

Scottish Parliament

Cross-Party Group on Nuclear Disarmament

21st September 2022, 1.00 p.m. AGM

Minute

Present

MSPs:

Bill Kidd

Ruth McGuire

Mercedes Villalba

Paul McLennan

Maggie Chapman

Jenny Olsen, Senior Researcher, Office of Bill Kidd MSP

Hilary Brown, Office of Kaukab Stewart MSP

Invited Guests

Paul Rogers, Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University

Mhair McClafferty, Secretary Scottish Branch, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Non-MSP Group Members

Janet Fenton (ICAN Liaison in Scotland, and Secure Scotland)

UN House Scotland - Clara Zhang

Friends of the Earth Episcopal Church in Scotland - David Mumford

Scottish CND - Lynn Jamieson

Medact Scotland - Guy Johnson

Soka Gakkai International - Carol Acutt

Trident Ploughshares - Margaret Bremner

Trident Ploughshares - Sheila McKay

Nukewatch - David Mackenzie

Edinburgh CND - Ann Milne

SNP CND - Bill Ramsay

Conscience Anne McCullagh-d'Lyske

Edinburgh University Gender Studies - Luba Zatsepina

Duncan Campbell (Free lance journalist)

Apologies:

Ross Greer MSP, Mark Ruskell MSP,

Lesley Morrison (Medact Scotland),

Michael Orgel (Medact Scotland),

Melanie Scott (CAAT Scotland),

Gari Donn (UN House, Scotland),

David Somervell (Peace & Justice Scotland),

Judith McDonald (Medact & Cromarty Peace Group)

Richard Outram (NFLA)

Agenda Item 1

Bill Kidd MSP welcomed the attendees to the AGM

Agenda Item 2

The Minute of the meeting on 15th December 2021 was approved

The following Office-bearers were appointed:

Convenor: Bill Kidd MSP

Deputy Chair: Ross Greer

Secretary: Janet Fenton

Agenda Item 3

UN International Peace Day

As co host, of the Ruth McGuire MSP and member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom introduced Mhairi McClafferty, Secretary of the Scottish branch of WILPF and recent graduate sponsored by WILPF to attend the 1st Meeting of State Parties to the TPNW and the Humanitarian Conference on Nuclear Weapons in Vienna in June.

Mhairi offered a presentation on the gender issues in nuclear disarmament and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Mhairi addressed the need to take full account of gender issues within the discourse around the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Surveys and tests of Japanese and Chernobyl survivors show that women and girls are biologically more vulnerable to the radiological effects of these weapons, and women can suffer increased rates of stillbirths and foetal malformations. The reasons for this are not fully understood and require further research. Women are also affected by the stigmatisation of victims. Women also suffer disproportionately due to displacement and stress. Women are seriously under-represented in decision-making processes concerning nuclear weapons. The TPNW recognises this, and the pattern was still apparent at the Treaty's First Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) and at the recent NPT Review Conference. Nuclear weapons are framed as a symbol of dominance, military power, and masculine strength – and the gendered discussion of violence and weapons views women as being in need of male protection, reinforcing the idea that nuclear weapons policymaking is exclusively a male domain. The Action Plan arising from 1MSP addresses the gender imbalance and the need to recognise the disproportionate effects on women and girls but progress is likely to take time. WILPF works at the UN for feminist approach to peace through its disarmament programme Reaching Critical Will, and its Scottish branch regularly collaborates with Scottish CND. Mhairi's full presentation is available on request from wilpfscotbranch@gmail.com

Agenda Item 4

Bill Kidd introduced Paul Rogers, Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University, noting that he would receive the Carnall Peace Award later that evening, in recognition of outstanding work over many decades on issues of peace and security.

Paul acknowledged that there was a risk, albeit a small one that Putin would act on his threat to use tactical nuclear weapons in the war. He is not alone in making such threats – all the nuclear-armed states do that and refuse to adopt a no-first-use policy. During the Cold War NATO was prepared to use nuclear weapons if faced with a large conventional attack by the Soviet Union on Western Europe. UK Defence minister Geoff Hoon had threatened nuclear use if UK troops were attacked by chemical weapons during the 2nd Gulf War. It is a myth that "deterrence" makes for stability. In this context the Putin threats are nothing new. We know how close we have come to the brink of nuclear war in the past, for example during the Able Archer exercise and the Cuban missile crisis. We have been incredibly lucky. We need effective arms control measures as soon as possible. The emergence of the TPNW is a positive step – it is important to maintain that alternative of

complete prohibition and elimination. He noted that 147 UN states had supported the Costa Rica resolution on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and welcomed the idea that Scotland could present itself as the aspirational Nation 148. The Ukraine war can neither be won or lost. Nuclear weapons postpone peace.

Questions from the floor:

Bill Ramsay asked how the concept of motherhood might aid diplomatic efforts. Mhairi noted that the traditional patriarchal culture around diplomacy is a hindrance to women's involvement although successful conflict resolution usually depends on the participation of women in the process.

Bill Ramsay also asked what could be made of the comment by George Robertson that NATO had provoked Russia into attacking Ukraine. Paul Rogers noted how important it is to see the situation through the eyes of the other. The Russian regime's perspective is that the West and NATO have undermined Russia's status and encroached on what is seen as "Greater Russia – a view that is held particularly by many older Russians.

David Mumford asked what could be done. Paul Rogers said that a process of confidence building was required leading to positive steps for arms control treaties. The work done on grain exports gives a hint of how this could work. Local ceasefires, even for very short intervals, also play a part in building confidence for negotiations.

Lynn Jamieson commented that in the midst of all the talk of "appeasement" it was important to recognise the risk of nuclear weapon use and mutual disaster.

Anne McCullagh-d'Lyske called for a tax boycott to make war impossible. Paul Rogers saw that as a valid route if it was possible, certainly divestment could play a part.

Janet Fenton pointed out the resolutions taken at the first WILP congress in 1915, one which would ban arms manufacture for profit and the other which would require a democratic mandate to any foreign policy shift.

Paul Rogers noted that one scenario is that Russia and its satellites could be framed as a Eurasian superpower in opposition to the US (which seems to be moving back to a position of placing more nuclear weapons in Western Europe, as probably at Lakenheath

Paul Rogers noted that the peace movement in the 1980s had been effective in providing a relative peace. It was also important to recognise that most people in the world live in a state of relative peace.

Bill Kidd closed the meeting with thanks to the contributors and attendees.