

## ***Now is the time* - Advocating for further progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons**

### Basic Information

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision
<b>Draft Resolution</b>	To present to the Methodist Conference the text of the petition of the UK churches for adoption.
<b>Alternative Options to Consider, if Any</b>	To receive the attached report and commend the advocacy initiative <i>Now is the time</i> to churches, circuits and districts.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	The aim of this resolution is to obtain the endorsement of the Methodist Church for the advocacy initiative of UK churches calling for further progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons.
<b>Main Points</b>	2010 offers an important opportunity to make progress on non-proliferation and disarmament as governments enter an intense period of negotiation. It could be argued that the call for a new legally binding verifiable and universal agreement to eliminate all nuclear weapons is a corollary of 2006 Conference Resolution 34.4.
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	2006 Conference Resolution 34.4: <i>The Conference opposes replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system and urges the UK Government to take leadership in disarmament negotiations in order to bring about the intention of the Non-Proliferation Treaty for the elimination of all nuclear weapons.</i>
<b>Consultations</b>	Ecumenical partners, government and secular agencies.

### Summary of Impact

<b>Standing Orders</b>	None
<b>Faith and Order</b>	None
<b>Financial</b>	None
<b>Personnel</b>	None
<b>Legal</b>	None
<b>Wider Connexional</b>	None
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	Positive in terms of strengthening ecumenical cooperation in the area of international security
<b>Risk</b>	None

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### **Background**

1. The Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference is held every five years and meets in New York in May 2010. In addition NATO is conducting a strategic concept review which will assess the nature and future role of nuclear weapons within overall defence posture.
2. The commitment of the United States and Russia to substantially reduce the stockpiles of warheads and missiles, through the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) follow-on agreement, provides encouragement that after a decade of stagnation international agreement on wider disarmament and non-proliferation measures might be achieved this year.
3. There is a realistic possibility that the nine states that have not yet ratified Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty could be persuaded to do so, enabling the Treaty to enter into force.
4. There is substantial political support for a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty to control the manufacture of bomb-grade material and place all such material under international control.
5. Nuclear technology and material is likely to proliferate further over the coming years presenting significant security risks. Ultimately, our security depends on further progress across the so-called three pillars of the NPT; 'disarmament', 'non-proliferation' and 'peaceful use of nuclear technology'.
6. Political agreement on a proposed new treaty to commit all states to general and complete disarmament appears still to be some way off. However there is now a serious policy debate on the possible stages to "global zero" to which the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament has made an important contribution with the publication of the report *Eliminating Nuclear Threats* in December 2009<sup>1</sup>.

### **The call from Churches**

7. The World Council of Churches Central Committee adopted a "Statement of Hope in a Year of Opportunity" on 1 September 2009<sup>2</sup> and issued a letter to world leaders on 28 October 2009.
8. On 12 March 2010 the Conference of European Churches issued a statement and published recommendations for the Common EU Position at the NPT Review Conference<sup>3</sup>.
9. In 2006 Methodist Conference passed resolution 34.4: "The Conference opposes replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system and urges the UK Government to take leadership in disarmament negotiations in order to bring about the intention of the Non-Proliferation Treaty for the elimination of all nuclear weapons."
10. In response nine UK denominations are collaborating in an advocacy initiative coordinated by the Joint Public Issues Team titled "Now is the time"<sup>4</sup>. This initiative is engaging with Parliamentarians, political parties, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Cabinet Office. It has received the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.icnnd.org](http://www.icnnd.org)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/geneva-2009/reports-and-documents/report-on-public-issues/statement-of-hope-in-a-year-of-opportunity-seeking-a-nuclear-weapon-free-world.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/nuclear-disarmament/>

<sup>4</sup> [www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk](http://www.endnuclearweapons.org.uk)

endorsement of Baroness Williams, the PM's adviser on nuclear disarmament and other high profile figures. The initiative invites people to write to their MPs and sign a petition, the text of which is offered to Methodist Council for adoption.

11. Now is the Time petition statement: -

*We believe that the use or threat of use of weapons of mass destruction is immoral.*

*We acknowledge the spread and increasing accessibility of nuclear technology and the threat that this poses to our security. We are encouraged by the prospect of significant reductions in US and Russian nuclear arsenals.*

*We call on nuclear weapons states to refrain from updating their nuclear arsenals and remind them of their "unequivocal undertaking" to meet their obligations to eliminate all nuclear weapons under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).*

*We owe it to our children and our grandchildren to seize the opportunity to put in place a new legally binding verifiable and universal agreement to eliminate all nuclear weapons.*

*Now is the time.*