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## **FOR A WORLD FREE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS**

by

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An article that appeared in January in *The Wall Street Journal* entitled “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons” signed by George Schulz and Henry Kissinger, Secretaries of State to Republican Presidents Reagan and Nixon, by Bill Perry, Secretary of Defense to Clinton, and by Sam Nunn, Democratic Chairman of the Senate Defense Committee, set off a debate of highly importance to the future of mankind. In that article the four U.S. statesmen proposed that nuclear weapons be completely abolished. The matter was taken up again in a second article in the same paper in January 2008, declaring that if the eight countries now possessing nuclear weapons—mainly the two major ones, the U.S. and Russia—do not take initiatives for their elimination, it will then become progressively harder to prevent other countries from acquiring them, with the risk that sooner or later the weapons will be used with catastrophic consequences for the world.

The article is important because it marked the first time that figures from the U.S. energy and policy arenas representing both U.S. political parties addressed a total ban on nuclear weapons as an objective to be pursued in the national interest and in the interest of the world.

That article was followed by the assumption of a series of important political positions. The two current candidates for the White House have substantially agreed on the objective as have most of those who in the past have held top

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positions in the U.S. government. In Russia, the response was favorable from Gorbachev and there was a more cautious, albeit not negative, reaction from the Government. UK's Gordon Brown expressed favor, with the Minister of Defense proposing that experts from the U.S., Russia, UK, France, and China gather at Britain's nuclear labs for the purpose of defining methods to verify the elimination of nuclear weapons; and just days ago in *The Times* another former Foreign Minister and a former NATO Secretary General took up favorable positions. France's Defense White Paper notes the elimination of nuclear weapons as an objective to be pursued. The Australian Government has established a new International Commission of Experts to outline a road map leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Lastly, a host of NGOs have also expressed their approval.

We feel it important that Italy too send a signal in this direction and that, as has occurred in other countries, our signatures bear witness that both major political parties and the scientific community are in full agreement that it is an important matter and an objective to be pursued.

We would like to outline the major steps to be taken in this direction.

The first is the entry into force of the Treaty banning all forms of nuclear testing, underground included, endorsing the current moratorium.

The second is to unblock the Geneva Disarmament Conference negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), which bans the production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium isotopes that are needed to produce nuclear weapons. Despite the current de facto moratorium, there is neither any formal Treaty nor any verification. The entry into force of these two treaties would be very welcome by non-nuclear military countries and would smooth the way for a positive outcome of the periodic Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) conference, strengthening the global non proliferation regime also by monitoring an effective respect of both the letter and the spirit of the commitments envisioned in the Treaty.

We are well aware that the road to the elimination of nuclear weapons is a long one. It requires certain political conditions.

The first is a concrete improvement in the relations between the nuclear superpowers — USA and Russia — which, notwithstanding the recent reductions, still retain more than nine-tenths of the world's nuclear weapons. This would encourage the other nuclear countries recognized by the NPT — UK, France, and China — to do their part. Moreover, it is necessary to ease tensions in areas of the world where the risk of nuclear weapons and arms being used, perhaps by terrorist groups, is higher. We are referring to

Southeast Asia (India and Pakistan) and to the Middle East (Israel-Palestine-Arab problem). In both these contexts a signal of willingness from the nuclear powers to move toward a world free of nuclear weapons would certainly have a positive influence.

Italy and Europe can and must do their part to pave the way toward the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. It is clear that this outcome can be reached only with a commitment from the major players, first the USA and Russia, and the other nuclear military countries. The propagation of a new way of thinking, of a new 'shared wisdom', is a basic step. Italy must contribute to this as well.

Man's very survival, legitimate and even necessary political objections notwithstanding, depends on acknowledgement of a superior and common interest in this matter.