

ICAN's UDTALELSE PÅ MØDET FORUD FOR NÆSTE NPT GENNEMGANGS KONFERENCE

The Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the Eleventh Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference is taking place in Geneva from July 22 to August 2nd. On the second day of the meeting, Naomi Zoka from Pax Christi Flanders (Belgium) delivered ICAN's statement to the states parties. Please find the full statement below.

Distinguished Delegates,

Nuclear risks are on the rise.

The chance of nuclear weapons use are higher than at any other time in my- and many others in this room's- lifetime. Nuclear-armed States are launching threats faster than they are test-launching delivery systems, resulting in a less stable, less secure and more dangerous world.

That is not the world in which we want to live. We cannot abide by policies in which one -or nine - countries are allowed to hold the rest of the world hostage through weapons of mass destruction, because the use of those weapons knows no borders. A conflict involving nuclear weapons thousands of miles from this conference room will still cause chaos and catastrophe to all of us, our families, and our future.

We do not need to see nuclear weapons used in war again to know their impact. As W.J. Hennigan [wrote](#) in the New York Times, recently:

The United States and the Soviet Union might have narrowly avoided mutual destruction, but there was a nuclear war: The blitz of testing left a wake of illness, displacement and destruction, often in remote locations where marginalized communities had no say over what happened on their own land.

The over 2000 nuclear tests - conducted primarily by the nuclear weapons states in this room- forever altered the lives of these thousands of women, men and children, and of little girls in particular, as girls exposed to nuclear weapons use and testing got cancer at twice the rate as the boys. Even before their creation, nuclear weapons have facilitated suffering amongst the oppressed.

From the Shinkolobwe mines in Eastern DRC where locals were forced into Uranium mines by their colonial rulers, to the multiple generations still battling life threatening diseases. Nuclear weapons have and always will be a tool for oppression regardless of which state possesses them.

Today, many survivors are demanding justice and accountability, and that nuclear weapons be eliminated once and for all, so that what happens to them, may never happen again. Yet the nuclear-armed countries are recklessly embarking on a new nuclear arms race. Every year, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear weapons, ICAN, exposes the unacceptable nuclear weapons. Despite their commitments under NPT's Article VI, the nuclear-armed states in the NPT spent \$86 billion dollars on their arsenals in 2023.

US spending accounts for 54% of the global total, at \$51.5 billion, while China and Russia also spent exorbitant amounts at \$11.8 billion and \$8.3 billion respectively. The UK increased spending by 17% from the previous year. Across the board, every nuclear-armed state increased the amount spent on their arsenals. Meanwhile the profit-seeking private industry hires powerful lobbyists to secure billion dollar contracts to develop these weapons of mass destruction.

Runaway nuclear spending is increasing the risks of nuclear weapons use- as are the applications of emerging technologies to nuclear weapons command, control, communications and delivery systems. We are entering an era of AI assisted information gathering to facilitate decision making.

But reducing the time needed to reach the only conclusion in the interest of humanity puts catastrophe seconds, instead of minutes away, as Annie Jacobsen's "Nuclear War: A Scenario" recently reminded us. The decision whether or not to use nuclear weapons doesn't need artificial intelligence - common sense says that it must always be no.

Another growing concern is the proliferation of nuclear weapons deployed on foreign territories. With Russia's stationing of weapons in Belarus, and the continued US deployment of weapons in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Türkiye, the NPT is failing to meet its first principles.

Nuclear weapons deployed in Europe are designed to be used in Europe. But the consequences will not stay on this continent- and this continued deployment is decreasing security for others.

The weapons in Europe illustrate another problem with nuclear weapons, one that is often raised in these rooms- and that is the lack of transparency.

As citizens in the countries hosting nuclear weapons, we have repeatedly called for the bombs to be removed, but our governments claim they cannot discuss the issue- that it is not something they can confirm or deny.

It seems that governments who support the use of nuclear weapons on their behalf believe in just enough transparency to make nuclear threats credible, but not enough transparency to enable effective democracy.

The practice of nuclear sharing has been allowed to continue for far too long, and now it is spreading. How will the governments currently defending the practice feel when weapons start to appear in countries outside of Europe? There are proposals out there that would spread nuclear weapons around the world- the very antithesis of the treaty we're here to discuss. Nuclear sharing is unacceptable.

That is why the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is so clear on the matter. Under the TPNW, a state cannot put the population of another state in jeopardy by deploying nuclear bombs in their country. It is clear, and clarity provides safety, security and reassurance.

The TPNW is also where progress is happening on disarmament. The robust intersessional process, the dynamic and highly engaging Meetings of States Parties, and the commitment to the same tenets that underpin the NPT and form its preamble, are sincere.

It is in the TPNW that the girls harmed by nuclear weapons use and testing are finding a pathway to justice. It is in the TPNW that the security concerns of all states, not just a few, are taken seriously and given due consideration.

The path to a world without nuclear weapons lies through the TPNW, and we invite all states to join us as we move closer to it without delay.

Thank you.