Critical Issues Forum

“Education is quite simply, peace-building by another name... Experience and learning are indeed crucial pillars of peace,”
Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General

Today, there is a critical need for education of the younger generation in the fields of nuclear nonproliferation and security. With the beginning of the new century, humankind is faced with qualitatively different risks and challenges, such as nuclear weapons acquisition by new states and international terrorist groups, which significantly increases the problem of proliferation. Prevention of nuclear weapons proliferation is widely acknowledged by Russia, the United States, and other states as one of the main national and global security challenges. However, changes within the global environment and the threat of proliferation demand new answers to these new challenges. The answers must come from the younger generation, whose knowledge of nonproliferation and peacekeeping is forming at present – during their high school years. To encourage understanding of these new risks and challenges, security and nonproliferation issues must be included in high school curricula and facilitate the development of critical thinking for further understanding of these issues. Education is an important tool for peace and disarmament. Hence, the development of programs for high school students, which aim to educate and introduce methods of analytical work on key issues in the nonproliferation and global security arenas, is essential and timely.

The Nuclear Cities Information Center (NCIC) is located in Novouralsk, one of ten Russian's closed nuclear cities. The NCIC was established in September 2000 to develop educational lasting ties between students and teachers of high schools in the USA and high schools within ten Russia’s nuclear cities.

Since 2002 the Center has been involved in a number of educational and training projects implemented with Russian and international partners.

From 2002 to 2013 with the assistance from James Martin Center for Nonproliferation studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies (CNS), NCIC developed and implemented projects dealing with nuclear nonproliferation issues in Novouralsk, Russia, in which high school students from Russia and the United States took part. During this period 8 projects were accomplished by the NCIC in Novouralsk. The projects were realized in close cooperation with the Ural Federal University and Novouralsk Technical Institute that provided technical and science expertise.

Successful implementation of the NCIC project activities contributed to the development of nonproliferation courses that have already become the part of high school education in the nuclear cities.

The Center aims to promote student exchange between nuclear cities in Russia and the USA and to foster dialogue on nonproliferation and disarmament issues. Since 2002, NCIC has been coordinating the participation of Russian schools in the US nonproliferation educational program Critical Issues Forum (CIF) for high school students. The CIF program
engages high school students in nonproliferation research and outreach activities, introduces them to the field of WMD nonproliferation and encourages critical thinking. CIF participants are united by the realization of the threat of nuclear weapons and the risks of nuclear energy. The future belongs to them. It is vital that the younger generation knows that every individual is responsible in all that goes on in the world. Through education, understanding, and interaction, these young citizens will be creating a world free of nuclear weapons.