

Canada says NO to historic UN Vote on Nuclear Disarmament

Posted by Joan Russow
Thursday, 27 October 2016 15:27 -

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

By Peggy Mason, Former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament to the UN, now President of the Rideau Institute released the following statement after Canada's UN vote today against Resolution L.41.

October 27, 2016.

"The First Committee on Disarmament and International Security of the UN General Assembly today passed an historic resolution, mandating the launch in 2017 of negotiations for a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons. Such a ban would reinforce customary international law against the threat or use of nuclear weapons and pave the way for further negotiations on their verifiable destruction and ultimate elimination.

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Tensions between Russia and the USA are dangerously high. Massive nuclear weapons modernization programmes are underway. The negotiation to be launched by this resolution is the best hope the international community has to move away from the nuclear brink.

Canada's vote against this resolution puts this country, quite simply, on the wrong side of history. Canada was one of only a handful of countries to vote NO. In so doing we joined with most other NATO member states, in blatant contradiction of our legal obligation under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Article VI to enter into good faith negotiations for nuclear disarmament. This is the exact opposite of what Canada should be doing. We should be working as hard as we can to reduce NATO's unconscionable and unnecessary reliance on nuclear weapons, not using that reliance as a reason for opposing nuclear disarmament negotiations at the UN. In that regard, we note that fellow NATO member, Netherlands, withstood American pressure and abstained rather than voting no.

Canada has another opportunity to put this right when the General Assembly votes on this resolution in early December. We call on Canada to change its vote ideally to a YES but, at a minimum, to an abstention and at the same time to signal its intent to contribute constructively to the negotiation, once launched. These actions would be worthy of a country seeking to be elected to the UN Security Council in 2021."

For more information contact:

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