

Cross-Party Group on Nuclear Disarmament

26 September 1.00pm

Minute

Present

MSPs

Bill Kidd, Maggie Chapman

Invited guests

Sharon Dolev (Israel) and Emad Kiyaei (Iran) from **The Middle East Treaty Organization (METO)**

Non-MSP Group Members

Janet Fenton (Secure Scotland and Group Sec)
Steve Davies (Glasgow CND)
Lynn Jamieson (Chair, SCND)
Caol Acutt (Soka Gakkai International)
Seonaid Stewart (P and J)
Gari Donn (director, UN House)
Rania Alabaddi (intern UN House)
Maria Zerubian (intern UN House)
Bill Ramsey (Peace Education Scotland)
Chris White (Parliamentary Assistant to Bill Kidd MSP)
David Mackenzie (Nukewatch & Trident Ploughshares)
Roslyn Mauchland Pax Christi, Scotland.

Apologies

Ruth Maguire MSP, Richard Leonard MSP, Katie Clark MSP, Pauline McNeil MSP, Mercedes Villalba MSP, John Cairns (send) Michael Orgel (Medact) Guy Johnson (DBOTB)

Agenda item 1:

Convenors Update and International Updates from ICAN

1.1 International Update

The TPNW now has 93 signatories and 69 state parties, close to half the number of UN member states as we work towards universalisation. Bahamas and Sri Lanka are now part of the Treaty. The new Executive director of ICAN, Melissa Parke former Government Minister and Parliamentarian in Australia, will be visiting the Parliament at the start of a visit to Scotland on the 2nd of November.

Cross party group here in the parliament and she will also be attending the Scottish and participating in the Scottish CND Festival for Survival on the on the 4th. Full details on ICAN International or nuclear ban dot scot websites. We are all preparing for the second meeting of States Parties in New York in November. Bill Kidd MSP will attend, as will Maggie Chapman MSP. People can encourage their elected representatives to ask the UK Government to attend as observers and several civil society organisations from Scotland will be represented, email hello@nuclearban.scot for details and enquiries

1.2 Convenor's report

Bill Kidd MSP mentioned his work with PNND, and his attendance at the NPT preparatory meeting and expressed delight that Maggie Chapman plans to attend the TPNW meeting, because it's very, very important that the world understands fully what an important contribution Scotland can make to discrediting the UK's nuclear weapons policy.

Agenda item 2

Update from METO

Bill introduced the guests from METO, the Middle East Treaty organisation founded in 2017 to seek ways to rid the Middle East of all weapons of mass destruction as a gateway to regional security and peace. An original round table discussion took place behind closed doors in Scotland. METO is an ICAN Partner.

Sharon introduced the discussion, thanking Bill for hosting and Janet for organising the visit with apologies from both for not being able to attend present face to face.

Emad offered the historical context to METO by explaining that the idea of a middle east region free from nuclear weapons was initially started in 1974 with Egypt and Iran backing a resolution at the UN. In 1990, following concerns over the singling out of the one nuclear weapon states in the region, they decided to include biological weapons and chemical weapons so the aim was set for a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East- the first one in the world because including chemical and biological was a new initiative.

In 1995, the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and its review cycle, included a promise of development and advancement of the WMD free zone in the Middle East which meant the Arab countries came on board on the indefinite extension of the NPT. In 2010 a major milestone was the NPT decision to take practical steps through convening a conference by 2012 where the 22 members of the Arab League plus Iran and Israel, would come together to negotiate what a WMD free zone in the Middle East could look like. Despite promises and hype about a conference in 2012, those hopes died very quickly due to opposition to the proposal by the United States, which contributed to frustration in the region.

Sharon explained that at the 2015 NPT Conference, the conference plan was derailed with the UK and Canada responsible. This indicates how necessary the zone would be for advancing global non-proliferation and disarmament in a very unstable region and how the treaty could build trust and confidence, as well as getting rid of these weapons. After 2015, the weapon of mass destruction free zone was extensively discussed in all UN related meetings but there was no proposal or model on how to achieve it. In 2007, Sharon had founded the nuclear disarmament campaign in Israel and in 2011, a regional campaign in the Middle East was considered, but the history and the obstacles were always discussed rather than what could be achieved, and few people from the Middle East were included in discussions. Like panels of men talking about feminism, this discourse was not relevant because it didn't include voices from the zone. In 2014 Sharon set up a series of round tables in the Middle East, mainly in Israel with meetings with diplomats from outside Israel, as a first opportunity to talk with Arab diplomats and Iranian diplomats about the real obstacles, and discuss why something so crucial for the non proliferation regime is referenced only as impossible. Mapping the obstacles took a couple of years, showing technical questions about how to create a mechanism of compliance between states that don't trust each other or even talk to each other through a deep seated belief that crossing that gulf was impossible. There was also an idea that the existence of a nuclear armed state as part of the status quo meant some stability because it was something that everyone, including the diplomats, understands. From mapping these obstacles, it was a next step to look at what parties could agree on and what kind of the model could be envisioned,, enabling the first draft text to be produced – something that had been described as impossible. At the UN in Vienna in 2017, it was shared at a side event which Bill and Janet attended amongst a pretty hostile group of attendees. Sharon reminded Janet, that one of the diplomats who had previously said that drafting a treaty would be impossible actually saw that from civil society can come possibilities. But if only one thing had to change, that's the one thing they didn't want to change. For Sharon that thing was the language; from impossible to possible. Janet decided that she might be able to help. So with UN House Scotland, and Bill's connection with the

local authority in Edinburgh she worked with Scottish activists and ICAN partners in Scotland and they managed - despite almost zero funds - to host the first ever round table to discuss the possibilities outside the zone and in private, and thus to redraft, and create a second improved version, and this first very successful round table led to a second one, with the vast majority of participants from the zone, now these diplomats they went through the draft article by article to improve it and argue their differences which was critical in showing that we were not married to the language. METO, is not putting its name on the draft, it's for the diplomats to use. I'm happy to say that even though these diplomats just wanted to talk about the obstacles. Sharon reminded Janet that on the first day the first half an hour was for the obstacles, with a promise to go back to that on the last day. But when the last day, came they no longer wanted to discuss the obstacles, but they preferred to talk about the next steps. We needed to protect this process. **Emad** continued explaining METO was able to bring experts and officials in their personal capacity to Zurich after Scotland and the change in the atmosphere and attitude of diplomats from within the region informed the revised second draft treaty presented in Geneva in front of a packed room of 215 diplomats by an Israeli, Sharon, Emad, the Iranian, an Arab representative and in between British people, reminding everyone of what Britain has done in the region. This showed that we can bring people that are usually divided to present a united front on possibilities about going forward at the UN in Geneva. Diplomats said this was an optimistic but realistic side event on the Middle East and wanted to get involved, a major breakthrough at the UN followed by one of the Arab countries tabling a proposal in 2018 at the UN General Assembly for a conference where diplomats can meet the 24 countries plus the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and International civil society organisations annually to establish a WMD free zone in the Middle East and in 2018 this resolution was passed and it came to realisation at the United Nations headquarters in New York in November 2019. The first meeting of these regional countries to engage on this issue seemed like Christmas and Hanukkah and Eid altogether in one day when they reached a final agreement, which provided the framework for the continuation of these discussions so that they can ultimately reach a treaty ready for everyone to agree and sign.

Sharon continued The November conference on the zone is now a regular event every at the UN headquarters in New York, and is where the states of the zone are working by consensus. In 2020 Covid prevented Israel participating but others took Israel's concerns into consideration because what is being created is a mechanism of compliance, confidence building measures and a model that will allow the States to disarm, or retain their status as non possessors of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons. Another topic is human security with more more working papers included and METO has got to Draft Treat 5 a very evolved model with ongoing work on the

biological component and work to protect the process by looking at obstacles with a view to dismantle them before the people in the room face them. The protection of this very valuable process, although states don't always follow through. A next step for METO is based on the success of the TPNW, and the ability of campaigners to create and use a WMD Free zone in their states by building on issues that states can agree on. It is important for Europeans to talk with Middle Easterners about the Middle East and remember to inform their views from those people, and to be aware that all campaigners from different states must work together, whether the Middle East, Russia, France or other European states.

Bill thanked the guests for the very informative presentation and introduced a Q and A

Gari congratulated METO and expressed appreciation of being involved in the Edinburgh arrangements, and checked the number of drafts achieved since

Sharon confirmed that it was 5

Bill noted the enormous progress, expressed that civil society in Scotland was delighted to have been part of it and asked if another round table in Scotland would be useful, Lynn asked if it would be possible to work for a WMD Free zone in the Scandinavian countries, or northern Europe. Bill Ramsey asked whether nuclear power was included in the deliberations.

Sharon responded that Scotland would be a great place for future METO work, but the main problem is financial as its necessary to fly people long distances. She thought that Scotland starting work on a WMD Free zone in Europe would be a positive step albeit it would be declarative rather than actual. Access to nuclear power technology is too much of an incentive as in how it is agreed in the NPT that it would not be useful to tackle that at the moment, despite the obvious shortcomings of the NPT

Gari reminded us of the 1984 a conference on NWFZ here in Scotland and the second one in Iceland on the nuclear free North Atlantic and that brought in Iceland, Pharaohs, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Scotland, remembering that it it's really important to start small and to take what is possible. Gari may still have the reports from these and can share them.

Bill reported that at the ICAN meeting at the Norwegian Parliament there was goodwill from representatives from the Norwegian Iceland Sweden and Finland parliaments and about working together to promote the idea of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Scandinavian Europe area and agreed the need to start where you can and build from there

Maggie Chapman MSP thanked both speakers and noted that there's been such an important role for Scotland in the development of this work not only with METO but more broadly. She is keen to know what we can do in the Scottish Parliament, and more widely, through actions by parliamentarians, our staff, and the communities that. She asked what what could be the main 'asks' for us as individuals, as campaigners, as parliamentarians, and is this to raise awareness? She is sure there are many people who support the cause but just don't know know about this particular facet of it.

Sharon Responded that the first things is language. The Scottish Parliament does not have a role in international affairs when it comes to security, but it doesn't mean that you don't affect the conversation that comes out in London All in all, more discussions are needed campaigners, parliamentarians, whoever that wants to wants to get rid of the bomb It's way too quiet out there, especially in the corridors of the UN where we all meet.

A more generalised conversation followed.

Agenda item 3

SCND Festival of Survival and Keep Space for Peace

Report was given by Lynn Jamieson

Posters are available to view and take for the Festival of Survival. This event is the first big face to face event by the Scottish campaign for nuclear disarmament, disarmament. It aims to bring together various elements of civil society across environmental and peace movements, to talk about ways forward. The opening session will include.

Bill Kidd and Katy Clark and Mark Ruskell and o representatives of civil society in the form of Friends of the Earth, Religious leaders and human rights campaigners to set the scene for workshops panels and plenary events across the day with a set of films also being shown some cultural music and poetry interventions. Organisations

stalls and to show the work of environmental and peace movement campaigns. It would be very helpful for members to attend and also promote it. It is on the 4th of November in Glasgow, an all day event.

Keep Space for Peace is another event on the 3rd of October at 12.00. which is an alliance between ourselves and Drone Wars. There are a number of space ports being developed in beautiful rural areas of Scotland, very environmentally sensitive areas like the Moine peninsula, which is part of the flow country, and they will be very environmentally destructive and polluting, but also they will have, undoubtedly a military connection which will ultimately also be connected to command and control and design of nuclear weapons. SCND are absolutely opposed to these. And on the 3rd of October at 12 noon, we'll be outside Parliament having a demonstration and hoping that members of the Cross party group will come out to support and meet with us.

Agenda item 4

Unready Scotland Update

David Mackenzie reported on the progress made by Nukewatch, which is hoping to arrange a meeting with the Community Safety minister in near future to reflect concerns from this group. and hopefully with Bill's help and also support from Mark Ruskell MSP. Meanwhile, the traffic continues. Yesterday a nuclear weapon convoy with four trucks possibly containing each containing 2 Trident warheads passed through Glasgow on its way South from Coulport and is, as at the moment, proceeding through England on its way back to Burghfield.

This underlines how we need to be alert and aware of this continuing traffic and do what we can to stop it. If members of the group happen to be on the roads, they can be keeping their eyes peeled as well, and Nukewatch is keeping the citizens monitoring part of that going as much as possible. going anywhere.

The Meeting was closed at ten past two in the afternoon.