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Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and European Union High Representative Frederica Mogherini, March 31, 2015 (AP / Brendan Smialowski).

Japan's prime minister during the Fukushima catastrophe, Naoto Kan, delivered a message at the World Uranium Symposium in Quebec City in mid-April that it is time for the world to put an end to nuclear power. The symposium, held for the first time in Canada, tackled uranium issues, ranging from mining to fuel for nuclear reactors to explosive material for nuclear weapons.

This year will be a key year for debating the future of uranium, nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons. It's the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and it's time again for the UN conference that reviews the nuclear non-proliferation treaty every five years.

But the most high-profile nuclear issue is the interim accord between Iran and six world powers to restrict Iran's development of nuclear power.

In the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, one fatal flaw is the quid pro quo deal in which the nuclear haves agreed to provide uranium and nuclear energy to the have-nots, which would continue to be non-nuclear, and in exchange the haves promised to get rid of their nuclear arsenals and move toward general disarmament. Fifty years ago, diplomats should have foreseen the problems with such discriminatory arrangements.

Another problem with the treaty stems from oil-rich countries, like Iran, and poor countries, like India and Pakistan, seeking to build nuclear power plants for reasons ranging from abundant energy and technological prestige to their not-so-secret desire to build nuclear weapons.

But by agreeing in the interim accord to enrich uranium to 3.7% only, Iran will forego the possibility of producing weapons-grade and weapons-usable uranium. Iran also promises to take two-thirds of its centrifuges out of service — the most-advanced centrifuges needed to make highly enriched uranium.

In fact, India, Israel, Pakistan and many other countries will have nuclear programs that are far more extensive and dangerous than Iran's. Moreover, all countries with nuclear power and nuclear weapons will continue to produce hundreds of thousands of tons of nuclear waste that need human stewardship for many generations into the future.

If the fundamentals of the Iranian deal could be treated as a template for all countries, the international community would be well on its way to choking off the supply of weapons-usable material everywhere.

But the Iran deal will be opposed by Israel, Saudi Arabia, Republicans in the U.S. Congress and the remaining strong supporters of Israel in the Harper cabinet. In a rare bit of bipartisan compromise, the U.S. Congress and the Senate foreign relations committee amended language that threatened to give U.S. hawks a chance to derail the talks and raise the risk of military strikes.

All the proliferators that refuse to sign the non-proliferation treaty and accept the strictest safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency — like Israel, India, North Korea and Pakistan — must be sanctioned, not just Iran.

Canada banned exports of uranium and nuclear technology to India until recently, after New Delhi used Canadian technology to develop nuclear bombs in 1974. The recent announcement that Canadian miner Cameco Corp. intends to export Canadian uranium to feed India's reactors should not have been hailed. Until India signs and abides by the non-

proliferation treaty, it should be sanctioned like Iran.

The fear is, without an agreement, Iran could develop its own nuclear explosive over the next three months to a year. Libya's Moammar Gadhafi voluntarily disarmed his small arsenal — and was later attacked by NATO forces to aid his overthrow — while North Korea's Kim Jong-Un remains outside the treaty and threatens nuclear war against the U.S.

And despite the Iranian interim agreement, nuclear have-not Egypt might walk out of the treaty talks.

Soon we could be thrown into a trackless nuclear jungle with few rules and regulations.

The Stuxnet virus attack on Iran caused its centrifuges to destroy themselves in 2010. The possibility of a future military strike on Iran, in the style of Israel's 1981 strike on Iraq's Osirak reactor, looms large in many warriors' minds. These are costly military solutions that could dangerously backfire. The Stuxnet worm has already been replicated and Iran's nuclear facilities are hardened and spread out underground in mountains.

Within the existing framework of international law, the proposed Iranian deal is as good as we can expect.

The entire nuclear regime, especially its cornerstone treaty, needs much stronger debate and qualified support.

The good news is there are many regional nuclear-weapon-free treaties around the world, covering large swaths of Central and Latin America, Southeast Asia, Africa and Central Asia. Each commits the states not to deploy, construct, receive or test nuclear weapons on its territory. Already 113 nations — a majority of UN members — have signed or ratified these treaties, and 50% of the world's land area is governed by them.

There are even opportunities here in Canada to dismantle the nuclear option.

One proposal is to persuade Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne and Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard to sign a long-term electricity co-operation agreement. It could save both provinces \$14 billion over 20 years and allow the four Darlington reactors to be retired instead of rebuilt. It does not make sense for Ontario to refurbish its nuclear reactors to get electricity at a cost of 8.9 cents or more per kilowatt-hour, when Quebec exports its growing surplus of power to the U.S. for an average of three cents per kW-h.

Quebec is the fourth largest producer of hydro-electric power in the world and boasts the lowest electricity charges in North America. A Quebec-Ontario electricity supply contract would reduce Ontario's electricity bills by an estimated \$700 million a year and allow it to cancel Darlington, just like Quebec shut down Gentilly-2, its only operating nuclear power plant, in 2012.

Still, Ontario's highest-paid public servants at OPG will need to figure out somewhere safe to store mountains of nuclear waste that will remain dangerous for more than 7,000 future generations. OPG's proposal to bury some of it in man-made limestone tunnels in the Great Lakes water basin could threaten the fresh water supply of 40 million people.

Ontario — just like the rest of the world — will need plenty of diplomatic and practical solutions to problems stemming from uranium for centuries to come.

— Erika Simpson was a speaker at the World Uranium Symposium and will be a speaker at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference. She is an associate professor of international relations at Western University and the author of the book NATO and the Bomb.