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Ms Katie Boanas with her daughter, Lucy, aged five, at her home in Christchurch yesterday. Ms Boanas has just returned from the United Nations session on disarmament, in New York.

'Hopeful signs' at disarmament talks

New Zealand's anti-nuclear stand had a high profile at United Nations talks on disarmament, said a peace movement representative at the talks, Ms Katie Boanas, yesterday.

Ms Boanas, of Christchurch, was one of the non-governmental advisers to the seven-member New Zealand delegation at the United Nations' third special session last month on disarmament.

The New Zealand non-governmental organisation representatives were given much greater input into discussions and speech preparation than those from other countries, she said.

As non-governmental representatives they were also able to be more direct than normal diplomacy allowed.

"We were able to say things to diplomats and ambassadors that our own diplomats could not," she said.

Ms Boanas said the French diplomats could do little but look away in

embarrassment when she asked them how France had the "audacity" to continue to test bombs at Mururoa while its representatives were at a world conference on disarmament.

While the talks had failed to come up with an agreement document on disarmament, Ms Boanas saw hopeful signs for peace.

"There was a lot of agreement on a lot of issues, but it was just a few countries who prevented a final document being reached," she said.

One sign of hope was the confirmation by delegates of statements from the Moscow summit in which the United States and the Soviet Union agreed that nuclear war could "never be won and should never be fought," Ms Boanas said.

"Even five years ago that would never have been said because they both believed a limited nuclear war was winnable.

"I think there is hope in

that acknowledgement," she said.

Getting 159 countries to agree in one month on how to get rid of the world's nuclear weapons was impossible, said Ms Boanas.

Issues interrelated with disarmament were also discussed, Ms Boanas said.

Agreement was reached on the need for a treaty outlawing chemical weapons, verification talks and a curb on arms trade.

Nuclear-free zones such as New Zealand's were proposed for the Middle East, the Balkans, Africa, and the Nordic region.

Delegates disagreed on whether Israel and South Africa should be officially named as nuclear Powers, and whether the naval arms race should be included in the final document.

"An agreement on a final consensus was really blocked by only a few countries," said Ms Boanas.