A resolution on nuclear war was presented.

GIVEN:

1. World nuclear arsenals now contain approximately 50,000 warheads representing about 16,000 megatons of explosive force. This is equivalent to more than one million Hiroshima bombs, nearly 2,700 times the total explosive energy released in World War II or 3.3 tons of TNT for every human being alive today.

2. The World Health Organization estimated that the direct effects of a 10,000 Megaton exchange in terms of blast, heat, fire, and ionizing radiation would kill one billion people and would grievously injure another one billion who would die soon thereafter.

3. Recent scientific studies involving geographers, particularly the Report of the 18-nation Scientific Committee on the Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), have concluded that an exchange involving a small proportion of current inventories could generate sufficient airborne particulates to lower global surface temperature by a significant degree for an indeterminate period of time. This “nuclear winter” would inflict widespread starvation, thirst, radiation, epidemic, or mental breakdown. Such calamitous effects would not be confined to combatant nations but would extend to the entire surface of the planet.

4. Studies by geographers, among others, have demonstrated that no form of civil defense program or other defensive measures can substantially ameliorate the catastrophic effects on human beings and life support system due to the effects listed above.

5. Both the US and the USSR are deploying nuclear weapons to numerous new localities on land and sea. Because these weapons are equipped with multiple warheads and extremely accurate guidance systems that pose a mutual threat of first strike, there is increased dependence upon computer-activated or “hair-trigger” launch-on-warning systems which are subject to technical error or malfunction. Thus, we face an increasing risk of nuclear war by accident or miscalculation.

6. The rapid diffusion of nuclear technology has resulted in a proliferation of nations with potential weapons-capability, increasing the likelihood of nuclear war.

7. Geographers, whose professional objectives include understanding the nature and implications of human interaction with all aspects of their global environment, have a special responsibility to express urgent warning of the risks to humanity inherent in the present course of world events.

BASED UPON THE PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL JUDGMENTS OF ITS MEMBERS, THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN GEOGRAPHERS HEREBY URGES PROMPT RECOGNITION THAT:

1. Survival of human society depends on avoiding the use of nuclear weapons for any purpose.

2. The prospect of nuclear winter demands immediate reconsideration of the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) involving vastly exceeding the needs of deterrence whose effects on the earth’s atmosphere would threaten the habitability of the entire planet.

3. The United States, which pioneered the development of nuclear weapons, should take leadership in reducing the risk of nuclear war. Specifically, the United States should:
   a. Renounce first use of nuclear weapons
   b. Drastically reduce the number of its warheads to lessen the potential for nuclear winter.
   c. Refrain from further development and first deployment of new space-based and destabilizing systems such as the Strategic Defensive Initiative (“Star Wars”).
   d. Insist that all nations scrupulously respect existing nuclear arms treaties, including the ABM treaty, SALT I, and SALT II; and the limited test ban treaty.
e. Intensify diplomatic efforts to obtain new agreements with the Soviet Union in the interest of global survival, including a comprehensive test ban treaty, establishment of binational [sic] crisis centers and stronger control of proliferation of weapons technology and materials.

f. Seek peaceful alternatives to the rule of force as a basis for resolving or mitigating international disputes.