

Churches disappointed by weak commitments on nuclear disarmament

Written by Administrator

Friday, 28 May 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 September 2010 13:24

An alliance of nine UK Churches has expressed disappointment at the failure of nuclear weapons states to agree deadlines for actions on nuclear disarmament.

While the Churches welcomed progress made on discussions on the Middle East and a declaration by the UK on number of warheads, they were highly critical of the refusal of the nuclear powers to agree timeframes for future discussions at the conference in New York, which ended today.

Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Reading, said, "Nuclear weapons are a legacy of the cold war era and have little relevance to the threats that we face today. There is a growing recognition that having one set of rules for some nations, and a different set of rules for everyone else is unsustainable. Moving towards the elimination of nuclear weapons is not only morally right but the best possible guarantee for our nation's security."

The Churches' campaign, entitled Now is the Time, calls on the British Government to make a commitment to achieving a world free of nuclear weapons, building a safer future for all.

Revd David Gamble, President of Methodist Conference, said: "Consensus on non-proliferation is a major achievement, and one that reflects a growing understanding that nuclear weapons are a threat, not a guarantee, to our security. But in failing to agree a timeframe for further discussions, world leaders appear simply to be paying lip service to the concept of nuclear disarmament. We didn't expect the conference to produce a detailed plan for banning nuclear weapons, but we were looking for a commitment to move forward on the issue. The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament and a whole host of others, from NPT state parties, former ambassadors and NGOs have all produced versions of a road map that could take us to zero nuclear weapons.

The nuclear states stand alone in shying away from discussion of the detail."

Revd Pat Took, President Designate of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, said: "If the nuclear armed powers do not go further to demonstrate that they are prepared to relinquish nuclear weapons, then the existing international commitments on non-proliferation could unravel,

Churches disappointed by weak commitments on nuclear disarmament

Written by Administrator

Friday, 28 May 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Thursday, 16 September 2010 13:24

leaving us all in a much more dangerous and insecure situation. The call to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons comes not only from the majority of the world's governments but also overwhelmingly from people of all nations. I pray that we will raise our voices loud enough such that our governments have no choice but to be spurred into action."

The three church leaders were a part of a delegation that delivered a petition to the Prime Minister at Downing Street on Wednesday. The petition urged the UK to declare a 'no first use' policy and to support the process for negotiation of a new international agreement leading to the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

The alliance includes the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the United Reformed Church, the International Affairs Department of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Scotland and the Archbishop of the Church in Wales.