious to us that we have in Doug Roche somebody who has just given incredible amounts of time and energy to this whole process, unbelievably from 1985 through into the 2005 review. My question is whether there are American counterparts to Doug Roche from whom we should be hearing, either by way of written material that would be available or by way of testimony that we might seek.

I think the very sensitive, thoughtful statement that Senator Roche makes is one that we all take under advisement, that it's an extremely, extremely dangerous and sensitive time in our relationship with the U.S., and we need to get it right and we need to do it respectfully and we need to do it from a basis of information and analysis, not on the emotion that may easily be generated but isn't going to help.

Are there others with whom we should be communicating, with whom we should be in touch, who are as passionate and committed within the U.S. to the same goals that we are, in terms of really making the non-proliferation treaty work in today's and tomorrow's world?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): We would also say that we would be very welcome if any of you would submit a list of people who you believe would be good. I think that would maybe answer some of hers. But very quickly, if you have a couple of names, we would welcome that.

Ms. Beverley Delong: Thank you very much for your question, Ms. McDonough.

I would be overjoyed if you could hear from Dr. Bruce Blair, who was a missileer for the Minuteman launchers. He has his Ph.D. since, has learned Russian, and has been over visiting with the Russians and learning about their arsenals. He is an extremely knowledgeable and excellent speaker.

On the legal end, I would encourage you to speak with Mr. Peter Weiss, who was the former president of the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, or his colleague, Dr. John Burroughs, with the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy. They have been monitoring the non-proliferation treaty in New York for years and they are co-authors of a report called “Rule of Power or Rule of Law?”, which is a list of all the treaties that the current U.S. administration is in breach of. It's a plea for adherence to international law by the American government.

David Kreiger from the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation is another lawyer who speaks out very well and clearly and is following these events closely, and also Jonathan Granoff with the Global Security Institute. That institute is the home for the middle powers initiative. Jonathan is on the American Bar Association, I believe chairing the committee on defence, so he would speak on behalf of the American Bar.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: We'll give you all these names and addresses.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Ms. Stronach.

Ms. Belinda Stronach: As my colleague said initially, ideally it would be nice if there were no nuclear weapons and there was an organized rules-based reduction, and if everybody played by the rules, that would be a good thing. In your opinion, where should Canada be focusing its energies to be the most effective at the end of the day? Which framework should we be focusing on, or which institutions should we be working with? Or does that need to evolve as well, in particular when you have, as you indicated, the United States not participating in some of those institutions? What does the future look like? Where should we be directing our energy to be the most effective toward the reduction of nuclear weapons and having an effective rules-based system?

● (1715)

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Thank you, Ms. Stronach.

Canada is well known for its membership in all the major groupings—La Francophonie, the Commonwealth, the UN. It's a long list. So I would certainly say we ought to maintain a proactive stance in all that, but we're here today discussing nuclear weapons. So it is the non-proliferation treaty that is the central element here to deal with the elimination of nuclear weapons so that they don't overtake the world. We've had that discussion here this afternoon.

There are associations, missile control technology. There are various spinoffs of the NATO nuclear planning group. There are these bodies, but I would say the most important body for Canada to take active steps in an effective way is through its participation in the non-proliferation treaty. This is not like a piece of paper that sits there. The 188 states belong to it. It's the largest arms control and disarmament treaty in the world. It's not just a piece of paper that sits there. They come, all these nations. And as I said earlier, for one month these negotiations are going to take place about how to strengthen it.

So for Canada to play a driving role in it is I think one of the most effective ways, and my colleagues may want to add.

Ms. Sarah Estabrooks: I completely agree. The climate for multilateral negotiations is obviously tough, but there is other work that can be done in the meantime.

There are a couple of interesting examples here. One is Canada's work on verification. We've had experience with treaties that aren't verifiable; they're a document, and everyone says they will abide by them, but there's no way of checking and verifying that's happening. Canada is working on verification technologies and has taken leadership on this in the past as well, and it is working on how to set up the technology and expertise in verification even before the treaty is in place. Verification is frequently used as an excuse for why a treaty can't be negotiated, because the verification mechanism isn't there or the technology is not there. Starting out on that, even without negotiations in place, is a proactive step Canada is taking.

I'm going to ask for clarification. Is Sweden working on the FMCT? Am I correct on that?

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Yes.

● (1720)

Ms. Sarah Estabrooks: Working on definitions, for instance.... Frequent stumbling blocks in treaty negotiations are how to limit this and how to define the parameters. For instance, the negotiation on the fissile material control regime, which is a treaty that is seen as important by several countries, including the U.S. at some level, is being blocked. So Sweden is working outside of the treaty framework, outside the Conference on Disarmament or a formalized body, on addressing definitions with civil society and government and on setting that foundation in place. That is the kind of critical work that can take place in a time like this.

I still think the NPT is the best forum for that to take place.

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: Mr. Chairman, can I come back for 30 seconds to Ms. Stronach's extremely important question?

I'd like to tell you a little story. I'll do this very, very, briefly. It makes the point that answers what I think you are looking for.

There are a whole lot of technicalities involved; this is a very complex subject. You can get “technicality-ed” to death in it. As a matter of fact, that's a short way to get into paralysis for nothing.

The heart of our testimony here today is that Canada has to take a political push, a decision politically to make progress. Here is the example I want to give you. In 1963, the mothers of Scandinavia noticed that strontium-90, a fallout from radioactivity from nuclear weapons testing in the atmosphere, was showing up in their breast milk for their babies. They didn't like this, and they protested, marched, and so on. This was so effective it got right up to President Kennedy of the United States and President Khrushchev of the Soviet Union, who, in the wisdom that prevailed at that moment, said, "Yes, we ought to shut off nuclear testing in the atmosphere", whereupon they instructed their negotiators to go and negotiate a test ban treaty. The negotiators did it, and they did it in 12 days. It was what's called a limited or partial test ban treaty, because it shut off atmospheric testing but allowed underground testing. Kennedy died four months after this, but at the time, there was such acclaim that he said to his colleagues—which has been documented—"If I had known how popular a limited test ban treaty would be, I'd have gone for the whole thing". It's too bad he didn't.

So the heart of my little story is that what really counts is the political leaders making a decision.

Mr. Chairman, this committee has the power to push the political leaders concerned.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Mr. Bevilacqua.

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua: My final question, just in case I might use some of your wisdom in response to people who claim that not participating in a ballistic missile defence system is actually not very wise, because we're not sitting around the table where decisions are being made, thereby losing influence....

The Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.: I think my colleagues want to answer, and I'll let them go to it now.

Ms. Beverley Delong: I don't think there is a table. This is going to be an interceptor system that's set up, and when things come in and are seen on the radar, the interceptor will take off, and you and I had better be thinking about what the results of that interception will be in terms of debris. Theresa Hitchens from the Center for DefenseInformation is concerned about that, whether it's going to take out satellites, Canadian or otherwise. Whether interception might take out civilian aircraft is a concern of the Canadian Pugwash Group, in its letter to the minister. People aren't going to be sitting discussing whether they're going to be hitting the button or not; I think it's going to have to be pretty automated. So it's a frightening system.

Others may do better on that than I.

Ms. Sarah Estabrooks: The other point there is that the U.S. has already confirmed that the system will be operated through NORTHCOM, which Canada is not a member of. NORAD is going to be playing a critical role in BMD and Canada will be involved in that process. It's the same role we currently play for strategic defence, which is that we are at the table operating the technology to detect incoming, whether it be space-based debris.... We track satellites and we would also be operating the equipment to track intercontinental ballistic missiles.

In fact, Canadians are privy to that data through NORAD, but the data is passed on to STRATCOM, to Strategic Command, which makes the decision in the event of a detection. From what we understand, that's the exact kind of process that would happen with ballistic missile defence. Canadians would be in the chairs operating the equipment to do the detections. That data would then be forwarded on to NORTHCOM in the same way it is now forwarded on to Strategic Command.

Ms. Debbie Grisdale: I believe that last week Alan Simpson, who is a Labour MP from the U.K., was here in Ottawa, and he gave several interviews; you may have read them. I also heard him speak, and he spoke about the massive public hostility to missile defence in the U.K. He also described their situation, where the memorandum of understanding did not go through Parliament in the U.K. Since the memorandum was signed, two annexes have been added in the agreement between the U.S. and U.K. governments. One was to upgrade radar and the second was that the testing for the interceptors would happen on British soil. The discussion was started in May and the decision will be made, but there will probably be no announcement, he said, until after a May election.

He understood that there were some conditions—that may not be the right word—or something akin to conditions that, in signing these agreements, the United Kingdom would bear no costs and that the system would only be used for defence. Well, as he said, you don't put conditionality on any agreements with the United States.

I only bring this up as an example that might be worthwhile for this committee to look at carefully, namely what has been the experience of the United Kingdom in signing on to missile defence. Also, Australia too has a memorandum of understanding with the United States, so that might be useful information to look at.

● (1725)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Thank you.

Are there no other questions? Mr. Paquette, a very short one.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: It's not a question. I'd simply like our research analyst to send us the details of the 13-Step Program for disarmament. I wasn't asking you to get into the specifics of the program at this time. However, I would like to see a copy of the 13-Step Program.

[*English*]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): Mr. Roche is wondering if you want the framed one that hangs on his wall.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Kevin Sorenson): But anyway, thank you, Mr. Paquette. That is a good suggestion and we would be very open to that, along with the list of whoever you believe would be relevant to the discussion.

We want to thank you all for coming today, and certainly your testimony has been good, it's been positive, and we appreciate your appearance here.

We stand adjourned.

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