Call to Conscience: A Ban on Nuclear Weapons

The founding members of the *Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons* Cooperation Circle consist of a dynamic group of people from around the world:

**Dr. Sidney Drell**, Professor of Theoretical Physics (Emeritus) at SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory; Senior Fellow at Stanford's Hoover Institution

**Roger Eaton**, Technology and Communications Coordinator for URI-North America

**Ambassador James E. Goodby**, former Ambassador to Finland; served as Vice Chairman of the U.S. Delegation to the Strategic Nuclear Arms Negotiations with the U.S.S.R. Bipartisan Security Group Expert

**Jonathan Granoff**, President, Global Security Institute

**Mussie Hailu** (Ethiopia), URI Regional Director for Africa and Representative at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Chair of the Interfaith Peace-building Initiative CC in Addis Ababa

**Professor David T. Ives**, International Steering Committee member, Middle Powers Initiative; Executive Director of the Albert Schweitzer Institute, Quinnipiac University, Connecticut

**Dr. Abraham Karickam** (India), URI South Zone Coordinator for India; former Director of Comparative Literature at the Mar Thoma College in Kerala, India

**The Honorable Secretary George P. Shultz**, former Secretary of State and Chairman of the President's Economic Policy Advisory Board under President Ronald Reagan

**Rev. Tyler Wigg Stevenson**, Board of Directors, Global Security Institute; Founder and Director, Two Futures Projects

**The Rt. Rev. William E. Swing**, President and Founder, United Religions Initiative; Retired Episcopal Bishop of California

**Monica Willard**, URI NGO Representative at the United Nations

**Sam Ruben**, Executive Assistant, URI Global

The United Religions Initiative (URI) is composed of citizens from all over the world committed to working together for peace. We are a Cooperation Circle, and as part of URI, we share an appreciation for the rich diversity of religions and spiritual traditions through which the one family of humanity finds so many ways of pursuing reverence for life, love of one’s fellow beings, and humility and gratitude for the gift of creation.
We believe that the indiscriminate, destructive effects of nuclear weapons render them incompatible with civilized values and international humanitarian law. Our goal is to achieve the universal, legally enforceable, nondiscriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons.

Only by building bridges of cooperation and trust amongst peoples can we effectively address crushing poverty and adequately organize ourselves to protect the global commons, such as the oceans, the climate, and the rainforests – the living systems upon which civilization depends. A security system with nuclear haves and have-nots is incompatible with the achievement of this necessary global cooperation.

Now, with the spread of nuclear technology, the risks increase every day. Nuclear weapons are more of a hazard to our well-being than any problem they seek to address.

The use of a nuclear weapon against any state is inhumane and useless against terrorists. We cannot hold life sacred and at the same time seek security by placing its entirety at risk. We cannot countenance the continued threat to the well-being of our own communities these devices pose nor do we want to threaten the lives of millions of others with such devastation.

In the course of the nuclear age, many justified such dangers because they believed that the possession and threat of nuclear weapons could deter the greater evil of their actual use in nuclear war. The argument that by threatening to use nuclear weapons a state can deter another state from using theirs, thereby enhancing stability for all, might have been sensible during the Cold War when the USSR and the USA were existential enemies. With this situation long past, it is unacceptably risky to permit the continuation of policies which are premised on ensuring that the threat to use nuclear weapons is credible. To accept this condition as part of daily life is to accept a morally corrupt pursuit of peace based on terror.

It is folly to believe that the thin line between the posture of credible deterrence and actual use will never be violated through mechanical or human error. Mere mortals are simply not that perfect nor are our creations. Nuclear weapons and mistakes cannot coexist. It is irrational to believe that they will not be used by accident, design or madness.

All 189 parties to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty have made an unequivocal undertaking to obtain the elimination of nuclear weapons, as has been unanimously
advised by the International Court of Justice. The awakened conscience of humanity demands nothing less.

The responsibility for banning nuclear weapons does not lie solely with governments of nuclear weapons states and their citizens. It is a responsibility shared by every sovereign state and each individual. People of religion and spiritual expressions must inspire moral and ethical action.

Therefore, we pledge to:

- Work together in our homes, communities, temples, mosques, churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship, transcending differences of race, religion, and nationality, to eliminate this unacceptable, universal threat.
- Include the moral imperative of the abolition of nuclear weapons in our studies and teachings, and encourage families, friends, and congregations and institutions to do likewise.

The risk will not disappear with inattention. Silence under current circumstances is complicity. Our faith requires us to speak out. Our sense of awe for the mystery that has given us life, and our love for one another will inspire our actions. We will raise our voices for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Please join us in this chorus of conscience. Now is the time for action.

Annex:
As we go forward we will advance specific policies which can make us all safer and pave the road to nuclear weapons abolition. These include:
(1) Obtaining entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty banning further weapons explosive tests;
(2) Negotiating a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty banning the production of more nuclear weapons grade fissile materials;
(3) Making deep cuts in existing arsenals that are irreversible and verifiable;
(4) Codifying legally binding negative security assurances ensuring countries without nuclear weapons that they will not be threatened any longer;
(5) Pledging of no first use by states with nuclear weapons;
(6) De-alerting nuclear weapons from launch-on-warning status;
(7) Dramatically strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency capacity to safeguard nuclear facilities and make sure they are not diverting materials for weapons;
(8) Achieving consensus that the use of a nuclear weapon against a civilian population, such as a city, would be a crime against humanity;
(9) Commencing preparations leading to the negotiation of a treaty or framework of legal instruments that universally, legally and verifiably ban nuclear weapons.