

Basic Information

Title	Now is the Time – Advocating progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons
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Status of Paper	Final
Resolution/s	The Methodist Conference a) receives the Report <i>Now is the Time – Advocating progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons</i> ; b) recalling previous Methodist Conference statements on non-proliferation and disarmament, adopts the <i>Now is the Time</i> petition statement in paragraph 12 of the Report as a position of the Methodist Church and c) directs the Connexional Team to make appropriate representations to the UK government and European Parliament in conjunction with UK and European partner Churches.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To encourage all governments to commit to the path to general and complete nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.
Main Points	1. 2010 offers an important opportunity to make progress on non-proliferation and disarmament as governments enter an intense period of negotiation.
	2. UK churches have come together to advocate for all governments to map out the path to 'global zero'.
	3. Church members are invited to sign the petition to be presented to Her Majesty's Government later this year.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	2006 Conference Resolution 34.4: <i>The Conference opposes replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system and urges the UK Government to take leadership in disarmament negotiations in order to bring about the intention of the Non-Proliferation Treaty for the elimination of all nuclear weapons.</i>

Background

1. 2010 has offered an opportunity in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament unparalleled in the past decade. The Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference is held every five years and met in New York in May 2010. NATO is currently conducting a strategic concept review which will assess the nature and future role of nuclear weapons within overall defence posture.
2. The commitment of the United States and Russia to reduce substantially the stockpiles of warheads and missiles, through the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) follow-on agreement, provides encouragement that after a decade of stagnation international agreement on wider disarmament and non-proliferation measures might be achieved this year.
3. There is a realistic possibility that the nine states that have not yet ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty could be persuaded to do so, enabling the Treaty to enter into force.
4. There is substantial political support for a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty to control the manufacture of bomb-grade material and place all such material under international control.
5. Nuclear technology and material is likely to proliferate further over the coming years presenting significant security risks. Ultimately, our security depends on further progress across the three pillars of the NPT: 'disarmament', 'non-proliferation' and 'peaceful use of nuclear technology'.
6. Agreement on a proposed new treaty to commit all states to general and complete disarmament appears still to be some way off. However there is now a serious policy debate on the possible stages to "global zero" to which the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament has made an important contribution with the publication of the report *Eliminating Nuclear Threats* in December 2009¹.

The call from Churches

7. The Churches' campaign therefore argues that the many governments (including some nuclear armed powers) that have stated their commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons should each make clear their analysis of the preconditions that might allow negotiation of a new legally binding verifiable and universal agreement to bring about general and complete disarmament and work strenuously to achieve this objective in the earliest possible course.
8. The World Council of Churches Central Committee adopted a "Statement of Hope in a Year of Opportunity" on 1 September 2009² and issued a letter to world leaders on 28 October 2009.
9. On 12 March 2010 the Conference of European Churches issued a statement and published recommendations for the Common EU Position at the NPT Review Conference³.
10. In 2006 the Methodist Conference adopted resolution 34.4: "The Conference opposes replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system and urges the UK Government to take leadership in disarmament negotiations in order to bring about the intention of the Non-Proliferation Treaty for the elimination of all nuclear weapons."

¹ www.icnnd.org

² <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2009/reports-and-documents/report-on-public-issues/statement-of-hope-in-a-year-of-opportunity-seeking-a-nuclear-weapon-free-world.html>

³ <http://csc.ceurope.org/issues/nuclear-disarmament/>

11. In response nine UK denominations are collaborating in an advocacy initiative coordinated by the Joint Public Issues Team titled *Now is the Time*⁴. This initiative is engaging with Parliamentarians, political parties, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Cabinet Office. It has received the endorsement of Baroness Williams, the PM's adviser on nuclear disarmament, and other high profile figures. The initiative invites people to write to their MPs and sign the petition below.

12. *Now is the Time* petition statement: -

We believe that the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction is immoral.

We acknowledge the spread and increasing accessibility of nuclear technology and the threat that this poses to our security. We are encouraged by the prospect of significant reductions in US and Russian nuclear arsenals.

We call on nuclear weapons states to refrain from updating their nuclear arsenals and remind them of their "unequivocal undertaking" to meet their obligations to eliminate all nuclear weapons under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

We owe it to our children and our grandchildren to seize the opportunity to put in place a new legally binding verifiable and universal agreement to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

Now is the time.

***RESOLUTION

13/1. The Conference

- a) received the Report *Now is the Time – Advocating progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons*;
- b) recalling previous Methodist Conference statements on non-proliferation and disarmament, adopted the *Now is the Time* petition statement in paragraph 12 of the Report as the position of the Methodist Church; and
- c) directed the Connexional Team to make appropriate representations to the UK government and European Parliament in conjunction with UK and European partner Churches.

⁴ www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk