



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

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MEDIA ADVISORY – for immediate release, 9th December 2011

NFLA submit detailed comments to the Trident Commission on the alternatives to a new nuclear weapons programme

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities today submits its comments on the cross-party Trident Commission on the need for, and alternatives to, replacing the Trident nuclear weapons programme (1).

The Trident Commission is a cross-party expert committee seeking to receive comments on the future replacement of Trident nuclear missiles and recommend alternative approaches to the UK Government. In May the then Defence Minister Dr Liam Fox announced the 'Initial Gate' decision of detailed design work to prepare for a Trident replacement programme. He also announced a parallel Cabinet Office review of the potential alternatives for a 'like-for-like' replacement of the Trident system, which is being chaired by Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey.

The Commission is jointly chaired by former Defence spokesmen and Ministers Lord Des Browne (Labour), Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Conservative) and Menzies Campbell (Liberal Democrat) and includes expert figures from the academic, foreign policy and military fields (2).

The NFLA submission talks much of its positive relationship with the Hiroshima and Nagasaki-led Mayors for Peace, a 5,092 member organisation which campaigns for a nuclear weapon free world (3). The largest local government organisation in the world, effectively representing around a billion people, it is growing evidence of the increased role of civil society groups in the disarmament debate.

Key points of the NFLA submission includes:

- The NFLA supports the Mayors for Peace's '2020 Vision' – a structured and practical timetable to negotiate an international Nuclear Weapons Convention and the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons.
- The NFLA remains puzzled as to what the UK's 'independent nuclear deterrent' actually deters us from. It believes there are much greater threats in the world, such as climate change, terrorism, cyber attacks and a global flu pandemic – none of which can be prevented by the possession of nuclear weapons.
- The NFLA is concerned about the huge financial costs of a Trident replacement programme, varying from at least £25 billion to as much as £97 billion. At a time of deep financial crisis, the concerted effort to develop a new Trident programme threatens the wider defence budget and puts pressure on all the other public services.
- The NFLA puts forward new research over the damage to the planet of a limited nuclear attack, exacerbating climate change and damaging world food production, making a mockery of the theory of deterrence.
- The NFLA supports other submissions to the Trident Commission such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN-UK) and the main churches who note the illegality of using, or threatening to use, nuclear weapons under international law. All other potential alternatives to develop nuclear weapons, such as reducing the yield of nuclear weapons, also fall foul of the legal hurdles.

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- The NFLA notes with disappointment the Anglo-French Defence Treaty, which it argues goes against the desire to develop a nuclear weapons free world.
- It notes the developing political debate over nuclear weapons in Scotland and encourages the Trident Commission to engage with it.

NFLA Chair Councillor Brian Goodall said:

“The NFLA welcomes the creation of the Trident Commission to provide a forum for proper and fair discussion over whether the UK needs and can afford to maintain a nuclear weapons programme. The NFLA was originally set up to campaign for a nuclear weapons free world and, thirty years on, we still want to see more done to achieve that aim. Our co-operation with the Mayors for Peace and the increasing development of a wide coalition of civil society groups and 140 states advocating a nuclear weapons free world convinces me that we are part of a new consensus. It is time for the UK Government to fully join that consensus and encourage the negotiation for a Nuclear Weapons Convention as a matter of urgency. ”

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For further information and interview opportunities contact Sean Morris, NFLA Secretary on 00 44 (0)161 234 3244 or 00 44 (0)7771 930196.

Notes for editors:

- (1) The NFLA Policy Briefing on its submission to the Trident Commission is attached.
- (2) Information on the Trident Commission can be found at:
<http://www.basicint.org/tridentcommission/evidencereceived>
- (3) Further information on the Mayors for Peace can be found at:
<http://www.mayorsforpeace.org> and <http://www.2020visioncampaign.org>

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