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Young Leaders Develop Plan to Work Toward a Nuclear-Free World

Santa Barbara, CA (August 24, 2005) – A gathering of 50 young leaders, policy experts and veteran activists met from August 15-21, 2005 in Santa Barbara, California to discuss issues and develop action plans around nuclear disarmament, the social and environmental justice implications of the nuclear fuel cycle, including uranium mining and indigenous peoples, the role of universities in nuclear weapons production, alternatives to nuclear energy, and toxic waste disposal.

Titled “Think Outside the Bomb,” the conference was organized by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation with assistance from the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research (Maryland), Western States Legal Foundation (California), Women’s Action for New Directions (Georgia), Educators for Social Responsibility (New York), Nuclear Information and Resource Service (Washington, DC), American Friends Service Committee (Hawaii), and other non-governmental organizations.

Participants ranged from 15 to 29 years of age and hailed from 17 states, including California, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Texas, Illinois, Washington State, Washington DC, as well as from the Marshall Islands and Kazakhstan. Participants came from diverse ethnic backgrounds, fields of study and career aspirations.

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Inspired by the need for a new generation of leaders working toward a nuclear-free world, the participants agreed to establish a diverse network of individuals and organizations for the purpose of communication, interaction, support, and to collect and disseminate resources. The youth participants crafted a collective “Principles of Unity,” which states in part, “The continued research, development, manufacture, testing, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons violate international law and basic human rights to life, dignity and security. Nuclear weapons disable functional diplomacy and prevent the establishment of a just peace. The only way to halt this vicious cycle is to devalue and delegitimize the role of nuclear weapons in national security policies. Nuclear weapons must be abolished.”

The full text of the “Principles of Unity” is available online at www.wagingpeace.org. For more information on the “Think Outside the Bomb National Conference on Nuclear Issues” or the “Principles of Unity,” please contact the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation’s Director of Youth Programs, Michael Coffey, at (805) 452-1166 or by email at youth@napf.org.

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PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

From August 15-21, 2005, young adults from all regions of the United States, as well as representatives from China, Germany, Kazakhstan, the Marshall Islands and South Korea gathered in Santa Barbara, California for the first-of-its-kind "Think Outside the Bomb" National Youth Conference on Nuclear Issues. Inspired by the need for a new generation of leaders working toward a nuclear-free world, the participants agreed to establish a diverse network of individuals and organizations for the purpose of communication, interaction, support, and to collect and disseminate resources through the internet and other channels.

Aware of the historical context and the current urgency to address the devastating affects of the nuclear complex;

Recognizing the need to develop connections between the nuclear complex and global, environmental, racial, economic and social justice;

Emphasizing the importance of the right to self-determination of all indigenous peoples, who have been most affected by the nuclear complex;

Drawing attention to the need to redefine security in terms of human and environmental needs;

Underlining the need to move beyond military force as the principle means of solving conflict and instead resolve conflict by nonviolent means;

Understanding the devastation caused by nuclear weapons and memorializing the many victims of bomb production at every step – from uranium mining to design, to production, to testing, to use and threat of use; and

Reaffirming our humanity through mutual respect, nonviolence and consensus-building,

The "Think Outside the Bomb" Network agree to the following Principles of Unity:

The nuclear fuel cycle is an inherently dangerous process that is destructive to the health, environment and economies of all peoples and environments irrespective of political boundaries. Historically and currently, this process has disproportionately and adversely affected people of color; downwinders and workers; and indigenous, colonized and disenfranchised peoples, threatening future generations and undermining local sovereignty and environmental sustainability. Reparations must be made to all victims of the nuclear fuel cycle. Damages and risks caused by past and existing uses of radioactive material must be alleviated.

The current trend of utility consolidation around the world is monopolistic and leads to increasing dominance of corporate utilities over people's ability to choose their sources of energy generation. The use of nuclear reactors for the generation of electricity is economically infeasible, unsustainable and environmentally destructive. Nuclear reactors and power plants create stockpiles of nuclear waste with no safe, scientifically credible or permanent storage solutions, putting the health and security of local communities at grave risk. There must be a moratorium on the construction of new nuclear reactors and power plants and currently operating ones must be decommissioned and replaced by clean, safe, renewable energy generation, efficiency and conservation.

High level and low level nuclear waste from nuclear weapons and energy production is a threat to future generations. Any process to isolate and dispose of nuclear waste must consider the social and environmental impacts on all communities. The mining, milling, reprocessing and enrichment of uranium for use in nuclear weapons and power plants must cease immediately.

The arms race is perpetuated by competition between the branches of the military and subsidized by the Pentagon, whose layers of secrecy reinforce US militaristic hegemony. The continued research, development, manufacture, testing, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons violate international law and basic human rights to life, dignity and security. Nuclear weapons disable functional diplomacy and prevent the establishment of a just peace. The only way to halt this vicious cycle is to devalue and delegitimize the role of nuclear weapons in national security policies. Nuclear weapons must be abolished.

The nuclearization and militarization of our schools perpetuates systems of oppression on our campuses and threatens our civil liberties. Nuclear weapons research, development, testing and production only takes place with the obsequious support of our Universities, whose funding is overwhelmingly funneled through the Pentagon, multinational weapons manufacturers and their subsidiaries. This is a drain on human and financial resources and is antithetical to the values our educational institutions should be fostering, such as critical thinking, independent research and participatory democracy. Because generations have grown up without a holistic understanding of the serious problems wrought by the Nuclear Age, a balanced curriculum to address these issues must be integrated into public and private educational systems at all levels.

Continuing the legacy of young people as leaders in movement building, we empower ourselves and our peers to foster authentic relationships across racial, religious, gender, political, ethnic, cultural and class boundaries, as well as with previous and future generations. Young people must seek and be supported in leadership positions in communities, organizations, coalitions, networks, and in other non-violent forums for creative organizing. The "Think Outside the Bomb" Network seeks to make the vision embodied in these Principles of Unity a reality.