

MEDIA ADVISORY

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124 states condemn unacceptable effects of nuclear weapons: “very survival of humanity depends on nuclear weapons never being used”

For immediate release

NEW YORK – A joint statement on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons was delivered by New Zealand today at the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Expressing deep concern for the catastrophic consequences that any use of nuclear weapons would entail, as well as for their uncontrollable destructive capability and indiscriminate nature, the New Zealand statement was signed by 123 other member states. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a campaign coalition with more than 300 members in 80 countries welcomes the statement and the initiative shown by non-nuclear-weapon states including some nuclear-umbrella states to drive a new discourse around the global humanitarian threat posed by nuclear weapons, a discourse that can only conclude with the decision to make these weapons illegal once and for all.

In 2013 alone the number of states and international organizations compelled by the undeniable evidence of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons to express deep concern about the limited progress of nuclear disarmament has grown exponentially. In March 2013, the conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons held in Oslo concluded that no international response plan could effectively be put in place to respond to a nuclear detonation. In September the first high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament convened by the UNGA, despite resistance from nuclear-armed states, showed a strong focus on the humanitarian approach and numerous calls to ban nuclear weapons. Building on this momentum, Mexico announced a conference to continue the discussion around the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, to be held next February in Nayarit.

“The humanitarian focus on nuclear weapons has again proven to be successful. A growing number of states are showing concern about the unacceptable harm that these weapons of mass destruction threaten to unleash. This debate strengthens our confidence and resolve that there is a credible way forward towards the prohibition of nuclear weapons,” says Beatrice Fihn, member of ICAN’s International Steering Group.

A single nuclear weapon detonation in an urban area would kill hundreds of thousands immediately and leave hundreds of thousands more in desperate need. A wider use of nuclear weapons could cause climatic changes that would impair global crop production and lead to a mass famine among the world’s most vulnerable populations. Study upon study has pointed to the inability to prevent or care for civilian casualties on a mass scale. Mitigation is simply impossible.

“The 124 governments that have co-sponsored this important statement on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons are putting the security of their people above the militarist justifications for some states to have nuclear weapons,” said Dr Rebecca Johnson, Co-Chair of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. “Diplomatic action to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons will be the best way to prevent a nuclear catastrophe in the future.

Interviews

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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 80 countries, and was launched in 2007.

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