



## In the spotlight

### Hon Phil Goff, Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand

**Q:** *New Zealand is a small country, yet it has been able to exert influence and win respect for the role it plays in promoting nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in the world. As Prime Minister Rt Hon Helen Clark vividly expressed it: “New Zealand’s goal is to see the complete, verifiable, and irreversible elimination of weapons of mass destruction. This is a deeply held, long term and consistent foreign policy priority.”*<sup>1</sup>

*How did New Zealand’s stance on nuclear disarmament develop historically?*

**A:** New Zealand has had a long and consistent history of speaking out strongly against nuclear weapons and nuclear testing. In 1958, at the United Nations, we called for the negotiation of a multilateral treaty to ban nuclear testing and in 1963 New Zealand was among the first signatories of the Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, New Zealand advocated strongly against nuclear testing in the Pacific including taking this up with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) when we sought an end to atmospheric testing in 1973. We also welcomed the ICJ’s advisory opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons was generally illegal, and that there exists an obligation “to pursue in good faith, and to bring to a conclusion, negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control”.

New Zealand was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on 1 June 1968. New Zealand’s ratification of the Comprehensive

Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1999 further signalled our commitment to the end of nuclear weapon testing as part of our longstanding and active efforts to see the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In 1987, the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone Disarmament and Arms Control Act 1987 established in New Zealand a nuclear free zone and also implemented in New Zealand the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone (the Treaty of Rarotonga).

a human weakness but for the first time mankind had the potential to destroy itself.

Our own region, the Asia-Pacific, was a major testing zone for the nuclear weapon States and more significantly, is the only region which has experienced the use of nuclear weapons. Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to be symbols of determination to prevent the human suffering, loss of life and massive destruction from the use of nuclear weapons. That must never happen again.

The history of nuclear testing in our region, the Pacific, brought the cold reality of nuclear weapons close to our shores. The irreparable damage caused by nuclear explosions can be catastrophic for any country but especially for small island States. Nuclear testing in our region served to highlight the fragility of communities in the South Pacific that rely heavily on the environment for their economic livelihoods. This strengthened our resolve to work for progress towards nuclear disarmament.

The total elimination of nuclear weapons represents the ultimate goal for New Zealand. New Zealand’s priority has always been and remains, a nuclear weapons free world. New Zealand will continue to speak out against nuclear weapons, seeking an end to their development, testing and use under any circumstances.

**Q:** *New Zealand was, together with Australia, instrumental in proposing and setting up a nuclear weapon free zone in the South Pacific, encompassing Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Island countries south of the equator, also called the Rarotonga Treaty.*

*How did the Treaty so far contribute to regional security? What other regional*

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The actions we have taken internationally and domestically reflect the high level of public and broad political support that our long-standing anti-nuclear stance continues to enjoy.

**Q:** *The United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, once called the New Zealanders ‘model international citizens’.*

*What is the driving force behind New Zealand’s engagement in nuclear disarmament?*

**A:** The main driving force behind New Zealand’s engagement in nuclear disarmament was the knowledge of the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. Conflict has always been

<sup>1</sup>The Prime Minister’s address to the Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament, 8 December 2004



*initiatives is New Zealand envisaging to further the nuclear disarmament cause?*

**A:** New Zealand remains committed to working with like-minded countries, including as part of the New Agenda Coalition, for a world free of nuclear weapons. This includes pressing for greater progress on commitments made under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in particular the unequivocal undertaking on nuclear disarmament given by the nuclear weapon States, encouraging universalisation of the CTBT, particularly by Annex 2 States, and promoting the establishment of the Southern Hemisphere Nuclear Weapons Free Zone.

The widespread support for the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone demonstrates how countries can further the nuclear disarmament cause within regions.

From a global perspective all nuclear weapon free zones are complementary and mutually reinforcing of each other. All are united in their renunciation of nuclear weapons. Such zones represent a fundamental reaffirmation of regional solidarity against nuclear weapons and we support proposals for the establishment of new nuclear weapon free zones in Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. New Zealand also works with Brazil on an annual resolution at the United Nations General Assembly to promote an initiative to create a Southern Hemisphere free of nuclear weapons.

**Q:** *New Zealand hosts seven International Monitoring System stations and has been a strong supporter of the CTBT. This was also expressed in a press release of March this year by your Office on the occasion of Viet Nam's ratification of the Treaty: "The entry into force of the CTBT is a priority for New Zealand. ... Viet Nam's ratification has now brought us one step closer to having the ban*

*on nuclear explosions in force under international law."*

*What regional and global measures has New Zealand undertaken to encourage other States to sign and/or ratify the Treaty?*

**A:** New Zealand remains fully committed to encouraging the universalisation of the CTBT. For New Zealand it is important that we back our political support for the Treaty by assisting the CTBT in its efforts to encourage States that have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty. Our emphasis has typically been on our own region, the Pacific, although where appropriate we have made bilateral representations encouraging those countries that have not done so to ratify the CTBT. While ratification by Annex 2 States is a requirement for the Treaty ultimately entering into force, all ratifications are important and add to the universality of the Treaty.

In the United Nations General Assembly New Zealand continues to play a lead role along with Mexico and Australia in coordinating an annual CTBT resolution which has achieved near consensus support. In addition, as part of a group of ten countries based in Vienna (G10), New Zealand co-authored a paper on the CTBT at the NPT Review Conference last year. This paper noted that the CTBT "constitutes an effective measure of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation in all its aspects and is vital to the NPT".

**Q:** *In your view, what are the main benefits of joining the CTBT?*

**A:** The entire international community stands to benefit from full endorsement of an international regime that has as its fundamental obligation the prohibition of nuclear weapons testing. Although the CTBT has yet to enter into force, the near universality of the CTBT sends a strong signal about the

legitimacy of nuclear weapons testing and development.

The build up of the International Monitoring System (IMS) has real value in supporting global stability. IMS technologies also have civil applications and, for example, might contribute to a tsunami warning system. The Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS) is doing good work in this regard but we can not afford to be complacent. Maintaining its momentum is a key priority for New Zealand. Only upon entry into force will this Treaty and its global verification regime be fully operational. A fully operational CTBT would be the first line of defence against nuclear testing, and, as such, a fundamental contribution towards nuclear disarmament. ■

### Biographical note



*Since first entering parliament in 1981, Phil Goff has held numerous portfolios including Foreign Affairs and Trade, Justice, Education and Housing.*

*During the period 1990 to 1993, he lectured in Political Studies at the Auckland Institute of Studies and undertook a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Scholarship to Nuffield College, University of Oxford in 1992.*

*His interest and experience in international affairs sees him currently hold the portfolios of Minister of Trade, Minister of Defence, Minister for Trade Negotiations, Minister of Pacific Island Affairs, Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control and Associate Minister of Finance. ■*