



25th anniversary of historic Reykjavik nuclear arms summit reminds world of need for leadership, foresight and action

10 October, 2011 -- Geneva/Moscow/Washington: Efforts to ban atomic weapons and curb militarization of world affairs have not gone far enough in the 25 years since the historic disarmament summit in Reykjavik between Presidents Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan, and today's leaders must demonstrate foresight, leadership and action to respond to the many risks that threaten billions of people today, according to Green Cross International.

"In a world of new threats, nuclear weapons do not solve the real security problems that confront us today; indeed, reliance on them only makes the situation increasingly dangerous," says Mikhail Gorbachev, founding president of Green Cross International, the NGO he launched in 1993 that works at the nexus of insecurity and conflict, environmental degradation and poverty.

During 11-12 October, 1986, the presidents of the world's then two superpowers not only initiated steps leading to significant reductions in deployed long- and intermediate-range nuclear forces, including the elimination of an entire class of threatening missiles. Their negotiations in Reykjavik also marked a turning point in world history that reversed the nuclear arms escalation that had threatened the world for a generation, thus paving the way to the end to the Cold War.

"In 1986 the leaders of the Soviet Union and the USA were up to the challenge, and launched this global transformation," says Alexander Likhotal, President of Green Cross International. "Today, a new set of leaders now faces the same test of courage, vision and transformational leadership."

"Today, as 25 years ago, the world must take stock of our current challenges. We cannot ignore any longer the fact that half the world's population lives on one or two dollars a day. Sixty per cent of the ecosystems have been broken. The atmosphere has been polluted. Oceans and rivers have been poisoned. Unchecked climate change will pose within the next decade an unacceptable risk of catastrophic and irreversible harm on a global scale," Mr. Likhotal says.

Mr Gorbachev adds: "Just as mutual assured destruction had its place in the 20th century, but was proven ultimately unsustainable, resource-intensive growth had also had its day.

Such growth fans other crises, including environmental and economic, which both threaten people's lives and drive many below the poverty line."

Green Cross believes that cutting military spending – which reached [US\\$1.6 trillion in 2010](#) – could create enormous peace dividends to tackle the challenges the world faces today.

"It's clear there are no quick-fix solutions. But we must put the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons back on the agenda, not in a distant future but as soon as possible," says Paul Walker, Director of the Green Cross Environmental Security and Sustainability program. "It links the moral imperative - the rejection of such weapons from an ethical standpoint - with the imperative of assuring security."

"The most immediate step is for the US to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty," added Walker, "along with the other eight outstanding nuclear-capable nations – China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan. And then the US and Russia must engage in deeper cuts, beyond last year's New START agreement, in nuclear weapons. Another important step would be to establish a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in Europe and elsewhere in the world similar to those existing in Latin America or Africa."

Green Cross International is an independent non-profit and nongovernmental organization working to address the inter-connected global challenges of security, poverty eradication and environmental degradation through a combination of high-level advocacy and local projects. GCI is headquartered in Geneva and has a growing network of national organisations in over 30 countries.

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