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In Saintes, City Council and candidates are unanimous for nuclear disarmament

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Seven people are competing to be Mayor of Saintes (Western France). All have replied to three questions sent by ACDN France. All have expressed, often vigorously, their support for nuclear disarmament that is comprehensive, universal and controlled. All have approved the involvement of the City. All have declared that they would support the RID-NBC gatherings (Rally for International Disarmament - Nuclear, Biological and Chemical), of which the third will be held in Saintes on 9-11 May 2008

Meanwhile the City Council, at its last meeting before the elections, unanimously passed two motions, one to aid the RID-NBC, the other to make Saintes the only French city that is not only a member (since June 2000) of the global "Abolition 2000" network but also (from 5 March 2008) a member of the "Mayors for Peace" network chaired by the Mayor of Hiroshima.

As for the candidates for the local "cantonal" elections, those of all parties, from the Greens to the UMP (the party of president Sarkozy), declare themselves "completely supportive of nuclear disarmament".

Might the wind at last be changing, now that American men like Kissinger and Shultz, after McNamara, are calling for the elimination of all nuclear weapons, and now that PM Gordon Brown is proposing to discuss disarmament in the name of Great Britain?

When will we be getting the great debate about France's nuclear policies?

ACDN, Saintes, 6 March 2008

LETTER TO MAYORAL CANDIDATES

As you doubtless know, article VI of the NPT - which France has signed - makes provision for the banning of all nuclear weapons and their elimination under strict and effective international control.

For this reason we wish to put to you, and to the other candidates of 2008, the following three questions, directly linked to the purpose of our association:

Q1. *Do you personally wish France to become involved, as the UK as said it will, in a process of negotiation with the other nuclear states (whether signatories or not of the NPT) for the purpose of eliminating all nuclear weapons?*

Q2. *In your capacity as head of a list for the municipal elections, do you approve the fact that Saintes has since 2000 been a member of the global "Abolition 2000" network, which calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the current motion that Saintes also join the "Mayors for Peace" association, which has the same goal?*

Q3. *If you become Mayor of Saintes (or continue to be), what support do you intend to give to our cause, beyond officially opening the 3rd RID-NBC, which will be held in Saintes on 9-11 May 2008?*

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We are ready to provide any information you may seek about this, notably suggestions for how the city might act or assist. Please send your precise replies, which we will make public on March 5.

Yours sincerely,

For ACDN

JMM, CM, YL

FROM PIERRE MAUDOUX (Saintes en mouvement):

Thanks for your questionnaire. Here are my replies as a a human being, humanist, democrat... and of course candidate:

Q1. *Do you personally wish France to become involved, as the UK as said it will, in a process of negotiation with the other nuclear states (whether signatories or not of the NPT) for the purpose of eliminating all nuclear weapons?*

At a different time, in the Cold War which we are glad did not produce a major armed conflict, one must recognize that nuclear deterrence spared many lives.

Today it is clear that with the resurgence or continuation of conflicts around the earth, nuclear deterrence has become not only useless but dangerous. It has not protected the USA from terrorism. It has not prevented the Iraq conflict or the African wars and massacres. Today to accept the recourse to nuclear arms for some powers pushes other nations that do not possess them to obtain them, with the risks that that brings for all humanity.

If disarmament is comprehensive and securely monitored, I say Yes to your question.

Q2. *In your capacity as head of a list for the municipal elections, do you approve the fact that Saintes has since 2000 been a member of the global "Abolition 2000" network, which calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the current motion that Saintes also join the "Mayors for Peace" association, which has the same goal?*

I approve that affiliation and would extend it (unless the Council's majority is opposed) I don't see why the incoming Council would vote against it!

Q3. *If you become Mayor of Saintes (or continue to be), what support do you intend to give to our cause, beyond officially opening the 3rd RID-NBC, which will be held in Saintes on 9-11 May 2008?*

I will bring you the logistic support of the city's communication service. Even, if by chance the Council did not wish (given the complexity that could result from the election) the City's affiliation to those networks mentioned, I will do my best to support your rallies which in my opinion are good for the cultural and humanistic reputation of our city, and can have a positive impact on activity in the city centre. We will seek together the best means of communication and organization, so that your events are a real success.

Best wishes.

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Pierre Maudoux

â€" -

FROM JEAN ROUGER (Saintes en harmonie), Left: PS, PCF, Verts

Since we must answer in a perspective where electoral considerations cannot be absent from the objectivity of replies, here are some fragmentary elements that we feel we can send you today (March 1)

Q1. *Do you personally wish France to become involved, as the UK as said it will, in a process of negotiation with the other nuclear states (whether signatories or not of the NPT) for the purpose of eliminating all nuclear weapons?*

Personally, if I was still an MP (since the matter lies in the legislative competence), I would work for the elimination of all the world's nuclear weapons.

Q2. *In your capacity as head of a list for the municipal elections, do you approve the fact that Saintes has since 2000 been a member of the global "Abolition 2000" network, which calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the current motion that Saintes also join the "Mayors for Peace" association, which has the same goal?*

Yes to the first part. I don't know the Mayors for Peace! Oh to have free time!

Q3. *If you become Mayor of Saintes (or continue to be), what support do you intend to give to our cause, beyond officially opening the 3rd RID-NBC, which will be held in Saintes on 9-11 May 2008?*

Guess! You may possibly find the solution by reading my earlier answers.

Now, everybody has to vote!

â€" -

FROM DANIEL METRAUD (Alternative Left)

In reply to yours of 28 February, we affirm first that we share totally your struggle for peace and the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

To us it is obvious that France has to commit herself with all nations - NPT signatories or not - to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We are committed to Saintes remaining in the Abolition 2000 network. We completely support affiliation to Mayors for Peace.

We will support and take part in the 3rd RID-NBC on May 9-11, in ways that we will work out together.

â€" -

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FROM PHILIPPE CALLAUD (Saintes citoyenne) MRG

This reply is delayed by the abundance of mail, I regret, but I did receive your letter and give it attention.
The problematics of nuclear arms have long been highlighted by NGOs and certain emblematic Mayors like Mr Akiba. It is high time for all elected representatives, including heads of state and representatives of their people, to support this cause, which is vital for the future and for good international relations.

Abolition 2000 does effective lobbying work. I note the different actions of Abolition 2000 in Belgium which now brings together many NGOs and over 200 Belgian mayors.
The AFCDRP (French Association of Communes, Departements and Regions for Peace), created in 1997, includes the French cities in the Mayors for Peace network and already hs the support of some French towns like Harfleur and Malakoff. With a long tradition of sharing and openness, the city of Saintes should join the AFCDRP.

In addition, I consider it essential to promote the UN resolution making 21 September the International Day of Peace. The point of this symbolic day is, as you know, to promote a culture of nonviolence and peace for the children of the world. The ongoing inclusion of this Day in the city's calendar is paramount for generations to come.
I am available to meet you and consider details of this ongoing action.

Best wishes

Philippe Callaud

â€” -
JEAN-PHILIPPE ARDOUIN (Mieux vivre à Saintes)

Q1.
That seems to me necessary.

Q2. Yes.

Q3. General disarmament is a good thing, but we have to ensure that all nations respect it.

â€” -

FROM BERNARDETTE SCHMITT (Saintes en mouvement), retiring Mayor

Q1. *Do you personally wish France to become involved, as the UK as said it will, in a process of negotiation with the other nuclear states (whether signatories or not of the NPT) for the purpose of eliminating all nuclear weapons?*
Following on from my predecessor, I wanted to be involved personally in acting for a nuclear-free world.

Unfortunately France has been and remains today one of the chief proliferators, partly through commercializing nuclear technology. In fact, for many developing countries, the building of nuclear plants is an essential step to obtaining the technology and materials necessary for developing nuclear weapons. For France now to be trying to sell nuclear reactors to those nations is dangerous for the stability of the globe and of France herself. I therefore hope that Gordon Brown is followed by many other heads of state, including President Sarkozy, in his desire for global nuclear disarmament. France as the homeland of Hunman Rights cannot neglect the danger these weapons pose for

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civilian populations in all nations. France must negotiate for multilateral disarmament and for a strengthening of sanctions against NPT signatories that are not respecting that treaty.

Q2. *In your capacity as head of a list for the municipal elections, do you approve the fact that Saintes has since 2000 been a member of the global "Abolition 2000" network, which calls for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the current motion that Saintes also join the "Mayors for Peace" association, which has the same goal?*

One must admit that the debate around nuclear weapons is a marginalized one, which States often avoid by responding to questions with a deafening silence. Saintes' joining of the Abolition 2000 and Mayors for Peace networks is an act of solidarity with the cities worldwide that are working to make Nations recognize how dangerous and useless weapons are mass destruction really are. We hope thus to give more credibility to the citizens working for disarmament, by forcing States to listen to their worries and their recommendations. I regret that policies concerning arms and military strategy have not been the subject of sufficient public debate in recent presidential elections. I seems to me essential that citizens be able to give their opinions on these matters.

Q3. *If you become Mayor of Saintes (or continue to be), what support do you intend to give to our cause, beyond officially opening the 3rd RID-NBC, which will be held in Saintes on 9-11 May 2008?*

As you know, we have been firmly committed for 7 years to holding the RID-NBC gathering in Saintes. Focusing on the question of disarmament, they gather personalities from all over the world, every two years. They create discussions on the state of nuclear proliferation, the positions of different states, and the actions that citizens can take for disarmament. For these reasons they are essential on give a new dimension to the debate on nuclear weapons. We will therefore continue to give materials and financial assistance - modest, admittedly, but highly symbolic - to the RID-NBCs.

â€” -

BERNARD CHRETIEN (Liste alternative & citoyenne) gave his support orally.

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