

## Opportunities for progress in France

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Members of Parliament,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I ask you to please accept the apologies of the French Senator Jacques Muller, a member of the Greens political party. For family reasons, he had to cancel at the last minute his participation to the conference

However, he would like to express his willingness to support the PNND actions, especially the successful actions of the French PNND section.

Independent consultant working on national security issues, I have the chance to work for the PNND since July, with the intention of promoting the ideas of this organization in both Assemblies of my country. I will explain to you

- 1 Opportunities for progress in France.

But before it is necessary to know

- 1 The situation of the nuclear arsenal of France and
- 2 The position of France on nuclear disarmament.

### **1/ OVERWIEF OF FRENCH NUCLEAR DETERRENCE**

According to various think tanks in the world, France is the third nuclear deterrence in the world after the United States and Russia, and the First in Europe after the U.S. nuclear arsenal of NATO and the British arsenal.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy delivered a speech on French nuclear policy on March and June 2008 that had major implications for the French arsenal and nuclear deterrence.

- He confirmed the French attachment to the policy of nuclear deterrence, describing it as the nation's life insurance policy, and a contribution to European security in the face of the looming threat of a nuclear-armed Iran.
- He described French "vital interests" as "the elements that constitute our identity and our existence as a nation- state, as well as the free exercise of our sovereignty." If such interests were attacked, then nuclear retaliation could be in order. Observers believe that this vague language refers to French interests but could also coincide with the interests of other countries, particularly Britain.
- Sarkozy reaffirmed France's close strategic ties with Britain: There can be no situation in which the vital interests of one of our nations could be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened."
- He also restated France's commitment to Article V of the NATO's charter, which states, "An armed attack against one or more [NATO members] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all," and to the belief that France's nuclear weapons, by their very existence, "are a key element in Europe's security."

The French nuclear arsenal has two components: the FOST - Force Océanique Stratégique (Strategic Oceanic force) and the FAS - Force Aérienne Stratégique (Strategic Air force). All elements of the warheads and their missiles will be renewed between 2008 and 2015. The forthcoming Defence Ministry publication, the "White Book" (le Livre Blanc, June 2008), should specify the elements of the French strategic forces.

➤ **The Strategic Oceanic Force (FOST)** comprises four submarines, though currently only three are operational (*Le Triomphant*, *Le Téméraire*, *Le Vigilant*) deploying M-45 missiles. The fourth, launched by President Sarkozy in March and named *Le Terrible*, will be operational in 2010, and will be the first to be equipped with the new M-51 missile (with a range of 6000 to 8000 km). The other three will receive M-51s over the following five years. Each submarine carries up to sixteen missiles, and each missile can be equipped with up to six nuclear warheads TN-75 (150 kt). President Chirac announced in January 2006 that "the number of nuclear warheads has been reduced on some missiles in our submarines". The M-51 will carry a new nuclear warhead (the TNO).

It also includes six *Rubis* class nuclear attack submarines, to protect the aircraft carrier, the strategic nuclear submarines and conduct research and intelligence. The *Rubis* class is slated for replacing the *Barracuda* class in 2017.

➤ **The Strategic Air Forces (FAS)** have existed since 1964. Last week, the Air Force celebrated the 45th anniversary of this force. France has three aircraft squadrons with nuclear roles: Two land-based squadrons and one sea-based flotilla assigned to the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*. These squadrons are composed by Mirage 2000N, Super-Etendar and the new fighter Rafale. Last week, the new missile ASMP-A has been declared operational. The ASMP-A, which has improved maneuverability, enhanced accuracy, and an increased range of 500 kilometers (310 miles), will be equipped with a new warhead designated the Tête Nucléaire Aeroportée (TNA). This warhead was completely created by the nuclear simulation program. It is the first time in the world that a warhead is being declared operational without a previous real nuclear test.

➤ **France continues its nuclear test simulation program (the same program as the one named National Ignition Facility in the US)**. It started in 1994 to realize, test, and assure the safety of its future nuclear warheads. The principal element of this program is the Laser Mégajoule (LMJ, a system with similarities to the US National Ignition Facility), based at Barp, near Bordeaux. It is expected to be operational in 2012. But there are other elements like supercomputer and small laser.

## **2/ FRANCE AND DISARMAMENT**

"Rather than making speeches and promises that are not translated into deeds, France acts » declared Sarkozy during its speech in Cherbourg on March 2008. Nobody can retort the opposite. In this speech, Sarkozy announced:

- A reduction by one third in the number of nuclear weapons missiles and air-craft of the French-airbone component. Following this reduction, the French total arsenal will include fewer than 300 nuclear warheads.
- He also presented an eight-point multilateral nuclear disarmament plan for discussion between the nuclear weapon states. like the universal ratification of CTBT, the opening negotiations for the treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons

Yes, undeniably France disarms. But at the same time, we observe a modernization of its two components, as I explained before.

In France, as many know, the military and civilian nuclear and even the question of nuclear disarmament is a taboo issue.

- By disarmament, I mean, disarmament measures that France should be taking towards the famous Nuclear Zero.
- By taboo I mean that there is a political consensus between the two major parties (the Socialist and right party). A very small minority of Parliamentarians undermine the nuclear deterrent)
- By taboo, I mean that the issue of Disarmament is not covered in the discussion of defense budget.

For example, in France there are no think tanks working on the question: What could be the next steps for disarmament in France? What will France do in 2010? Think-tanks prefer to study this question: " Is a world without nuclear weapons desirable for France? .And the answer is No. Why:

- We must wait until human nature changes
- The US and Russia still have large arsenals which prevent France from participating in a multilateral process of disarmament).
- France cannot proceed anymore to measures of reduction of its arsenal, because after, nuclear deterrence could no longer insure correctly his role

But all is not black. The speeches and actions of President Obama, the proposals of Prime Minister Brown to remove a submarine begin to be truly heard in France. The famous researcher, Bruno Tertrais of the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, specialist of French nuclear deterrence and favorable to the bomb, feared that if France stays in the background of this movement, it will become the black sheep of nuclear disarmament.

So France is at a crossroad in its politics, and the question is disarmed yes or no ? and the central issue concerns the question of disarmament.

### **3/ OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRESS IN FRANCE**

The PNND in France gathers a dozen members of parliament, mostly Green and communist. The Green Party is the most involved party on the issue of disarmament.

Since July, with the help of Senator Muller, I met many new French parliamentarians and notably, some belonging to the political party of Nicolas Sarkozy, as well as French parliamentarians of the European Parliament. Meetings have also been made with peace organizations and think tanks like the German Fund Marchall France to present the PNND.

The first meeting with MPs will take place at the end of November. It is expected to increase the number of parliamentarians belonging to the French PNND.

I know that peace movements prepare an appeal for nuclear disarmament in France. It should be signed by various politics, including former Prime Minister (Rocard) and Minister of Defense and scientific.

This is certainly a new opportunity to relaunch the debate. Moreover, the French Parliament now has new rules, authorizing Parliament to discuss for a week issues that are not proposed by the government.

According to me, Senator Muller will request to ask the question "what are the next steps in France in the process of nuclear disarmament"

## **CONCLUSION**

As you see, there is a lot of work in France. But it is impossible that France can not possibly remain outside the disarmament process launched by President Obama. And if the subject of disarmament doesn't appear welcome in France, it is not impossible that President Sarkozy reserves a surprise to the world, in the coming months, just to compete with his friend Obama!

Thank you for your attention,