



International commemoration in Astana of the United Nations Day Against Nuclear Tests, as North Korea conducts first submarine missile launch

Media alert August 25, 2016

August 29th is the United Nations International Day Against Nuclear Tests.

It is also the 25th anniversary of the closing of the Soviet nuclear test site in Kurchatov, Kazakhstan by a mass civil society movement led by poet Olzhas Suleimenov and current President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev.

As Kazakhstan prepares to host a major international commemoration and conference in Astana on August 29, co-organised by Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK), the only country still testing nuclear weapons, has just tested its first submarine-launched missile, increasing tensions in the region.

However, the DPRK is not the only nuclear threat. Eight other countries possess nuclear weapons. Amongst them, France, Russia, the UK and the USA have policies to use nuclear weapons first, i.e. even if not threatened by, or attacked with, nuclear weapons from another country. Russia and the USA maintain thousands of nuclear weapons on an operational readiness to use within minutes, under launch-on-warning policies.

With tensions rising between the nuclear-armed States, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists set their 'Doomsday Clock' earlier this year at 3 Minutes to Midnight – the closest to nuclear catastrophe that the world has been since 1983.

The Astana conference entitled *Building a Nuclear Weapon-Free World*, is therefore expected to call for new actions, such as a UN Security Council resolution prohibiting all nuclear tests, the establishment of nuclear weapons free zones in North East Asia and the Middle East, agreement by nuclear-armed States never to use nuclear weapons first, and the commencement of United Nations led negotiations in 2017 to prohibit nuclear weapons globally.

Participants in the conference include **President Nazarbayev**, Austrian Former Federal Chancellor **Alfred Gusenbauer**, Head of the Austrian-based Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organisation **Lassina Zerbo**, Vice President of Bulgaria **Margarita Popova**, Former President of Poland **Aleksander Kwaśniewski**, Chairperson of the Russian Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs **Konstantin Kosachev**, Republic of Korea Minister of Unification **Hong Yong-pyo**, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union **Saber Chowdhury**, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross **Christine Beerli**, Former Prime Minister of Italy **Romano Prodi**, IPPNW-Italy President **Michele Di Paolantonio**, Former French Air Force Commander **General Bernard Norlain**, Chair of the UN Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations **Thani Thongphakdi**, Religions for Peace Co-President **Ela Gandhi** (grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi), nuclear test victim and renowned artist **Karipbek Kuyukov**, Director General of United Nations Office in Geneva **Michael Møller**, Former Prime Minister of Israel **Ehud Barak**, and many others.

Media accreditation for the conference is possible. Contact alyn@pnnd.org

Resources for Media:

Conference website: www.astanaconf2016.org

Conference blog: www.astanaconf2016.org/en/blog/

Powerful introduction video (1 minute): www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMjbMHlzyLw

Media clips: International press coverage of the conference
www.astanaconf2016.org/en/media-clips/