



# Dialogue for a nuclear weapon-free world

A Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) and British American Security Information Council (BASIC) initiative to facilitate engagement between Friends and decision-makers on nuclear disarmament

## Background

Over the past year or so, British government cabinet members have made official speeches stating their support for

international moves towards zero nuclear weapons. Now with the election of Barack Obama to the Presidency of the United States, the political space may be opening up for serious significant transatlantic moves in the right direction.

After all, if governments can abandon a commitment to free market liberalisation and nationalise much of the financial system in the name of financial security, they can surely cooperate more effectively to secure global security and achieve a nuclear weapon free world.

However, this is going to take political will, and assistance from concerned citizens. So, QPSW is teaming up with BASIC (British American Security Information Council) to facilitate your engagement with decision-makers on nuclear disarmament.



## The initiative

Given that the current political landscape offers an opportunity to promote the nuclear disarmament agenda, our approach will be to encourage tangible moves in this direction.

For now we will not address the recent government decision to renew the Trident system – it is a decision that certainly sits uneasily with the nuclear disarmament agenda (to say the least), but discussion of Trident tends to close down rational conversation with government officials right now. There will be adequate opportunity to raise the Trident issue later on in the process.

In the meantime, there is plenty more on the agenda to engage with – and by establishing relationships, we can work more effectively on these issues, before going back to Trident.

The opportunities currently presenting themselves for British action may not be here forever.

**This briefing is also available in a large print format**

## Key milestones

There are several key milestones approaching that require action.

We are looking to the British government to play a key role – particularly in working with the new Obama Administration – to:

**Encourage the US Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)** that will help to ensure that nuclear tests are consigned to history. Our government is committed to the Treaty, but it could send scientists from Aldermaston to testify in front of Senate Committees to explain why the British are so confident of the verification measures associated. There are few people on the planet who will be so convincing to Senators.

**Raise the issue of NATO's tactical nuclear weapons in Europe**, in the context of a wider review of NATO's strategy due to be announced next April. These free-fall bombs, based in several European states and delivered by aeroplane, serve no purpose in military planning – even in NATO scenarios using nuclear weapons (why fly a vulnerable aeroplane for several hours when they can use a Trident missile with far greater speed, confidence and accuracy?). They are dangerous, expensive and destabilise relations with Russia. They also prove that European allies are equally unable to give up the nuclear fix, a fact that is a sore point for other non-nuclear weapon states. Britain is in a unique diplomatic position to raise the issue in NATO in advance of the NATO summit in April in a way that will not be seen as anti-NATO, anti-US, or anti-European. So far the government has not seen fit to do so.

**Review ballistic missile defence, because of the destabilising impact on relations with Russia.** President Medvedev has already announced Russia's intention of deploying new tactical nuclear weapons in western Russia in response – Britain could become a target again. President Obama's election provides a golden opportunity to delay and review the scheme.

**Engage in deep unilateral cuts to the US nuclear arsenal** to build confidence for further bilateral cuts with Moscow.

## Get involved

We encourage you to start an ongoing correspondence with your MP and with a key elected or appointed official in the British government to encourage them to move on these issues.

As one of the key aspects of this initiative is the development of relationships, we are recommending that you limit letters to two people. We have found that it takes several exchanges before people really start to engage properly. It takes some persistence. It also helps to begin with some encouragement for their existing policy. And let's face it, there are things we can congratulate them on, in particular for their explicit support for the disarmament agenda to zero (the first nuclear weapon state to do so), and the studies they are engaged in to establish procedures to verify disarmament.

## What you can expect from us

As part of QPSW and BASIC's support for Friends taking up this opportunity, we will allocate an official to you for correspondence and send you emails with suggested content for your letters as and when appropriate opportunities arise.

Kat Barton, Peace & Disarmament Programme Manager at QPSW, will be the first point of contact in terms of providing resources, and Paul Ingram, Director of BASIC, will be available for interpretation, technical and strategic advice.

## Contacts

If you would like to be involved in this initiative, please contact Kat Barton giving your name and the name of your MP.

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