

Public Statement to the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons
25 April 2018, Geneva

With the first military use of atomic weapons in August 1945, which destroyed the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of these weapons became agonizingly clear. Since then, humankind has been forced to live in the shadow of apocalyptic destruction. Any use of nuclear weapons would not only destroy the past fruits of human civilization, it would disfigure the present and consign future generations to the grimmest of fates.

As people of faith, we advocate for the right of all people to live in security and dignity; we seek to heed the commands of conscience and the call to justice; we are united in our determination to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard Earth for present and future generations. Nuclear weapons profoundly violate all these values and commitments. We can never accept a conception of security that privileges the concerns of any state or nation over the good of the human and planetary whole. The horrific destructiveness of nuclear weapons makes their abolition the only path to authentic human security.

In July of last year, in an important step toward a world free from nuclear weapons, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by 122 governments. It is important to recall that the TPNW did not arise in isolation from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Its motivating logic was expressed in the final document at the NPT Review Conference in 2010, in which the Conference expressed deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirmed the “unequivocal undertaking of the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, to which all States parties are committed under article VI.” We strongly urge all States to sign and ratify the TPNW.

The nuclear disarmament agenda remains stalled; there are announced plans to produce new types of nuclear weapons, including those that could lower the threshold to use. Such actions stand in direct opposition to commitments made in this very forum. Nuclear modernization plans alone are slated to absorb resources on a scale that, redirected, could greatly advance progress toward the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: providing the basic necessities, protecting the environment, enhancing the health of women and girls and the future generations, and reducing the risks of wars and tensions around the world.

At this Preparatory Committee session, we strongly urge all States to engage in constructive dialogue in order to produce concrete and measurable results in line with NPT agreements and toward the shared goal of a world free from nuclear weapons, leading up to the 2020 Review Conference.

As people of faith, we urge States parties to:

1. Heed the voices of the world's hibakusha (all the victims of nuclear weapons) and recommit to the unequivocal undertaking to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons, noting that the fundamental justification for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is the prevention of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of such weapons;
2. Recognize that all effective measures are mutually reinforcing and advancement in each area supports advancement in others. The entry into force of the TPNW; the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); halting the production and eliminating global stockpiles of fissile materials (FMT); irreversibly dismantling global nuclear weapon production architecture; ending programs designed to increase the accuracy and versatility and lower the threshold for use of nuclear weapons; preventing a new nuclear arms race; and eliminating nuclear weapon stockpiles, among other effective measures, are global undertakings, fully compatible with and contributing to the realization of the objectives and commitments of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT);
3. Recognize that there are core prohibitions common to the NPT and the TPNW such as those against the transfer of nuclear weapons, against assisting other states in acquiring nuclear weapons, etc., which can be supported regardless of a state's position toward the TPNW. We encourage all States to engage in constructive dialogue regarding the strengthening of such prohibitions as a concrete and practical step toward fulfilling the obligation of all States parties to the NPT to pursue and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.
