Dutch government embraces motion calling for ban negotiations

To all delegations at the Open Ended Working Group
on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations,

On April 28, 2016, the Dutch parliament had a debate on the citizen's initiative "Teken tegen Kernwapens". In this initiative a national ban on nuclear weapons was proposed. The initiative has been signed by 45.608 Dutch people and was promoted by PAX, the Dutch Red Cross and ASN Bank.

During the debate several party spokespeople embraced the proposal to ban nuclear weapons in the Netherlands. There is no majority expected for this legislation. However, a clear majority supported another motion calling upon the government to use the Open Ended Working Group to actively work on effective measures, including the start of negotiations on a international ban on nuclear weapons, in order to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. It also calls upon the Government to involve other NATO member States in these negotiations. Voting on proposed motions is due on May 17th.

The minister reacted by embracing the resolution.

Since the Open Ended Working Group will resume its deliberations on May 2nd, parliament asked the Minister of Foreign Affairs to act upon this resolution as if the voting already took place, since it will clearly be adopted by a majority of political parties.

The minister responded by emphasizing that he would act upon this motion.

PAX sees this as a highly significant step. The Dutch government has been present at various international meetings but has never supported the start of international negotiations on a ban on nuclear weapons, nor the need for a ban at this moment in time.

PAX

This changed position by the Dutch government should be noticeable during the OEWG. As Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Koenders embraced the resolution the Dutch delegation should:

- ♦ actively work on effective measures, including the start of negotiations on a international ban on nuclear weapons, in order to achieve a world without nuclear weapons
- ♦ involve other NATO member States in these negotiations

We recommend delegations praise the Dutch delegation for this strong mandate given by the Dutch Parliament to promote the start of negotiations on a nuclear weapons ban. We further recommend delegations engage the Dutch delegation in discussions on how to best start negotiations now on a nuclear weapons ban as an effective measure to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

Following is our full (non-official) translation of the motion, clarifying comments and the reaction of the minister.

Utrecht, April 29, 2016

Krista van Velzen

Selma van Oostwaard

PAX

Motion Servaes cs[1]

Parliament,

having heard the deliberations,

considering that article 6 of the NPT obliges signatory States to negotiate a treaty on complete nuclear disarmament;

noting that the adopted motion Sjoerdsma cs. (33783 nr 19) calls upon the Government to participate in international conferences on a ban on nuclear weapons;

noting that United Nations General Assembly has installed an Open Ended Working Group in 2015 that will discuss new measures, legal or otherwise, in the field of nuclear disarmament;

calls upon the Government to, within the Open Ended Working Group, actively work on effective measures, including the start of negotiations on a international ban on nuclear weapons, in order to achieve a world without nuclear weapons;

also calls upon the Government to involve other NATO member States in these negotiations

and resumes the order of the day.

Servaes

Sjoerdsma

Van Bommel

Van Tongeren

Voordewind

The chairwoman: The motion has now been numbered 11 (34419).

Mr **Voordewind** (ChristenUnie- Christian Union):
Madam chair, I'm grateful for the answers given by the minister and for the insight he has given in his commitment to worldwide conferences on disarmament and nuclear weapons. I have signed the motion submitted by colleague Servaes as I'd like the government to give this an extra incentive XX during the Open Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament.

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[1] This motion has been submitted by Servaes (PvdA/Labour Party in government), Sjoerdsma (D66/Liberal Democrats), Van Bommel (SP/Socialist Party), Van Tongeren (GroenLinks/Green Party), Voordewind (ChristenUnie/Christian Union)

Mr **Sjoerdsma** (D66) : I fully support the motion tabled by colleague Servaes as an extra push for nuclear disarmament that is needed during the Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament. That, to me, is the theme of this debate.

Minister of Foreign Affairs **Koenders**: Motion nr 11 is about an international ban on nuclear weapons. As parliament knows, the NPT calls for negotiations[…] The NPT calls for negotiations in good faith on effective measures to end the nuclear weapons race, nuclear disarmament and a treaty on general and complete disarmament. The Netherlands is actively working within the OEWG to identify these measures. I therefore support this motion, noting that the Dutch government will act upon this motion in the context of the chronological disarmament steps as provided in article VI of the NPT. I thus support this motion, the judgement on the adoption of this motion is up to the parliament. (..)

The chairwoman:

Mr Sjoerdsma, you are not the first name under the motion. But, is your name is under the motion?

Mr **Sjoerdsma** (D66):

My name is under the motion and I have a clarifying question, I understand the OEWG is starting this upcoming Monday. We are not voting on this motion today. The names under the motion are not a majority by itself. The minister is dealing with this motion as if there is a majority.[2] Is he embracing this motion? Or does the minister say: I leave it to parliament to adopt this motion but will nevertheless go ahead with this motion upcoming Monday?

Minister **Koenders**:
It is the second option.

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[2] Which there will be after voting, since at least two other parties will support the motion but did not have the opportunity to sign on.