

Statement by the Deutsche Physikalische Gesellschaft on nuclear disarmament

For more than 50 years, the German Physical Society has issued official declarations advocating for nuclear disarmament, guided by the responsibility that physicists bear for the existence of nuclear weapons in this world. Today, shortly before the opening of the May 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in New York, it appears necessary for us to underscore that the nuclear threat still exists.

Indeed, it is with a certain sense of relief we can state that since the mid-1980s, a large proportion of the more than 70,000 nuclear weapons has been reduced. Yet today's deployed nuclear weapons are still sufficient to extinguish modern civilization. In addition, nothing has changed about the fundamental inhumanity of nuclear armaments, because their use would affect military targets as well as civilian populations indiscriminately, and thus would be generally contrary to existing international humanitarian law, based on the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Beyond the global threat from deployed arsenals, the danger of nuclear weapons' proliferation is urgent. It is feared that a regional use of nuclear weapons could become more likely if more states or even terror groups obtain access to weapons-grade fissile material.

We cannot accept that nuclear weapons continue to be developed today. We perceive such actions as inconsistent with the ethical principles to which we as scientists are committed *. Twenty years after the end of the Cold War it is time to end and completely ban internationally the development of new nuclear weapons and the concurrent waste of valuable resources for their production.

We call upon the nuclear powers to meet their responsibility for complete implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. As early as 1970, these nations committed themselves in Article VI "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament."

We regard the recent commitment to a world without nuclear weapons by the presidents of the United States of America and the Russian Federation as a sign of hope. As first steps, the general renunciation of the first use of nuclear weapons should be undertaken together with the long overdue withdrawal of so-called tactical nuclear weapons from Germany and Europe.

Furthermore, we call upon the participating states of the Review Conference to take the historical opportunity to start negotiations regarding a Nuclear Weapons Convention for the prohibition and the gradual, verifiable, irreversible, and transparent elimination of all nuclear weapons before the year 2020.

* STATUTES OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PURE AND APPLIED PHYSICS

„... to help in the application of physics toward solving problems of concern to humanity.“

The German original is available at:

<http://www.dpg-physik.de/presse/pressemit/2010/dpg-pm-2010-12.html>

The German Physical Society, Deutsche Physikalische Gesellschaft e. V. (DPG), which dates back to 1845, is the world's longest-existing physical society and the largest in existence today, with more than 58,000 members. It serves as an open forum for physicists, and its status as a registered association forbids all commercial interests. Former presidents of the DPG include world-famous scientists such as Max Planck and Albert Einstein.
Website: www.dpg-physik.de