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Good News from Russia: nuclear disarmament progressing... unintentionally!

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It is rare to have a fortunate catastrophe. But this is one: the fire which destroyed the missile-equipped nuclear sub "K84-Ekaterinburg" in dry dock means that Russia has just taken one unexpected step forward towards nuclear disarmament.

This event is even more welcome in that it caused no death or injury. By contrast, the accident of November 2008 on a Russian nuclear attack sub during a test in the Sea of Japan, which caused 20 deaths and as many injuries, due to a fault in the fire-protection system. (That particular sub, "Nerpa" has just been delivered to India, two years behind schedule). We recall also the "Kursk", which was wrecked in the Barents Sea in August 2000 with the loss of 118 crewmen.

Furthermore, if we can believe the Russian authorities, the recent fire caused no radioactive leak capable of threatening the population.

This submarine, the "K84-Ekaterinburg" had entered service in 1984 and carried 16 missiles of the R-29RMU "Sineva" type, which were test-fired successfully in 2010 and 2011 and can carry 4 to 10 nuclear warheads more than 10000km - each warhead having a power of 100 kT (7 times the Hiroshima bomb). The maximum destructive power of such a sub is thus equivalent to over 1000 Hiroshimas. Now that the K84 is out of service, and therefore unable to harm anyone, it has ceased to threaten the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Unfortunately there are other nautical monsters, Russian, American, French, British, Chinese or Israeli, that continue to maraud in the ocean deeps, with bristling weapons and permanent threats to annihilate humankind. This could occur accidentally, since not one is immune from accidents, as the K84 has just proved.

We must therefore regret that this unexpected disarmament step has not resulted from Russian intentions, let alone from a concerted plan to dismantle nuclear arsenals involving Russia, the USA, France and all the nuclear powers (official or otherwise).

The best "New Year Wish" one can express for 2012 is that just such a concerted plan should be formed and carried out as soon as possible. In stating this wish, we hope that the French people will compel the next Parliament and President, after the elections, to implement genuine nuclear disarmament.

For these reasons we call on our fellow-citizens to write to the candidates for presidency demanding the organization of a referendum on the following question:

"Do you agree that France should participate with the other states concerned in the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, under mutual international monitoring that is strict and effective?"

It is especially important to demand this of Monsieur Sarkozy and his rival Monsieur Hollande: for the former *"nuclear deterrence is the Nation's life-insurance";* and the latter has recently declared: *"I will maintain nuclear deterrence".* These men want the power to play at being top murderers, without asking our opinion about the matter. It is essential to let them know it.

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