Sitting out a great opportunity

Dear Editor,

Through July 7, representatives of 132 countries are meeting at the United Nations to work out a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, the United States is not at the conference, nor is any other nuclear weapons state.

When Nikki Haley, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, announced that the United States would not take part in the proceedings, she asked, “Is there anyone who believes that North Korea would agree to a ban on nuclear weapons?” In fact, during the series of votes leading up to the conference, North Korea was the only nuclear power to vote for it to take place. North Korea and Russia have long offered to dismantle their nuclear programs in exchange for real security regimens.

It’s not as if participation in the conference would commit the United States to unilateral disarmament. If we sat at the treaty table in good faith, who knows how other countries might respond and what might happen?

The United States invented nuclear weapons. We are the only country to ever use them on human beings. We own the planet’s most powerful nuclear arsenal, and we still regularly threaten other countries with these weapons.

As a signatory to the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty, the United States agreed to negotiate complete nuclear disarmament “at an early date.” For us to refuse to even attend the conference is shameful.

If America wants to be great, here is a golden opportunity — to help lead the world away from the constant threat of global nuclear annihilation.

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