



World Council of Churches
Conseil œcuménique des Eglises
Consejo Mundial de Iglesias
Ökumenischer Rat der Kirchen

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The Right Honourable
Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada

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Geneva, 30 March 2009

Dear Prime Minister,

This letter comes to you, to the leaders of other NATO members and to the NATO Secretary General from the councils that represent churches across the member states of NATO, namely, the Conference of European Churches, the National Council of Churches of Christ USA, the Canadian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches.

Our letter is a joint initiative to encourage joint action. We ask your Government to ensure that the forthcoming NATO summit commits the Alliance to a thorough reform of NATO's Strategic Concept. The 60th anniversary meeting is a welcome opportunity to begin the process of up-dating the Alliance's security doctrine. In particular, we encourage new initiatives that will end NATO's reliance on nuclear weapons and will engage with nuclear weapon states and other states outside of NATO in the serious pursuit of reciprocal disarmament.

Such collective action by NATO can be a major factor in revitalizing the nuclear non-proliferation regime at this critical time. It is also an important opportunity for the alliance to reinforce the vision of a world without nuclear weapons so compellingly put forward in recent months by eminent figures on the global security stage. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, four elder statesmen of Germany and former Foreign Secretaries of the United Kingdom are among those urging both a recovery of that vision and concrete steps to realize it.

NATO has the opportunity to fashion a new strategic doctrine that, on the one hand, takes full account of the threats posed by nuclear weapons, and, on the other hand, takes full advantage of the political momentum that is now finally available to support decisive inter-governmental action against the nuclear threat.

We encourage NATO to consign to history the notion that nuclear weapons "preserve peace" (as claimed in paragraph 46 of the current Strategic Concept), and instead to recognize the reality that "with every passing year [nuclear weapons] make our security more precarious" (President Gorbachev's assessment; echoed by other leaders).

We are convinced that NATO security in the years ahead will require not only long-delayed action on reciprocal disarmament but also concerted new action to resolve injustices, divisions and conflicts that affect both the Alliance and its neighbours. We believe security must be sought through constructive engagement with neighbours and that authentic security is found in affirming and enhancing human interdependence within God's one creation.

Inasmuch as all NATO members are signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), we urge the Alliance to promote the actual implementation of the backlog of disarmament and non-proliferation measures already elaborated through the NPT review process or awaiting negotiation as the current cycle culminates.

One very important measure of NATO's good faith in terms of NPT and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament will be its willingness to remove the 150-250 US tactical nuclear weapons still based in five member countries -- Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy and Turkey. In so doing NATO would boost international confidence in an NPT regime that has been seriously eroded since 2000. NATO would also honor the longstanding international call that all nuclear weapons be returned to the territories of the states that own them. Removal of these weapons would be a timely signal that NATO's old nuclear umbrella will not be extended and that there are real prospects for progress on collective security agreements in greater Europe.

The emerging vision of a world without nuclear weapons is giving citizens and churches in every NATO country cause for hope. We are requesting that NATO's security doctrine be realigned in a direction which establishes such hopes.

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia
General Secretary
World Council of Churches



The Venerable Colin Williams
General Secretary
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Rev. Michael Kinnamon, Ph.D.
General Secretary
National Council of the Churches of
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The Rev. Dr. Karen Hamilton
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The Canadian Council of Churches