

Nuclear Disarmament Cross Party Group
Tuesday 14 Nov 2017, 12.30 – 1.30 pm

PRESENT:

Civil Society representatives:

Dagmar Topf Aguiar de Medeiros (UN House, SCND, WILPF)
Carol Acutt (SGI-UK)
Guy Johnsson (Medact Scotland)
Arthur West (SCND)
Michael Orgel (Medact Scotland)
Helen Kay (WILPF)
Judith McDonald (Medact)
Jane Tallents (Trident Ploughshares)
David Mackenzie (Nukewatch)
Brian Larkin (Edinburgh Peace and Justice Center)
Paridhi Singh (UN House)
Daniele O’Kane (ICAN)
Elizabeth Minor (Article 36/ICAN)

Secretary

Janet Fenton

Parliamentary representatives

Bill Kidd MSP
Claudia Beamish MSP
Ashley Douglas, representing Ruth Maguire MSP
David Cameron, representing Bob Doris MSP
Jenny Olson (Bill Kidd’s Office)

1.AGM of the Group.

Those present agreed to:

- a) Confirm the objects of the group to act as a policy forum for discussion and updating on how policy impacts on nuclear issues for Scotland.
- b) Accept the Report of the year’s activities as per the annual return (attached)
Bill Kidd added to the report that the Japanese Peace Boat had come to Scotland for the first time this year. A meeting took place with the founder of peace boat and with young people from around the world to discuss nuclear disarmament and the environmental impacts of nuclear weapons. The meeting was also attended by a Hibakusha who spoke of the effects the nuclear bombing had had on her life and the lives of others in her situation. Peace boat are looking to build a brand new eco-friendly ship. Scotland’s own military shipbuilding facilities are small, but there is an interest in Scotland’s involvement with the building of the new peace boat.
- c) Agree office bearers
Guy Johnsson nominated Bill Kidd as Convenor of the group. The nomination was seconded by Brian Larkin
Janet Fenton nominated Patrick Harvie as co-convenor of the group. This was seconded by Jane Tallents.
Bill Kidd nominated Janet Fenton as Secretary. This was seconded **by Arthur West**

2. INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY

a) Nobel Peace Prize for ICAN Oslo December

Elizabeth Minor briefly outlined the events surrounding the ceremony at which Beatrice Fihn and Setsuko Thurlow will be accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo in December 9th - 11th on behalf of ICAN. She highlighted that this will be a great opportunity for ICAN campaigners to celebrate across the world to raise awareness of the ban treaty, The Nobel Peace Prize ceremony will create momentum for increased communication and activity on all levels, in communities and with politicians. At Westminster Stewart MacDonald (SNP shadow Defence) will be holding a reception as a briefing opportunity for ICAN. ICAN could organize a similar briefing at Holyrood. The government of Austria is organising a signing event in New York around the date of the prize ceremony, which can be used as an opportunity for governments to demonstrate support for the ban treaty. The Pope recently condemned the possession of nuclear weapons at a Vatican conference a shift in the position of the Catholic church from condoning deterrence policies. Despite the ICRC position, the British Red Cross need to be encouraged to advocate for the ban treaty. Bill Kidd had to excuse himself from the meeting and asked Claudia to continue as chair, which she kindly agreed to.

Over the Nobel Peace Prize weekend Ceremony, celebrations are being organised and promoted collectively to the media by Scrap Trident Coalition. The website and facebook page are appropriate places to find more information on these peace celebrations. UN House is organising the inaugural party on 8 December 2017 at 5:30 in this context. Claudia Beamish asked whether all MSP members of the CPG might be sent an e-mail about the peace celebrations taking place so that they may consider attending or even organising such an event. Jane Tallents agreed to send a list of all planned peace celebrations.

b) ICAN parliamentary Pledge

Civil society is asking parliamentarians to sign the pledge. The ICAN parliamentary pledge, it is available on ICAN's website. So far 501 representatives have signed on from 18 countries with 71 from the UK. 41 are from Westminster out 650). 21 signatures are from Scottish parliament (possible 129). Agreed to focus on Scottish Parliament and Scottish MPs.

c) Update on Don't Bank on The Bomb

A special Scottish meeting on 15th November with Susi Snyder and Elizabeth Minor. Arthur West Chair, Scottish CND highlighted the topic of potentially involving the parliamentary pension fund in the 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' campaign. He has been trying to get a meeting with a trustee of the pension fund and would appreciate any assistance in this matter. Janet Fenton reminded the group that John Finnie MSP has a deep concern with the pension fund and inquired whether he might be able to attend another CPG meeting soon, in order to give everyone an update on his involvement with this. Claudia Beamish then suggested that it might be appropriate to send a letter to John and to other members of the group on the concern that 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' campaigners have regarding the parliamentary investment fund. She also suggested potentially using a multi-pronged approach. Perhaps joining forces with those interested in divesting the parliamentary pension fund from fossil fuels would maximise impact. The CPG then discussed the existence of the fiduciary duty of trustees when investing pension funds. It was highlighted that the fiduciary duty does not preclude the possibility of investing ethically. There are wheels in motion to invite the pension fund to invest differently - an opportunity for 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' campaign to send a letter, highlighting

divestment as a quick and easy way to make a positive, hassle free impact. Increased risks can be interpreted as relevant risks by the trustees. Jenny Olson highlighted trends in positive performance of ethical funds and the importance of considering also what to invest into.

3. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UK

Parliamentary CND UK.

Janet Fenton highlighted the efforts that have been made to increase resonance between the CPG and the Parliamentary CND in the UK. The parliamentary CND in the UK is not a CPG, but it works in similar ways and cooperation would be mutually beneficial. In this light, it was suggested to pre-plan all of the rest of the year's meetings to allow for more coordination with the meetings of the parliamentary CND. This suggestion was agreed to by the CPG and Janet Fenton will collate suggestions to set an annual agenda. The new parliamentary officer for CND UK, Michael Gallagher, has also agreed to set their meetings for the rest of the year in advance. Furthermore, he agreed to attend some of the CPG meetings in Holyrood based on mutual exchange. This could help to increase interaction between the two groups.

4. SCOTTISH ACTIVITY AND OPPORTUNITIES

a) SCND Peace Rally 15th September 2018

Arthur West was mindful of needing to work with partners in the peace movement and at this stage the main focus is to get the date out. Janet Fenton stressed the importance the rally in highlighting the international position of Scotland. It currently seems that there will be a good international turn out. Ray Acheson of Reaching Critical Will expressed interest in attending as well as German and French peace campaigners and Israeli disarmament campaigner Sharon Dolev. It is important to ensure a wide range of groups participate, whilst SCND provides a strong lead. Janet highlighted the importance of getting a good cross party parliamentary presence at the peace rally to reflect the position of the parliament and people across Scotland. If possible, the Scottish first Minister should attend. Claudia Beamish suggested that it might be appropriate to send a notification of this to MSPs via e-mail.

b) Feedback on Unready Scotland Report

'Unready Scotland' has been published since the CPG's last meeting. While community safety remains the responsibility of local councils, none of them have adequately fulfilled their duties in this respect. It is clear that, were an accident to happen, the MOD's main priority would be to protect the weapon and let the local authority look after the civilians. The authors of the report have asked the Scottish government to review current arrangements in order to raise awareness of the risks involved in having nuclear weapons stationed in Scotland.

David McKenzie highlighted that the request that has been made both in the report and in writing to the Scottish government, is that they conduct a review of the responsible civil authorities. The reply to date seems to misinterpret this request. The request was a modest request to review the readiness of civil authorities to respond. If no appropriate response is provided, the authors of the report might consider approaching the Scottish Parliament on this matter. However, they are still hopeful to receive a positive response before long.

Michael Orgel raised the possibility of raising this with a public health committee in Scotland. Claudia Beamish confirmed that there is a Health Committee and this could be accessed through the Petition Committee.

c) Update on Peace Cranes exhibition

Continued negotiation is required for the proposed exhibition in the main lobby of the Scottish Parliament. Brian Larkin commented that Bill Kidd's office has been very helpful in facilitating discussions and The Peace and Justice Centre have met with the exhibition staff. Although the exhibition had originally been requested for the main hall, the SPCB e-mailed back about a garden lobby display. Jenny clarified that this was not the expectation, and submitted a request. There has been no response as of yet and it was clarified that a postponement would be more acceptable than any attempt to scale the exhibition down. The CPG confirmed that it is indeed the objective to have the exhibition in the main hall and not somewhere else, where impact might be compromised.

Claudia Beamish stressed the importance of figuring out whether the problem was of a purely logistical nature, which might be easily resolved, and that if Jenny needed further support from MSPs this should be indicated to the group.

The group reviewed the very successful meeting celebrating the opening for signature of the Ban Treaty on 20th September. Janet Fenton reminded the group that bringing together the topic of the ban treaty and the situation in the middle east through the launching of the UN Report on the situation in Yemen had been very interesting to several parliamentarians. She highlighted the importance of the role of women in conflict and the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls. Janet wanted to highlight this issue for our awareness as an issue we might want to discuss this in more detail at a following meeting.

Claudia Beamish then closed the meeting.