

No Trident Replacement core group 23.01.2024

1. **Attendees** Sara Medi Jones (CND), Kate Hudson (CND), Rachel Earlington (CND), Dixie Wills (Quakers), Ros Cook (WILPF), Rebecca Johnson (Acronym), Frank Boulton (Medact), Sarah Lasenby (Trident Ploughshares), David Cullen (NIS), John McGrath (Christian CND), Trish Whitham (NIS), Frank Jackson (Uniting for Peace), Liddy Buswell (Christian CND), Richard Outram (NFLA), Lynn Jamieson (Scottish CND).

Apologies Sarah Lasoye (Medact), Andrew Jackson (Pax Christi).

2. **Minutes and matters arising**

November minutes approved with no matters arising.

3. **Trident**

The National Audit Office has published a report on The Equipment Plan 2023-2033, finding that the budget for the Defence Nuclear Organisation has been increased by 62% to £99.5 billion. Nuclear weapons spending accounts for a third of all defence equipment spending. Further, MoD expects to spend £7.9 billion more than the budget on the Defence Nuclear Enterprise.

2023 annual update to Parliament on Trident replacement has still not been published. This could be indicative of the issues with the work.

Information on funding for Trident replacement is likely to be released in February, which should be useful for our work.

4. **Escalating global nuclear risks**

As meeting was ongoing, it was announced that the time of the Doomsday Clock remains at 90 seconds to midnight.

Discussion had on war in Ukraine. Front line movement has stalled but massive exchange of fire continues. UK is sending more military equipment to Ukraine, contributing to the profits of arms companies.

The transfer of Russian tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus was completed in October 2023, with operational control remaining with Russia. Belarus has drafted a new military doctrine which includes nuclear weapons for the first time. Core group discussed whether it would be possible to commission more research on this topic, as well as organising a webinar.

Upcoming NATO war games are the most extensive in decades. Britain sending 20,000 troops.

Israeli nuclear weapons discussed in context of conflict in Gaza. Wider regional conflict is escalating, with UK and US missile strikes in Yemen. Nuclear use by Israel can't be ruled out. Core group members expressed support for ceasefire calls. The next national demonstration calling for a ceasefire will take place in central London on February 3rd.

BBC documentary on nuclear weapons and the reviews of it the next day discussed. Programme can be watched on iPlayer -

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m001vgq5/nuclear-armageddon-how-close-are-we>

5. **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)**

São Tomé and Príncipe ratified the treaty in January 2024, meaning the treaty now has 93 signatories and 70 ratifications.

The second meeting of state parties to the TPNW (2MSP) took place in Nov/Dec 2023. Rebecca Johnson attended and reported back to core group as follows. 2MSP established the TPNW as a serious and working treaty. The treaty is being readied for nuclear states to join.

The five-page declaration (<https://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/nuclear-weapon-ban/2msp/documents/CRP4-Rev1.pdf>) was far more political than previous statements. No further action points were adopted, rather more details are being

added to existing statements. Working groups gave reports. The issue of historic British nuclear testing was discussed, and work continues by campaigners to highlight this issue. January 22nd was the third anniversary of the entry into force of the treaty – some activities took place, notably in Brighton.

6. Mutual Defence Agreement

The MDA is a sixty-five year-old nuclear agreement between the UK and US which allows for the transfer of nuclear materials. It is due for renewal in 2024. In 2014 it was renewed without any parliamentary debate or vote.

CND is working to force more scrutiny this time - lobbying Parliamentary colleagues, submitting Parliamentary Questions, engaging with the Foreign Affairs committee, launching EDM.

Webinar to discuss topic will take place on 15 Feb - <https://cnduk.org/events/exposed-the-secret-us-uk-nuclear-weapons-agreement/>.

A legal opinion on MDA compatibility with UK's NPT commitments was commissioned in 2004. Core group discussed whether an updated one would be useful, taking into account the TPNW.

A recent news story has been a reminder that RAF Brize Norton is where the materials sanctioned by the MDA travels through, work ongoing by Nukewatch and CND to highlight this aspect.

NIS publishing report on MDA in June, using freedom of information requests.

Core group discussed whether there was merit in expanding MDA work to highlighting all US military bases in the UK.

7. Any other business

- John Ainslie's archive is complete on NIS' website. The paper archive has been accepted by National Library of Scotland who will host an event there this autumn.
- An event to commemorate Pat Arrowsmith's life is being organised at the LSE archives on April 18th - save the date.

The next meeting of the No Trident Replacement core group will take place **3pm on 27 February 2024**.