

A nuclear-weapon-free world is possible!

We read this morning the Op-ed by Massimo D'Alema, Gianfranco Fini, Giorgio La Malfa, Arturo Parisi and Francesco Calogero, calling for a world without nuclear weapons. We welcome this letter with the same interest we expressed for the previous letters by Schultz, Kissinger, Perry and Nunn from the United States, and by Hurd, Rifkind, Owen and Robertson from the UK.

We cannot but agree with our four former ministers, when they write “We think it is important that Italy, too, should give indications that go in that same direction.” In the meantime, however, there are some real emergencies in the field of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament that Italy could address without delay.

1. Last week we learned that, despite the alarm raised by the world's major disarmament experts, the agreement for the exchange of nuclear technology between USA and India is continuing its progress. Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala (former Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations for Disarmament Affairs) and Daryl Kimball (Arms Control Association, USA, also bipartisan) wrote: “Contrary to the claims of its advocates, the deal fails to bring India further into conformity with the nonproliferation behavior expected of the member states of the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Unlike 178 other countries, India has not signed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). It continues to produce fissile material and expand its arsenal.” The US-India agreement must be approved by the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the IAEA Board. Italy is a member of both those bodies. Further, within the NSG all decisions are taken by consensus. Even the doubts and concerns of a single state can put the deal on hold. **What will Italy do?**

2. Our four former ministers also write: “We are fully aware that the road that will lead us to the elimination of nuclear weapons is long. It will call for certain political conditions. The first is an actual improvement in the relations between the nuclear superpowers...” We agree on this point as well. However, we think that a first, small step towards that improvement, even before the dismantling of their vast nuclear arsenals begins, could be to refrain from further exacerbating their relations, as the plans for the installation of NMD (the so-called “shield”) in some European territories appear clearly to be doing. But on this issue Italy has kept very silent. ***Italy could lend its voice, together with European States, and demand that any new military installation on the continent be frozen.*** If we are pursuing the reduction of tensions and of armaments, then our first logical step must be not to increase controversial facilities.

3. On 1 July a group of Europarliamentarians (they, too, were bipartisan!) promotes an appeal on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the signing of the NPT, asking that letter and the spirit of the treaty be finally implemented. Forty years have gone by, they write, but little serious work has gone into the full implementation of its Article VI, “to bring to a conclusion in good faith negotiations ... for nuclear disarmament ... under strict and effective international control.” To this end, the MEPs commit themselves to working towards a Nuclear Weapon Convention banning all nuclear weapons. ***After the banning of chemical and biological weapons, the time has come to deal with nuclear weapons, too.***

The Association of Mayors for Peace has already launched a process, along these lines, called the Hiroshima – Nagasaki Protocol. ***Will Italy join the many United Nations member States who have already announced their support, on the occasion of the UN General Assembly in 2010?***

4. We are also very pleased to read the last part of the letter as well. They write that “the spread of a new way of thinking – of a new “shared wisdom” – is a fundamental step along this path, and Italy too must contribute.” For a long time that has been the commitment of all our associations as well. We shall be happy to welcome your support! ***But, then, why don't we start with Italy?***

We believe that, once you have understood the right path to follow, it is necessary to do everything that lies within your capacity and potential, so that afterwards you can credibly ask others to join you along that road. In Italy there are 90 B61 bombs, which should not be here according to our commitments with the NPT. A large number of Italian men and women, over the past few months have signed the proposal for a new law which would require Italy to do just that: to correct her own violations.

Over 80,000 Italian citizens are asking that Italy free herself of those nuclear weapons.

The draft legislation has been assigned to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, on 22 May. There it lies, not yet on the agenda, perhaps forgotten. Three of the signatories of the Op-ed are members of that Committee, and the fourth is the President of the Chamber of Deputies. Here is something they could do right away, to show concretely that they truly believe the sentiments expressed in the Op-ed published this morning in Corriere della Sera.

We are willing to contribute to the effort.

Paolo Beni, ARCI

Albino Bizzotto, Beati i costruttori di pace

Lisa Clark, coordinamento “Un futuro senza atomiche”

Tonio Dell'Olio, Libera

Flavio Lotti, Tavola della Pace, Coordinamento Enti Locali per la Pace

Andrea Olivero, ACLI

Francesco Vignarca, Rete Italiana per il Disarmo