

## Conference report – June 2010

The four week NPT conference, attended by 190 countries, was based around the three main areas, or *pillars*, of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the promotion of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Each pillar was debated concurrently by sub-delegations aiming to strengthen the NPT regime while defending their own state interests. Often, though not exclusively, debate would coalesce and occur between blocs of groups, for example – between the Nuclear Weapon States who have signed up to the NPT (P5) and the Non-Aligned Members (NAM).

The fourth and final week of the conference represented the most frantic time for discussion and bargaining between delegations, often with late night phone calls back to national government advisors when crucial junctures had been reached. Of course, real decisions were made behind closed doors and away from the media and NGO representatives, as was the case with much of the debate, which, for the most part, occurred in closed sessions. However, at the beginning and at the end of sessions, it was usually possible to mingle and talk with willing delegations. For example, the Chinese delegation in Committee I was more than happy to be informed of the work of UNA-UK, so much so in fact, that a Deputy Division Director from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was keen to procure a copy of the UNA-UK's 2005-2008 Impact Report!

Away from the deliberations taking place in the Committees, NGOs were still busy in side rooms promoting their own work or coordinating consolidated lobbying of various delegations. Within such a politically charged atmosphere it was all too easy to lose sight of the goals for which the NPT was brought into being. Attending an NGO session organized by Akira Kawasaki of Japan showing a short film which followed a world tour of the *Hibakusha*, (survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bomb explosions) many of whom were in attendance, one was reminded of the importance of fazing out and securing weapons which had such capacity to destroy. As one of the inspirational survivors whispered to me as we sat together during the session– *"I feel anger inside me, but this is of no good unless you use this to achieve what you want to achieve. I want there to be no nuclear weapons."*

Late on 27 May 2010, the President of the Conference revealed the Draft Final Document. After last minute foot dragging, the final text was adopted through unanimous consensus on 28 May. Although it has inherent compromises, the document, and the conference, is widely held to have been more successful in terms of tangible outcomes than those of 2000 and 2005. The most pertinent successes were represented by genuine efforts towards the establishment of a Nuclear Weapons Free Middle-East and language that reinforced specific steps on achieving nuclear disarmament, strengthening non-proliferation and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Of course, movement on establishing a nuclear weapons convention, as well as standardising the additional protocol are still beyond reach, but there is much to pin our hopes on.

**James Kearney**