



P U B L I C S T A T E M E N T

Time to reconsider the role of
nuclear weapons in
NATO's Strategic Concept 2010

Brussels, 23 July 2010

"Abolishing nuclear weapons will be a long and complicated process that will require profound changes in the world and in people's minds. It would be an error to believe that a world free of nuclear weapons can simply be the world as we know it now, minus nuclear weapons. However, as churches we believe that the vision of a better world can help transform today's reality."

The Church and Society Commission of CEC, March 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

For more than a year, ecumenical organisations with Member Churches in all Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have been encouraging NATO to use the opportunity of the revision of its Strategic Concept to change its nuclear posture, reinforcing the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.¹ In all statements NATO was specifically asked to withdraw the remaining ca. 200 U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from five NATO countries in Europe² and to end its policy of nuclear sharing. Russia was urged to address its own large arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons.

During the run-up to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in May 2010 in New York, the Church and Society Commission (CSC) of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)³ published a statement proposing how the European Union could show greater European responsibility for nuclear disarmament.⁴ With this new statement for NATO, informed by an expert meeting organised in Brussels on 8-9 June 2010 by CSC in co-operation with the World Council of Churches and Dutch IKV Pax Christi⁵, CSC wants to further contribute to the reflection on NATO's nuclear policy as the Alliance is preparing its new Strategic Concept to be adopted at the Lisbon Summit on 19-20 November.

¹ Prior to NATO's 60th Anniversary Summit on 3-4 April 2009, the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and the Canadian Council of Churches sent a joint letter to NATO and its Member States urging the Alliance to take new initiatives to this purpose. <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/messages-and-letters/30-03-09-letter-to-nato.html> .

The General Assembly of CEC in Lyon in July 2009 strongly supported the call for a world free of nuclear weapons as advocated by President Obama.

http://assembly.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/asse/Assembly/Documents/Official_documents/GEN_PUB_5_EN_NuclearWeapons_Final.pdf2.

In October 2009, the four organizations reiterated their call for NATO, and this time also the European Union and Russia, to reinforce the political dynamic towards global zero.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/general-secretary/wider-ecumenical-movement-incl-wcc/letter-to-nato-eu-usa-and-russia-on-nuclear-disarmament.html>.

² These are Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

³ CEC is an ecumenical fellowship of 124 Anglican, Old-Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches from all over Europe. It also has 40 associated organisations. CSC of CEC links the membership with the European Union's institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the UN (on European matters).

⁴The CSC statement for the EU policy to the 2010 NPT Review Conference:

http://csc.ceceurope.org/fileadmin/filer/csc/Nuclear_Disarmament/Final_CSC_of_CEC_Statement_on_the_EU_Policy_to_the_NPT_RevCon_2010.pdf. The Review Conference in New York was attended by a considerable number of church delegates.

⁵ IKV Pax Christi is the joint peace organization of the ecumenical Dutch Interchurch Peace Council (IKV) and Pax Christi Netherlands.

In this statement, after summarizing the churches' debate on nuclear weapons, we will argue that NATO must overcome Cold War logic in addressing today's security challenges. We will offer five principles for a new nuclear policy which would allow the Alliance to put in practise its newly proclaimed commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation⁶ and to use its resources more effectively in order to foster peace and security. As in previous statements, the focus of our specific proposals will be on tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, while trying to put this issue in the broader context of Europe's security needs. We appeal to NATO to rethink 'deterrence' and security cooperation in Europe as two parts of the same coin. We welcome the policy of openness that NATO has practised in the revision process and hope that the Alliance will continue its dialogue with civil society and churches.

Churches and nuclear disarmament

As expectations rise for a world without nuclear weapons, existing strategic doctrines and military programs of nuclear deterrence need to be critically examined. As long as nuclear weapons exist, the requirements of maintaining a credible deterrence and those of reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons must become part of one and the same policy. Therefore, in our March 2010 statement to the EU we stressed that as churches we believe that hope must be transformed into reality, without fostering illusions. The road to 'zero' will not be easy. Although after the end of the Cold War the number of nuclear weapons has been reduced from ca. 70,000 in 1986 to ca. 23,000 in 2010, this amount is still beyond any comprehension and logic – and a continuing source of unacceptable danger. Today, the world worries about further proliferation of nuclear weapons and their potential use in regional conflicts and in terrorist attacks. At the same time, nuclear weapon states and their allies continue to regard nuclear deterrence as the cornerstone of their security. This posture persists despite the fact that nuclear history demonstrates that possession of nuclear weapons cannot be separated from their further proliferation.

The agreement among the churches that nuclear arms must never be used again unites the two main traditions in the churches' thinking on war and peace: pacifism and the 'just war' tradition. In the pacifist tradition this unconditional moral rejection is evident. In the 'just war' tradition it is based on the criteria of 'proportionality' (the military benefits of using nuclear weapons can never outweigh the evil done) and 'discrimination' (the unavoidability of indiscriminate killing in nuclear war).

Not all churches which stand in the 'just war' tradition share the same moral judgment of *possessing* nuclear weapons. However, there is a consensus that one should strive for a world without the threat of nuclear weapons. As we concluded in our March 2010 statement to the EU, it is contradictory to our deepest beliefs and convictions that security should rely on a readiness to destroy the world which God has entrusted to humankind. To work for a world free of nuclear weapons is to work towards a respect of human dignity and the integrity of creation.

2. NATO IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Time to overcome Cold War logic

Officially, the Cold War ended two decades ago with the historical political changes wrought by the citizens of Soviet-dominated countries in 1989, the changes in the Soviet Union itself, the OSCE 'Charter of Paris for a New Europe' of 1990, and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in 1991. And indeed, today many former communist countries are democracies, the Cold War division of Europe is over, and the threat of a nuclear confrontation between the two superpowers seems something of a distant past.

However, relics of the Cold War and its logic stand in the way of adjusting to the new reality. Together, the U.S. and Russia possess 90% of the ca. 23,000 nuclear weapons in the world. The two countries cooperate in the management of existing nuclear stockpiles. The U.S. buys Russian military nuclear materials for civilian use in U.S. nuclear power plants. Yet, they are at great pains to agree even modest reductions in their strategic arsenals, including the necessary counting rules

⁶ These goals were included in the North Atlantic Council's *Declaration on Alliance Security* given in Strasbourg/Kehl on 4 April 2009.

and verification mechanisms. They seem to live in two different realities: a post-Cold War world of cooperation and a world still dominated by the Cold War logic of competition and enmity.

Europe is part of this problem. In addition to French and British nuclear weapons, five non-nuclear countries continue to host some 200 U.S. tactical nuclear weapons (TNW⁷) on their territory as a remnant of NATO's Cold War policy of 'nuclear sharing'. Today, NATO sees their role as 'political' but it has difficulty explaining how weapons that in NATO's deterrence strategy have virtually no *military* function⁸ left can still *politically* deter an (unidentified) adversary. No longer aimed at external military threats, their political role addresses *internal* NATO matters such as symbolizing the U.S. commitment to the security of its European allies and the allies' desire to participate in NATO's nuclear planning.

Russia, on its side, keeps a huge arsenal of several thousand TNW, arguing that this is a compensation for an imbalance with NATO in conventional forces. Most of these TNW are old and raise doubts about safety.

Moreover, in many new Member States of NATO memories of their own Cold War experiences are vivid and still hurting. Therefore, the challenge for NATO's new Strategic Concept is twofold. It must recognize the continued repercussions of Europe's Cold War history. Yet it must also move beyond the current pattern of addressing threats, 'new' or 'old', with Cold War concepts of deterrence that are obsolete. As to NATO's nuclear policy, rethinking NATO's nuclear posture for the future cannot be hostage to the Cold War logic of the past.

Time to move from 'detente' to co-operation

In 1967, NATO's famous Harmel Report restored consensus in a NATO that had been severely divided about its (and Europe's) future, by putting the traditional task of defence ('military security', 'to deter aggression') and the new challenge of 'detente' on equal footing. Although at the time controversial, the Harmel Report is now regarded as a major achievement of NATO. The 'detente' approach paved the way for the German 'Ostpolitik' that led to 'normalization' of relations between West and East Germany, to the treaties of 1970-1972, and to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. However, at the same time NATO modernised its military tasks of 'deterrence' and 'defence' by the doctrine of 'flexible response'⁹, which remained central to NATO's strategy until 1991.

Today's frequent references to the Harmel Report as NATO's paradigm prevent the Alliance from developing a new post Cold War model. Europe is no longer defined by the antagonism between two blocks. NATO is no longer faced by the Cold War challenge of combining two seemingly contradicting tasks, as was the case with 'defence' and 'detente' in the 1960s. Now NATO's responsibility of territorial defence in the Euro-Atlantic region and providing security for the citizens in its Member States is best served by investing in cooperation and confidence building in Europe and internationally. NATO faces the task of redefining 'extended deterrence'. In a new model for NATO, deterrence and security cooperation in Europe are no longer two different tracks but parts of the same coin.

Time for NATO to become "a dynamic and vigorous organisation"?

After the end of the Cold War, the Strategic Concept of 1991 drastically changed NATO's nuclear posture. Furthermore, the unilateral Presidential Nuclear Initiatives of 1991 and 1992 by Presidents

⁷ TNW, now often called 'sub-strategic', were originally also called 'battlefield' or 'theatre' nuclear weapons. Europe was the battlefield and the theatre. Today, the distinction between 'strategic' and 'tactical' can be seen as a Cold War heritage by itself, that may no longer be relevant in future arms control processes.

⁸ The alert status of TNW has been reduced to months. The range of NATO's aircraft with nuclear strike roles is limited. Officials acknowledge that only under extremely remote circumstances could they still perform a military task.

⁹ 'Flexible response' replaced 'massive retaliation', which was no longer considered credible as deterring a conventional attack by the Warsaw Pact. 'Flexible response' wanted to have many more options available, both conventional and nuclear, at all levels of escalation. In the 'flexible response' debate especially the Federal Republic of Germany was concerned about nuclear war being limited to Europe, as this would mean, first of all, Germany. Another concern highlighted in the discussion was about the US nuclear guarantee; an issue which continues to be brought up any time NATO's nuclear policy is discussed.

Bush, Gorbachev and Yeltsin reduced TNW in Europe by 90%, on the side of the U.S., and by 75% by Russia. However, since then NATO has not revisited its nuclear policy¹⁰ and little seems to be expected from its new Strategic Concept of 2010.

NATO's 'Group of Experts', established in 2009, provided key input for the new Strategic Concept with its report of 17 May 2010. The report recognized that "*global leaders – including many from Allied nations – have expressed a desire to move toward a world free from the threat posed by nuclear arms*". However, instead of making recommendations toward this aim, it suggested further "*in-depth consultations on the future role of nuclear weapons in its (NATO's) deterrence strategy*", thereby implicitly acknowledging that NATO is divided on this issue. In April, when the discussion on NATO's nuclear policy was launched at the informal foreign ministers meeting in Tallinn¹¹, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton presented five principles that were more an effort to define an existing consensus than to contribute to a new debate.¹²

If the 2010 Strategic Concept stresses continuity for the next 10 years, NATO's nuclear policy would remain unchanged for three decades. This would totally contradict NATO's claim in the Harmel Report of 1967 of being "*a dynamic and vigorous organization which is constantly adapting itself to changing conditions.*" NATO needs a new nuclear policy, especially with regard to its TNW.

3. ADOPTING A 21ST CENTURY NUCLEAR POLICY

As noted above, the churches across the countries of NATO would like to see the total elimination of nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future, and for NATO to make a clear commitment to work towards the global zero. The churches maintain that nuclear weapons must no longer be allowed to serve as a claim to global power. For the churches the continued reliance on nuclear weapons is a fundamental moral problem, as it implies that peace and security require the readiness for mass destruction. These weapons, not only their use but their whole life cycle, also raise serious environmental concerns. In addition, many church statements question the compatibility of NATO's nuclear sharing arrangements with the spirit if not the letter of the NPT.

At the same time, whereas the churches have no illusions that NATO would adopt a deterrence posture without a nuclear component in the near future, we believe that the role of its ca. 200 TNW can be ended. Given that all policy changes within NATO require consensus, we want this paper to offer ideas for concrete and feasible next steps to take the process toward a world free of nuclear weapons forward. We will first formulate some principles for NATO's nuclear policy at large, then enter into the debate about possible scenarios for dealing with NATO's remaining TNW. We are aware that this discussion is likely to be carried on in more detail in 2011.¹³

Principles of a new nuclear policy for NATO

- 1) NATO states its commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons and contributes to global moves towards reducing nuclear threats on the road to zero.**

¹⁰ In the revision of the Strategic Concept in 1999 little was changed in terms of nuclear policy.

¹¹ We welcome the initiative taken by the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg and Norway to have NATO's nuclear policy put on the agenda of the Tallinn meeting.

¹² The 'Clinton Principles', only made available to the media as excerpts from the speech by Secretary Clinton, are:

- 1) We should recognize that as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.
- 2) As a nuclear alliance, sharing nuclear risks and responsibilities widely is fundamental.
- 3) Our broad aim is to continue to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons. Of course, we recognize that in the years since the Cold War ended, NATO has already dramatically reduced its reliance on nuclear weapons
- 4) Allies must broaden deterrence against the range of 21st century threats, including by pursuing territorial missile defence, conducting Article 5 training and exercises, and drafting additional contingency plans to counter new threats to the Alliance.
- 5) In any future reductions, our aim should be to seek Russian agreement to increase transparency on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, relocate these weapons away from the territory of NATO members, and include non-strategic nuclear weapons in the next round of US – Russian arms control discussions alongside strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons.

¹³ The Nuclear Planning Group meeting of the ministers of defence in Brussels on 10-11 June briefly discussed the idea of a NATO Nuclear Posture Review next year, after the new Strategic Concept has been decided.

If it is assumed that, as long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO's deterrence policy will continue to have a nuclear component, then NATO is also challenged to make a clear commitment in its new Strategic Concept to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

2) NATO reduces its dependency on nuclear deterrence and instead adopts an approach where security is based less on nuclear deterrence and more on co-operation.

NATO should further reduce its dependency on nuclear deterrence and have its security needs increasingly addressed by non-nuclear means. This includes, most importantly, a hard-nosed cooperation, even with potential adversaries, in order to eventually escape deterrent relationships. In this strategy, efforts to build greater cooperation – based upon shared interests – would explicitly complement (and be part of) protection and security assurances.

3) Ending nuclear sharing is part of a wider reform in which NATO makes itself more efficient in addressing today's security needs

NATO should rethink the division of labour among its Member States in order to best match its security needs with available resources. It should acknowledge that nuclear sharing is a very expensive way to deal with internal concerns about the U.S. commitment to the security of its allies and the wish of NATO allies to take part in nuclear planning. These needs can be addressed in new ways.¹⁴

The withdrawal of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons from Europe and ending nuclear sharing would be a move which would allow NATO and the five current hosting countries to redirect scarce resources to undertakings which contribute positively to enhancing peace and security.

4) The sole purpose of NATO's nuclear deterrence policy is to deter a nuclear attack by other countries

NATO should reduce the role of its nuclear weapons and in the Strategic Concept of 2010 announce that the only purpose of NATO's deterrence policy is to deter the use of nuclear weapons against NATO Member States.¹⁵ This would be an important first move to be followed by the adoption of a no 'first use policy'.

5) By taking its own steps in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation NATO creates the conditions for countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

NATO has a lot to offer for international arms control. The ending of nuclear sharing policies would improve NATO's credibility by dispelling any criticism concerning the compatibility of the nuclear sharing arrangements with Art. I and II of the NPT. It would send a strong signal in the support of the NPT regime and thereby enable the development of peaceful and friendly international relations (Art. 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty). The responsibility for NATO to act in this area derives, not least, from the fact that of the world's 14 states with nuclear weapons on their soil, 8 are NATO Member States.

¹⁴ The request for new security assurances by some Member States could be met by a clear new signal from the United States that it does take responsibility for the security of its European allies. The assurances could, for instance, take a form of a 'Washington Declaration' endorsing the guarantees provided by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. The issue of participation in nuclear planning would be solved if the Alliance agreed on a comprehensive approach with regard to risks and responsibilities and the division of labour: If it was willing to share the responsibility for and risks related to, all of the tasks and policies it takes on board (including nuclear policy). If it practiced a division of labour in the most feasible and cost-effective way as a matter of mutual benefit. And if it agreed that non-participation in a specific area of work does not exclude from policy planning or decision-taking in that area.

¹⁵ Whereas the U.S. TNW in Europe no longer have this deterrence value, it is provided by the strategic US and UK nuclear weapons assigned to NATO.

Three scenarios to change or end nuclear sharing

Currently, various ways are being discussed in which NATO could deal with its remaining U.S. tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Theoretically, the two extreme positions are to retain the status quo and to end NATO's nuclear deterrence posture altogether. Both are unlikely.

Retaining the status quo would mean that NATO would fail to put into practice its newly proclaimed commitment to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. It would ignore the opinion of Germany and other Member States about TNW being relics of the Cold War that need to be withdrawn. It would leave the issue of modernization of aging dual capable aircraft (DCA) unresolved. It would not solve safety concerns about the storage sites except perhaps by very costly measures. It would in no way address the criticism as to the (non-) compliance with the NPT. NATO would remain divided. At the other end of the continuum, the prospect of ending all nuclear elements in 'extended deterrence' is remote, as there is consensus among the Alliance about the U.S. nuclear guarantee being the pinnacle of NATO's deterrence strategy.

In the following paragraphs we will contribute to this discussion by looking at three other scenarios as to the future of NATO's TNW.¹⁶ We will particularly look at the disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation effects of the following scenarios.

1. *All bombs relocated in the United States – other nuclear sharing arrangements remain as before*

In the first scenario, the U.S. TNW are withdrawn from Europe but other nuclear sharing arrangements remain. The hosting countries provide the infrastructure, related personnel and their training, and in several countries the dual capable aircraft and pilots. The very limited military role of these weapons, maintenance of the related infrastructure and the theoretical option of returning them would counter most arguments criticizing a decrease in the nuclear deterrence provided by the U.S. to its European NATO allies.

To some extent this change could be considered a non-proliferation measure as it would somewhat diminish doubts about non-compliance with the NPT. Secondly, the storage of these nuclear weapons in the United States would address heightened safety demands in a more cost-efficient way. However, this kind of change could not be marked as a long term disarmament step. Nor would it allow for major financial savings. It would retain the Cold War logic of NATO's nuclear policy and it would not encourage other countries to follow suit with non-proliferation measures or to proceed with nuclear disarmament.¹⁷

2. *All bombs relocated in the United States – only the U.S. provides dual capable aircraft (DCA)*

Also in this second scenario all remaining U.S. TNW are withdrawn from Europe, but only the U.S. provides DCA for nuclear missions with TNW. Some nuclear sharing arrangements remain including some infrastructure and its related personnel and training. The costs of infrastructure would be lower than in the first scenario. Moreover, this arrangement would spare the nuclear sharing countries from the replacement of their aging DCA and thus allow substantial savings.

This measure would allow NATO to demonstrate support for the NPT regime, dispelling more of the criticism than in the first scenario concerning nuclear sharing and its compatibility with the NPT. Yet again, this change would not amount to a major disarmament step as TNW would keep their role in NATO's new extended deterrence concept. Most probably it would not serve as an incentive for other countries to proceed with disarmament and non-proliferation measures.

¹⁶ The option of reducing numbers only while leaving nuclear sharing as it is now is too close to the status quo to merit discussion here. We also leave out the option of simply concentrating nuclear weapons to fewer locations, most likely Italy and/or Turkey, as too problematic.

¹⁷ We are aware that there may not be a direct relation between the steps NATO could make in abolishing its TNW and the ambitions of some countries to acquire nuclear weapons. Still, non action on the side of NATO with regard to nuclear disarmament, in the current political momentum toward zero, is quite likely going to weaken the credibility of NATO non-proliferation measures and of non-proliferation policy in general.

3. *The end of nuclear sharing arrangements in NATO and the eliminations of its TNW*

In the third scenario, nuclear sharing comes to an end. All remaining U.S. TNW are withdrawn from Europe without the option of returning these weapons. The current hosting countries no longer provide infrastructure or related arrangements.

This would constitute a non-proliferation measure which would end all doubts concerning art. I and II of the NPT. It would reduce the number of countries in the world with nuclear weapons on their soil from 14 to 9. It would count as a real disarmament measure and could add pressure on other countries to take such steps. All in all, NATO would send a strong signal in the support of the NPT regime and thereby for the development of peaceful and friendly international relations (Art. 2 of the North Atlantic Treaty). Moreover, it would allow for more effective use of money to address today's, rather than yesterday's needs.

4. Addressing Russian TNW

Although the issue of the future of NATO's TNW is primarily a problem within NATO itself, consensus in NATO would be helped if Russia was willing to address its own vast arsenal of TNW. Formally, all three scenarios for NATO would meet Russia's condition that TNW can only be discussed when the U.S. no longer deploys nuclear weapons outside its own territory. However, the third scenario would put the onus on Russia most clearly.

In the discussions with Russia, for which the NATO-Russia Council offers an appropriate arena, the first priority would be the reduction of nuclear threat by increasing transparency and relocating Russian sub-strategic weapons away from the territories close to NATO members. Considering the Russian view that its TNW are a compensation for its conventional military weakness compared to NATO and the U.S., reducing and eventually eliminating Russian TNW is more likely in the broader context of re-invigorated CFE talks and agreements about missile defence.

We consider it vital that Russia be engaged in confidence-building and transparency measures that build upon the common interest in moving towards a more peaceful Europe and a world free of nuclear weapons, a goal towards which Russia has also committed itself. We believe that it is in Russia's interest to build good relations with the former Warsaw Pact countries. We believe that NATO and Russia share the concern over the safety of nuclear arsenals and that it is also in Russia's own interest that TNW be moved to more central locations and eventually eliminated.

Whereas we consider it crucial to maintain an active dialogue with Russia, and work towards a new security concept based on co-operation, we believe that the withdrawal of U.S. TNW from Europe should not be made dependent of an agreement with Russia.

5. Reconciliation in Europe

It is not new in Europe's history that reconciliation is both a political and a moral challenge. This is certainly the case after a century with two world wars and a prolonged Cold War. Moving away from the dependency on nuclear weapons, reducing the nuclear threat, and eventually reaching the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons can only be part of a broad and long process that will entail much more than a focus on one category of weapons. Such a focus may even be distracting if it is not embedded in this broader process. As churches we believe that the challenges of peace, reconciliation and justice are also challenges for NATO as a secular organization. We believe that these challenges also involve the countries in Europe that are not part of NATO. We are willing to contribute to this broader process of building peace.

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