

## Three in four nations want nuclear weapons to be banned

MELBOURNE – Three-quarters of all nations support United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s proposal for a treaty to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons, according to a study released today by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Of the 146 nations to have declared their willingness to negotiate a new global disarmament pact, four maintain nuclear stockpiles: China, India, Pakistan and North Korea.

The report comes one week after the Doomsday Clock of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* was moved one minute closer to midnight in response to growing nuclear dangers around the world and a lack of progress towards nuclear abolition. “The vast majority of nations believe it is time to ban nuclear weapons in the same way that biological and chemical weapons have been banned,” said Tim Wright, an ICAN campaigner and the author of the study.

“Nuclear disarmament cannot continue at a snail’s pace if we are to prevent the further spread and use of nuclear weapons. It must be accelerated, and the best way to achieve that is through a comprehensive nuclear disarmament treaty with timelines and benchmarks for eliminating nuclear stockpiles,” Mr Wright said. “This must be the next big negotiating objective of the international community.”

Last November the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement—which has close to 100 million members and volunteers worldwide—adopted a historic resolution highlighting the humanitarian dangers of nuclear weapons and calling on governments “to pursue in good faith and conclude with urgency and determination negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement”.

Support for a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons has grown considerably since 2008, when the UN Secretary-General made such a treaty the centrepiece of his nuclear disarmament action plan. At the May 2010 review conference of the ailing Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, two references to a nuclear weapons convention made their way into the agreed outcome document, despite strong protestations from some nuclear-armed nations.

Arielle Denis, a senior campaigner at ICAN’s office in Geneva, believes that governments have a clear popular mandate to ban nuclear weapons. “Right across the world, even in nations with large nuclear arsenals, opinion polls show that a majority of citizens support the elimination of these immoral, inhumane and illegal weapons. The people believe the time has come for their leaders to cast off the nuclear shadow,” she said.

The ICAN study shows that every nation in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa is in favour of a treaty banning nuclear weapons, as are most nations in Asia, the Pacific and the Middle East. Support is weakest in Europe and North America, particularly among members of the NATO nuclear alliance. Nations that support a ban on nuclear weapons make up approximately 81% of the world's population. Only 26 nations are opposed to such a treaty, with 22 sitting on the fence.