

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

August 17, 2007

Mr. Frank-Walter Steinmeier
Foreign Minister
Auswärtiges Amt
Werderscher Markt 1
10117 Berlin
Germany

Dear Mr. Steinmeier:

We urge the Nuclear Suppliers Group to reject the proposed transfer of nuclear materials and dual-use nuclear technologies from the United States to India, as spelled out between those two countries in the text of an agreement dated August 1, 2007.

We particularly urge the government of Germany, as a responsible member of the NSG, to take a close look at the ways in which this agreement conflicts with the NSG's guidelines and undermines the goal of nuclear non-proliferation that is the Group's sole reason for existence.

As physicians who understand that the use, testing, production, transportation, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons constitute a grave danger to human life and health and that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is a grave danger to global security, we support full compliance with the disarmament and non-proliferation provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Moreover, we advocate the global prohibition of nuclear weapons through a Nuclear Weapons Convention that would fulfill the promise of the NPT. We believe that the "Section 123" agreement between the United States and India runs counter to these objectives and increases the danger that proliferation will increase not only in South Asia but also in other regions of the world.

As you know, the NSG was established in direct response to India's 1974 nuclear test, in order to prevent the transfer of "peaceful" nuclear technologies to countries that had refused to join the NPT, and to regulate transfers to non-nuclear states in such a way as to prevent diversion to weapons programs. The NSG Guidelines, as described in the Group's official literature, "aim to ensure that nuclear trade for peaceful purposes does not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices which would not hinder international trade and cooperation in the nuclear field."

Although India and Pakistan have acquired nuclear weapons outside the NPT and, therefore, have not violated any Treaty obligations by doing so, their status as nuclear weapon states is a point of contention in the international community. There have been widespread calls for both countries to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and to accede to the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states. The US-India agreement not only ratifies India's status as a nuclear weapon state outside the NPT, it also weakens the global norm against nuclear weapons proliferation.



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The unique exception for India, as provided under the deal, would further aggravate the discriminatory nature of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and would encourage additional states to acquire nuclear weapons. It would further worsen the ongoing nuclear arms race in South Asia by significantly increasing India's capabilities for fissile material production devoted to weapons. Moreover, the radically boosted nuclear power program, following as a consequence, would throttle investments for developing environmentally benign renewable sources of energy, including wind and solar. This, in turn, would have grave impacts on the prospects for long-term energy security.

In effect, the agreement is an end run around both the NPT and the mission of the NSG. The NSG can and should uphold its responsibility to the international community to reject the waivers that the US is requesting in order to proceed with these transfers legally.

As bodies of professional doctors working for peace and disarmament we also feel it is our duty to warn about the use of nuclear energy for power generation. These technologies are neither safe nor economical and are fraught with enormous dangers to health of people. These dangers were once again made clear several weeks ago when damage from an earthquake forced the closing of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Station. Furthermore, a study published in July in the European Journal of Cancer Care (2007, 16, 355-363), concluded that there is up to 24% rise in leukemia in children around nuclear facilities in Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Spain, and the US.

Physicians for Social Responsibility, the US affiliate of IPPNW, and Indian Doctors for Peace and Development, the Indian affiliate, have issued the enclosed statement calling upon the Parliament of India and the United States Congress to reject this agreement as dangerous to international peace and security. That call has gone unheeded with the publication of the final agreement on August 1.

We therefore join our US and Indian colleagues in calling on the NSG, as the final arbiter of international norms and common sense in this arena, to reject this agreement as contrary to the objectives of non-proliferation. We will further request of the United Nations Security Council that it undertake to support NSG guidelines and the improvement of international legal rules for the prevention of nuclear proliferation and the promotion of nuclear disarmament.

Sincerely,



Gunnar Westberg
Co-President

Enclosure