

Eliminating the threat of nuclear arms

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President Barack Obama has made his intention of eliminating all nuclear weapons a tenet of his administration's foreign policy. Professor Sidney Drell, a US theoretical physicist and arms-control expert, explains in February's *Physics World* what Obama needs to do to make that honourable intention a reality.

Professor Drell, a professor emeritus at the SLAC National Accelerator Center, a senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and an adviser on technical national security and arms-control for the US Government, has recently co-authored a report called *Nuclear Weapons in 21st Century US National Security*, in collaboration with the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Physical Society and the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

In his article for *Physics World*, he explains how and why there is need now, more than ever, to introduce globally ratified systems to control the spread of nuclear arms.

Professor Drell explains: "The world is teetering on the edge of a new and more perilous nuclear era, facing a growing danger that nuclear weapons - the most devastating instrument of annihilation ever invented - may fall into the hands of 'rogue states' or terrorist organizations that do not shrink from mass murder on an unprecedented scale.

His article makes two recommendations to Obama and his team. The first is to 'revisit Reykjavik' - Reykjavik hosted a summit in 1986 where former US President Ronald Reagan and then Soviet premier Mikhail

Gorbachev agreed to begin reducing the size of their respected countries' nuclear arsenals. As the US and Russia still possess more than 90 per cent of the world's nuclear warheads, it is imperative that they take the lead, Drell says.

Drell's second recommendation is that the new Obama administration should adopt a process for bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) into effect. "The new administration should initiate a timely bipartisan, congressional review of the value of the CTBT for US security," he says.

Drell concludes: "With these two steps outlined above, President Obama has a historic opportunity to start down a practical path towards achieving his stated goal of 'eliminating all nuclear weapons.'"

Source: Institute of Physics

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