



MEMO

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DATE: September 16, 2009

TO: Permanent Representatives to the United Nations

FROM: Jonathan Granoff, President

RE: **Declare October 27 International Nuclear Weapons-Free World Day**

Dear Ambassador,

We are seeking your support for the declaration of October 27th to be International Day for a Nuclear Weapons Free World. We are also sending a similar letter to the Foreign Minister.

From September 9-11, 2009 the 62nd Annual NGO/DPI Conference gathered in Mexico City. 1,300 civil society individuals and organizations from more than 55 countries heard inspiring presentations from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Mexican Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, and many other experts and leaders. Drawing on their insights and based on their own collective deliberations, they declared in the conference's Final Declaration, in the section relating to Nuclear Disarmament (Clause 7, adopted 11 Sept 09):

***Declare October 27 as the annual
International Day for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons.***

The Global Security Institute (GSI) strongly supports this Declaration and urges your office to do likewise. Civil society organizations are essential to public education and advocacy for a nuclear weapons-free world.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called nuclear disarmament "a global public good of the highest order." We agree. The moral legal and practical imperative of moving toward a nuclear weapons free world compels us to find focused avenues for public advocacy, education, and outreach. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support and advance a United Nations General Assembly resolution declaring the 27th day of October of each year as an International Day for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons.

This special day will become a landmark event during Disarmament Week and thus enhance public awareness and political focus.

There are those that are opposed in principle to creating new UN days. This kind of opposition is overcome if the Day is placed in the existing Disarmament Week, when it is appropriate to focus on the issue, which obviously warrants greater attention.

But these are not by any means the core reasons for choosing October 27th. During this period:

1. Parliaments and other legislative bodies the world over are in session and can be educated and lobbied.
2. Schools are in session and there can be many events organized with much wider outreach and long lasting impact.
3. Civil society, an essential dimension to public advocacy and education, is at its most available to engage.
4. The UN is working at full throttle, the debates of the First Committee are going on and the issue is ripe.
5. Celebrities and public moral intellectual leaders can be gathered to engage and thus upgrade media attention.
6. Churches, mosques, synagogues and religious institutions in this part of the world are active whereas in August they are nearly empty.

It has come to our attention that there are parties who want, for national reasons, to have August 29th as a similar day. The issue of nuclear disarmament must be universal in its framing and not be focused on any singular nation's actions, no matter how worthy of praise. Nuclear disarmament is a process and an obligation that must be undertaken by all nations, working together.

During the last week of August several logistical problems that cannot be overcome present themselves:

1. The UN community, particularly the NGO community and much of the high level diplomatic community, is nearly empty and the capacity to gather civil society activity for any events is simply impossible. It is the peak time for vacations here and directly before the long Labor Day weekend.
2. Schools and universities in the part of the world in which the UN sits, and most other countries the world over, are not in session; thus the educational outreach aspect will be impaired. For the few that could be in session any student preparatory work would be impossible because of the normal vacation schedule.
3. In much of the world, legislative bodies are in recess; thus the capacity of national resolutions and focus will be diminished.
4. Celebrities who could amplify the disarmament message are entirely unavailable.
5. Public intellectual and moral figures such as the Nobel Peace Laureates would also not be available.

6. Because of numbers 4 and 5 above, the mass media will ignore whatever minor event might be created and has diminished capacity this time of the year.

If the day is chosen because of intense political support on the part of a particular country or a small group of countries not sensitive to the dynamics of international civil society advocacy and education, and particularly if that day be in August, it would not be of value for the disarmament movement. In fact, it would open the effort up to criticism that the effort was ill-conceived, naive, and weak. The choice of the date would reinforce a tragically wrong impression the events would be without any significant impact, and would injure the cause that the proposing country was seeking to advance.

For these reasons I can assure you that nearly all major civil society nuclear disarmament educational and advocacy organizations would strongly object to the prospect of advancing any day in August over October 27 for the International Day for a Nuclear Weapons Free World. For these reasons, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to support the commitment of international civil society which has enthusiastically chosen October 27th as the best date for public education and advocacy. This is an issue that exceeds national interest and must be dedicated to ensuring a future for our children, the children of not just one country but of the entire world.

Nuclear disarmament is a necessary ideal and its time has come. Let us work together to make this ideal into a reality. Thank you for considering these ideas.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Granoff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jonathan Granoff
President
Global Security Institute