

THE B61 NUCLEAR BOMBS IN EUROPE

WHAT IS THE FUTURE?

Friday 13 December , The European Parliament.

Philippe Lamberts MEP (Green Party) arranged with IPPNW a meeting at the European Parliament to discuss the proposed modernisation of the B61 bombs based in Europe

REPORT OF THE MEETING

The meeting took place between 10am and 12:30pm

Senator Philippe Lamberts (Belgium) introduced the meeting and reminded (us) that the European Parliament is concerned and interested by the matter of NATO-stored nuclear bombs in Europe. However the EP does not have the power/remit to decide upon this matter as the decision rests individually with each of the states members He stressed that the majority of people are opposed to storing the bomb on their territory, some politicians are proud to belong to nations that can call upon the use of nuclear bombs. He adds that the Belgian Defence Secretary Peter de Crem, who is trying to be appointed as the next NATO General Secretary, would not facilitate the disposal of these bombs. PL advised us that the best approach was for IPPNW to coordinate an approach to the Foreign Offices of each of the 4 countries involved (Belgium , Germany, Italy and Netherlands) and to work with the members of parliament in those countries to build up awareness and opposition to the upgrading of the B 61 bombs.

Dr Marianne Begemann (Netherlands) focussed her speech on the antidemocratic process raised by the nuclear weapons matter. The Dutch parliament is firmly hostile to and the government rather favourable to the retention of weapons stores on Dutch ground. Public opinion cannot tolerate the idea of state as NATO subordinate. Dr MB stressed that the Dutch parliament agreed to the purchase of F35 planes, on the express condition that the planes may not be used for nuclear missions.

Dr Roberto Del Bianco (Italy) depicted the history of the nuclear weapon in Italy. Estimates vary from 60 to 70 bombs. Italy is in strategic position, due to its proximity to Russia and Middle East. Public opinion is rather unconcerned about the future of these stored bombs. People are more concerned about the current economic crisis and domestic politics. The media is silent on the issue but the government does deal with it, albeit quite feebly. Fortunately, several pacifist NGOs deal with the matter with energy and hope to dispose of the bombs via legal means. The 2013 Oslo conference on humanitarian consequences of nuclear conflict underpinned the opponents' motivation. As we all know, the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, whether against an enemy or by accident, will be catastrophic both in short and long term.

Dr Ward Kuster (Belgium) The 20 bombs arsenal is no longer a secret. However, as it was never confirmed or denied, it remains considered a rumour. This upset

the concerned part of the public and they in turn become mainly hostile to the idea. The Foreign Minister De Crem objected that these weapons are obsolete and need modernising, which is a concern for the Americans. However, the new F35 planes, due to replace the current bomb-carrying F16, will be paid for by Belgian taxpayers. It is urgent to alert NATO and European states who, like us, think that we do not need these bombs that modernisation of B61 must be stopped. The modernisation will be perceived by the Russians as a menace and it undermines all peace negotiation with them. NATO must offer peace pledges to Russia, or else nuclear disarmament will be set back for several decades. Moreover, we know that conflicts between nations are a downward trend. The solution cannot be a show of strength and threat of violence but mediate and negotiate. We have expertise in peace talks with other post-WWII institutions/bodies. Is this expertise be underused? Along these lines, we could re-think and strengthen the strength of the peace negotiating and enforcement power of United Nations.

Lydia Patzak, medical student (Germany) outlined the current position on B61 bombs based in Germany. Previously the German government was opposed to them but after the imminent elections it is possible this position may change

Dr Loretta Postma (Netherlands) detailed the humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons

Xanthe Hall (Germany) concluded the talks by describing the future modern bomb characteristics. Using readily available new technologies, the bomb is more efficient and more controllable. The improvement is due to its remote control system. Better used, it becomes all the more threatening. Cost is also terrifying. A rough estimate of this new remote control system is around the billion-dollar mark. This innovation upsets Russians, who were promised by Obama, that "no new bombs" would be produced.

Present at the meeting were the assistants of Tarja Conberg MEP, Jean Lambert MEP and Fiona Hall MEP.

A long discussion followed.

It was decided to approach Tarja Cronberg MEP, presently leader of the Security and Defence Committee of the Foreign Affairs Department of the European Parliament to bring a Resolution to the European Parliament condemning the upgrading of the B61 bombs in Europe. Although the Resolution would have no executive power, it would be a useful support for IPPNW when approaching Foreign Ministries similar to the recent resolutions from the ICRC and UNGA