

## **Cross Party Group on Nuclear Disarmament**

Online meeting: 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Present

MSPs

Bill Kidd MSP (Convenor)

John Finnie MSP

Sandra White MSP

Claudia Beamish MSP

Ross Greer MSP

Mark Ruskell MSP

Jenny Olson (Bill Kidd's office)

Janet Fenton (Group Secretary)

Guest Speaker: Sean Crowe Teachta Dála, Tithe an Oireachtas Dáil Éireann

### **Civil Society Representatives**

Carol Acutt SGI

Lesley Morrison Medact

Jane Tallents Trident Ploughshares

Brian Larkin Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre

Mike Blackshaw Edinburgh Yes Hub

Emma Cockburn CAAT

Fiona Mcowan Scottish WILPF

Gari Donn UN House Scotland

Emilie McSwiggan Scottish CND

Lynn Jamieson Scottish CND

Judith Macdonald Medact

Hannah Lawrence UN House Scotland

Flavia Tudoreanu Scottish CND

Ian Fairlie UK CND

Jean Anderson SNP/CND

### **Annual General Meeting**

1. Annual Report on the group's activities. This was approved with additions to the current draft including an account of the numerous events across Scotland commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nuclear weapon attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the demonstration outside the parliament, with Bill Kidd, Alison Johnstone and representatives of Scottish ICAN partner organisations, marking the TPNW achieving 50 ratifications. There have also been a series of parliamentary motions, most recently by Bill Kidd welcoming the 50<sup>th</sup> ratification, which should be followed by a Member's Debate.

2. The minute of the meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June was approved.

3. The meeting appointed Bill Kidd as Convenor, as nominated by John Finnie and seconded by Sandra White, Ross Greer as Deputy Convenor, as nominated by Sandra White and seconded by John Finnie, and Janet Fenton as Secretary, as nominated by Fiona McOwan and seconded by Jean Anderson.

## TPNW

Janet Fenton gave a brief update on the 50<sup>th</sup> ratification, noting that it has a special relevance for Scotland since our opposition to the UK's nuclear weapons now has full international backing and support. It was good to have Sean Crowe at the meeting since Ireland has ratified the Treaty and has been over the years in the forefront of the work for global disarmament. The recent US letter asking states to withdraw from the Treaty is good evidence of the impact that it will have and is already having. David Mackenzie noted the nuanced response of the Chinese, suggesting a wish to distance themselves from the US response, however marginally, as evidence that states are concerned about their international reputation as the norm changes. Lesley Morrison commended Janet for her part in the work for the Treaty and Janet pointed out how critical to that progress have been the ongoing protest work over decades. Jenny Olson said we should recall the fact that 72 MSPs have signed the ICAN Parliamentary Pledge in support of the Treaty.

## Sean Crowe TD

The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Bill (2019) entered into Irish Law in September 2019. This bill includes the full text of the UN Treaty and was passed unanimously by the Oireachtas. Ireland will be on the UN Security Council for 2021/2022 and it will be interesting to see what part it can play there. Sean had some concern about the notion that the UK's nuclear weapon bases could be moved to Northern Ireland in the event of their expulsion by an independent Scotland. Flavia and Janet will send Sean John Ainslie's "Trident: Nowhere to Go" and other relevant information about the lack of feasible options for re-location. Ross Greer wondered if the nuclear weapon issue was a live one among progressives in Ireland. Sean said that the stance against both the weapons and nuclear energy was non-controversial across the board. Mark Ruskell asked about the practical implementation of the ratification of the TPNW in terms of education and disinvestment. This has not yet been formally discussed. Responding to Brian Larkin, Sean was unaware of any overt pressure from the US on Ireland not to ratify the TPNW and anyway, those backing the Treaty were so clearly on the right side of history. Janet Fenton noted the long and distinguished Irish track record on disarmament, beginning with its push for the NPT, and suggested that US pressure on Ireland in regard to nuclear disarmament was not acceptable to the international community. Sean acknowledged that there were problems in regard to Ireland's stated neutrality, given the acquiescence with US military use of Shannon airport and its involvement in the European battle groups. Perhaps Bill Kidd's recent motion could be adapted for the Oireachtas.

## Arising from the Minute of 17<sup>th</sup> June

David Mackenzie reported that following the receipt of another letter from the Community Safety Minister re nuclear weapon convoy safety Nukewatch will write to the MSPs who spoke in Mark Ruskell's Members Debate (May 2018) and update them on what has and has not happened since. In particular Nukewatch will share their concern at the apparent collusion on a new low-transparency strategy between the UK Ministry of Defence and the Scottish government. Bill Kidd MSP & Ruth Maguire MSP suggested arranging a meeting with Community Safety Minister Ash Denham to discuss the report further.

Lynn Jamieson noted that the Hunterston re-starts had gone ahead, facilitated by the Office for Nuclear Regulation's change to the rules regarding the acceptable number of cracks in a reactor, without a murmur of complaint from the Scottish government. SCND working group on radiation risk is considering this in light of other risks. Janet Fenton will ensure updates on both these issues are made available to the Cross Party Group.

Next Meeting. Subject to Covid, a December meeting is planned with other Irish colleagues.