

MEDIA RELEASE



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Obama speech reaction – nuclear weapon reductions will reduce risks but prohibition treaty urgent

For immediate release

GENEVA– The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) welcomes President Obama’s announcement in Berlin today calling for a world without nuclear weapons and the readiness to pursue further reductions in the US and Russian nuclear arsenals. However, the humanitarian consequences of any nuclear weapon use, increasingly the focus of global engagement on these weapons, demands their prohibition and elimination.

The speech by President Obama contributes to a growing recognition that nuclear weapons are unusable weapons with no practical utility in today’s global security environment. Despite this, they threaten shocking humanitarian consequences if they were to be used. Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not subject to treaty prohibition and ICAN is calling for such a treaty to provide the framework for their elimination.

“The speech by Obama comes at a point where many other states, international organisations and civil society are focusing on the unacceptable humanitarian effects that the use of these weapons would create. The level of civilian harm that nuclear weapons threaten makes a treaty prohibiting their use, production and stockpiling urgent.” said Beatrice Fihn, of ICAN’s International Steering Group.

2013 has already seen international discussions focused on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, and broad cross regional support for this approach. Whilst the intended reductions announced by President Obama would contribute to a reduction in the risk posed by nuclear weapons, the announcement does not challenge the on-going modernisation programmes in most nuclear-armed states or the continued reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines.

A single nuclear weapon detonation in an urban area would kill hundreds of thousands immediately and leave hundreds thousands more in desperate need. A wider use of nuclear weapons could cause climatic changes that impair global crop production and result in people starving even in different continents from the conflict.

“The consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation will not stop at borders; it is truly a global concern no matter who possess these weapons,” says Akira Kawasaki, Executive Committee member of Peace Boat and Co-chair of ICAN. “This announcement should encourage action from all states, not only nuclear armed states and those with extended nuclear deterrence

arrangements, but all non-nuclear weapon states as well. It is now time to take bold and tangible steps towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons by negotiating a ban.”

About ICAN

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is a global campaign coalition working to mobilize people in all countries to inspire, persuade and pressure their governments to initiate negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons. It has 300 partner organizations in 70 countries, and was launched in 2007. Prominent supporters include Desmond Tutu, Yoko Ono and the Dalai Lama.

Details available at: <http://www.icanw.org>

Resources

Unspeakable Suffering (2013)

Download at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/>

Banning Nuclear Weapons (2013)

Download at: <http://www.article36.org/cat2-nuclear-weapons/banning-nuclear-weapons-2/>

- Catastrophic Humanitarian Harm (2012)

Download at: <http://www.icanw.org/resources/publications>

Interviews

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