2011 PRIORITIES OF US NON-GOVERNMENT GROUPS ON ARMS CONTROL AND NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

A Policy Memo

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Ploughshares Fund awards grants to several dozen organizations working on next steps in the reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. There is general agreement among these groups on the priorities they will promote during 2011. Some groups focus on one or two issues. Some groups work more on disarmament; others work more on arms control.

In general, the priorities of these groups are:

Deeper nuclear weapons reductions. All see the New START treaty as just the first step. The United States and Russia should follow through on their commitment to pursue further verifiable reductions of all types of U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons—strategic and tactical, deployed and nondeployed—by initiating formal talks this year.

Unilateral reductions. While negotiating a follow-on treaty with robust verification methods, the United States should simultaneously pursue other steps that would increase security and build momentum. These include:

- accelerate the reductions mandated by New START ahead of the 2017 implementation deadline;
- increase the dismantlement rate of excess nuclear warheads;
- phase-out Cold War-style nuclear targeting plans and launch requirements;
- reach agreement with our NATO partners to formally eliminate any requirement to station U.S. tactical nuclear warheads in Europe; and,
- reduce the role of nuclear weapons in US and NATO policy.
Realistic missile defense plans. The administration should work for meaningful U.S.-Russian cooperation on strategic ballistic missile defense. There is also a need for independent technical assessments of the ballistic missile threat from Iran and North Korea and the technical capabilities of the proposed anti-missile systems.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty: The US administration is planning to pursue a process for Senate approval of the treaty. US NGOs will support this process with an effort similar to the successful campaign for the New START treaty, including expert studies, lobbying, and media promotion.

Securing vulnerable nuclear material: Many organizations are working to support a successful 2012 Nuclear Security Summit. They are building bipartisan support for cooperative threat reduction programs and other nonproliferation programs and initiatives.

Iran and North Korea: There remains deep concern about the proliferation dangers posed by Tehran’s and Pyongyang’s nuclear activities. Iran, in particular, will be a hotly debated issue in the United States. Many NGOs are increasing their work on Iran to both discourage any military strikes and to promote a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

The normalization of zero. Several groups are continuing their efforts to broaden high-level international support for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Global Zero will hold two summits in 2011, one in London and the other at Stanford University in California.

Presidential commitment. Many groups are urging President Obama to deliver another major speech on a comprehensive approach to achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, as we approach the two-year anniversary of his speech in Prague.