

JOINT STATEMENT FROM CIVIL SOCIETY TO THE STATES PARTIES OF THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

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As the world continues to grapple with the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, we cannot afford to lose sight of the other global challenges that threaten all of us, including the worsening planetary climate emergency and the ongoing threat of catastrophic nuclear war. These are all, in the words of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, “problems without passports”.¹

The scale of the global crisis caused by this pandemic is due to multiple political failures. Time and again, governments and other actors have ignored and dismissed the warnings made by scientists throughout the world about transnational threats and the steps necessary to prevent and/or mitigate the effects. We’re not only at a pivotal point in the struggle against the fast-moving coronavirus and the climate crisis; we are also at a tipping point in the long-running effort to reduce the threat of nuclear war and eliminate nuclear weapons.

Tensions between the world’s nuclear-armed states are rising; the risk of nuclear use is growing; billions of dollars are being spent to replace and upgrade nuclear weapons; progress on nuclear disarmament has stalled; and key agreements that have kept nuclear competition in check are in serious jeopardy.

One of the many lessons to be learned from these global crises is that science must not be ignored under the guise of “national security” policies that put profit before people and privilege the most powerful.

More than 75 years have passed since the the horrific atomic bombings by the United States of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and more than 25 years have passed since states parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) adopted the package of decisions that led to the indefinite extension of the Treaty. It is in this context that the civil society organisations endorsing this statement put forward the following three key messages to NPT states parties:

1. Global support for the NPT is strong, but its long-term viability cannot be taken for granted.

It is encouraging to see countries reiterate their support for the NPT. However, the Treaty is only as strong as its implementation. The longer that consensus-based NPT Review Conference decisions remain unfulfilled, the less weight the Treaty and its obligations will have. For the long-term viability of the NPT, all countries must fully implement their obligations. The body of previous NPT Review Conference commitments and action steps still apply. This includes the benchmarks agreed to at the historic 1995 Review and Extension Conference and further commitments made at the 2000 and 2010 Review

¹ Mr. Annan’s closing remarks at the 2013 Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship, 12 April 2013, <https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/speeches/the-courage-to-change/>.

Conferences. Since then, the nuclear disarmament process has been stalled, and the five NPT nuclear-armed states cannot credibly claim they are meeting their NPT Article VI obligations.

2. The grave state of global affairs and the rising risk of nuclear conflict and arms racing requires new and bolder leadership from responsible states.

Implementing past action plans must be the floor and not the ceiling for taking forward the NPT's provisions. The risk of nuclear weapons use is all too high and is growing, particularly as offensive cyber operations and artificial intelligence introduce unprecedented uncertainty into the global security environment. New security alliances pose an unprecedented threat to the nuclear non-proliferation safeguards regime and an escalation towards a regional arms race. It is this environment that demands bolder action from *all* states to reduce nuclear risks by eliminating nuclear weapons; action that is rooted in "deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons". Many countries have demonstrated their commitment to nuclear disarmament by joining the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which has now entered into force. The TPNW is a major contribution to the common goal of eliminating the threat of nuclear war and eliminating nuclear weapons.

3. Those that resist change also say the "environment" is not right for further progress, but responsible actors everywhere are rising to the challenge.

The world cannot wait until the environment is "right" for disarmament. It is true that success in conflict prevention and resolution, control of non-nuclear military capabilities, protection of human rights, climate and environmental protection, and other important endeavors would help to facilitate nuclear disarmament. But taking action for disarmament by negotiating agreements or through unilateral steps helps create an environment for the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons while building a climate of mutual trust that will positively contribute to solving the world's other pressing problems.

The Tenth NPT Review Conference offers a critical opportunity to change the current course, and to focus efforts to slow and reverse the accelerating arms race, prevent proliferation, and bring about the end of nuclear weapons.

The XX undersigned organisations call on NPT states parties and the international community to advance new and bolder leadership. We urge all NPT states parties to move beyond bitter politicisation and to work together to build majority support for a plan of action to advance the NPT's Article VI goals, create much needed momentum for further progress on disarmament, and save humanity from the scourge of nuclear war.

More in-depth analysis and recommendations for NPT states parties' consideration at the Review Conference is provided following the list of endorsing organisations to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

ENDORISING ORGANISATIONS:

I. THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

More than seventy-five years ago, the United States (US) dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By the end of 1945 more than 210,000 people—mainly civilians—were dead. The surviving atomic bomb victims (Hibakusha), their children, and their grandchildren continue to suffer from physical and psychological effects of the bombings, as do people from the Korean peninsula and veterans from other countries who were among the victims of the atomic bombings.

From their development through their testing and use, nuclear weapons create victims at all stages. Indigenous peoples have been especially impacted by nuclear testing and uranium mining, and ionising radiation has disproportionate gendered impacts. There is a legacy of silences imposed, lies told, and information kept out of the mostly marginalised communities that are suffering from deep and abiding injuries from radiation and other nuclear exposure. The damage caused by nuclear weapons has no national borders.²

The two bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were tiny and crude by today's standards. Current capabilities are even more deadly. Moreover, reductions of nuclear weapons have tapered off in the last several years, replaced by a lavishly funded new race to develop novel and diversified capabilities to unleash nuclear violence. In 2010, NPT states parties agreed by consensus to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. Twelve years later the opposite is true: that role has been expanded—and not only by nuclear-armed states but also by their complicit allies—the “nuclear umbrella” states. With potential flashpoints over Ukraine and Taiwan, the risk of another use of nuclear weapons is as high as it's ever been.

An estimated 73 billion dollars was spent in 2020 on nuclear weapons.³ Investments in new weapons that are perceived as more suitable for warfighting, including so-called low-yield systems, increasingly threaten the taboo against nuclear use that has held since 10 August 1945. Referring to any warheads as “low-yield” is a misnomer: available plans indicate these weapons would have roughly one-third the

² A “limited” nuclear war, as one caused by 100 Hiroshima-sized nuclear weapons detonated in cities between India and Pakistan, would not only cause several million deaths and injuries, but the debris that rises to the atmosphere will reduce the temperature in the biosphere, affecting the production of staple grains -rice, wheat, corn and soy- resulting in a famine of 2 billion people worldwide, most from economically-challenged countries. The scarcity of food supplies and the ensuing speculation will increase the likelihood of armed conflicts and of a full-scale nuclear war which, aside from killing dozens of millions of people, will generate a nuclear winter through which many species, maybe even our own, will become extinct.

³ Figures from *Complicit: 2020 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending*, June 2021, https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ican/pages/2161/attachments/original/1622825593/Spending_Report_Web.pdf?1622825593. Other sources, such as the “[Move the Nuclear Weapons Money](#)” campaign, estimate it could be higher when considering other factors like the health and environmental impact costs.

yield of the Hiroshima bomb. In some nuclear-armed states, the resurgence of formerly retired types of weapons appears to be a result of corporate pressures.

New risks heighten the urgency to eliminate nuclear weapons. Emerging technologies including offensive cyber capabilities and artificial intelligence combined with nuclear modernisation plans also increase risk. Current developments, including increased hypersonic capacities, a return to intermediate-range delivery systems, and the production of delivery systems capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear payloads are dangerous and destabilising.

The scale and tempo of war games by nuclear-armed states and their allies, including nuclear drills, is increasing. Ongoing missile tests, and frequent close encounters between military forces of nuclear-armed states exacerbate nuclear dangers.

The September 2021 announcement of the Australia-UK-US alliance (AUKUS) envisions Australia, the first non-nuclear armed country, acquiring nuclear-propelled submarines. This would be an unprecedented threat to the safeguards regime and an escalation towards a regional arms race.

We need to redirect the immense resources being poured into war preparations and prioritise protection of the climate, building back better from the pandemic, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we approach the 77th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, the time for excuses and unfulfilled promises is over.

We call on the nuclear-armed states to transition their nuclear weapons budgets by shifting the allocation for programmes designed to build new nuclear weapons, new delivery systems, or their key components towards remediation of affected areas and assistance to those harmed throughout the history of nuclear weapons development, testing, and use. Coupled with policy decisions to eradicate launch-on-warning plans, ending modernisation programmes would start reducing risks, as would eliminating the role of nuclear weapons from national and regional security strategies and doctrines. Completely eliminating the risk of nuclear weapons is only possible when the weapons themselves are eliminated. All NPT states parties should commit to halting the development of new nuclear weapon capabilities and help stop the nuclear arms race, including by ceasing the provision of any form of assistance or encouragement to others to develop new capabilities. We commend those who have divested both private and public funds from the nuclear weapons industry, and we encourage others to follow suit.

States should better prioritise initiatives such as studies into the health impacts on the survivors, including second and third generation Hibakusha and future generations, and prevention of discrimination against survivors. We remind states that it is a common responsibility of the international community to guarantee the human rights of the survivors including second-generation Hibakusha and subsequent generations who continue to suffer even today, and to take action to ensure that such suffering will never be repeated. Provision of appropriate medical, economic, and social assistance to victims, their descendants, and future generations is the responsibility of the international community.

The evidence is clear. Any use of nuclear weapons at any time would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Further, international law applies at all times. Threat or use of nuclear weapons is illegal under the laws of warfare and international human rights law, and the rights of future generations to be free from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

Education on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons should be further promoted worldwide as a core component of disarmament and non-proliferation education, and support should be given to youth initiatives, such as the United Nations' Youth4Disarmament programme, as one example.

II. THE TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS EXIST, BUT IMPLEMENTATION IS LACKING

The NPT is not simply a non-proliferation treaty. It is also a treaty that requires action on disarmament. At the historic 1995 Review and Extension Conference, NPT states parties agreed to key benchmarks including the commitment to the "complete elimination of nuclear weapons." Further commitments were made at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences.

The 1995, 2000, and 2010 commitments with few exceptions remain relevant and important, but they have largely been unfulfilled. They should now be reaffirmed and implemented in good faith. These commitments represent a collective determination of how to comply with Article VI. Abandoning or undercutting them would represent a lack of respect for the NPT process and cast doubt on the value of new commitments or the process itself.

Although not all the commitments represent unique means of fulfilling NPT Article VI, some are closely intertwined with the legal obligation. This is true of the NPT 2000 Review Conference commitment to achieve the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the "unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals," as well as the related 2010 commitment "to undertake further efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all types of nuclear weapons, deployed and non-deployed."

Unfortunately, the nuclear-armed states parties to the NPT are moving in the wrong direction with respect to these and other Article VI commitments. The failure of the US and Russia to resolve their dispute over compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty has opened the door to arms racing in a new arena. Russia and the United States are both modernising their nuclear forces and pursuing development and deployment of new nuclear weapons systems.

Independent reports indicate that China may be seeking to significantly increase its land-based strategic missile force and is growing and diversifying its arsenal in other ways, in turn, reinforcing and stimulating further US modernisation.

In 2021, the United Kingdom (UK) announced it will move to increase its total nuclear warhead stockpile ceiling and reduce transparency about its nuclear arsenal. This is an alarming reversal of the longstanding UK policy to reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons. In addition, the UK is lobbying the US Congress to spend taxpayer dollars for the development of a new design warhead, the

W93, on the grounds that it is vital to continuing US support of the UK's nuclear arsenal. France's spending on "nuclear deterrence" has also increased significantly in recent years.

Next Steps in Arms Control and Disarmament

It is vital that the US and Russia negotiate and bring into force a successor agreement or agreements to the New START Treaty, which expires in early 2026. The successor agreement should reduce all types of warheads and delivery systems and provide—for the first time—for the verified dismantlement of warheads, not just their removal from delivery systems and the destruction of delivery systems.

It is also vital that China, in compliance with its Article VI obligation, engage in talks regarding limitations and reductions of its dangerous nuclear stockpile. It is not an excuse, legal or practical, that China's arsenal is much smaller than those of Russia and the United States. Such disparities can be addressed in negotiations; for example, China could agree to desist from expanding its arsenal while the US and Russian arsenals are reduced.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference affirmed "that all States need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons."

Non-nuclear-armed states assumed that responsibility by negotiating the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The nuclear-armed states must now make their own "special efforts" for disarmament.

It is well past time for all five NPT nuclear-armed states to commence negotiations on elimination of their nuclear arsenals. The nuclear-armed states outside the NPT will have to be integrated into the process. And the interests of NPT non-nuclear-armed states will need to be represented, through the direct participation of those states or in some other way. Possible pathways for negotiated elimination include the TPNW, a nuclear weapons convention, or a framework of instruments, the latter two referenced in the 2010 NPT Review Final Document.⁴

We urge all NPT states parties, including the five nuclear-armed states, to at a minimum support a final Review Conference document that:

- calls upon the United States and Russia to conclude talks on a New START follow-on agreement or agreements that achieve further reductions and significantly lower verifiable limits on strategic and nonstrategic nuclear warheads and delivery systems no later than 2025;
- calls upon all the NPT nuclear-armed states to freeze the size of their nuclear arsenals and reduce their fissile stockpiles, as the United States and Russia seek to achieve new agreements to reduce their offensive nuclear arsenals and limit their strategic missile interceptor systems; and

⁴ The 2010 Review Conference noted "the five-point [proposal](#) for nuclear disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which proposes, inter alia, consideration of negotiations on a [nuclear weapons convention](#) or agreement on a framework of separate mutually reinforcing instruments, backed by a strong system of verification."

- commits all five nuclear-armed states to agree to begin to engage in disarmament talks, including through a new multilateral format, no later than 2025, and charges the five with reporting back to the 2025 NPT Review Conference on the process they propose for negotiating the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons.

The implementation of other instruments complements and bolsters the NPT

The full implementation of the NPT and all its articles require additional legal instruments.

More than 25 years ago, the world's nations came together to ban nuclear testing by negotiating and opening for signature the CTBT. The CTBT has established a powerful norm against nuclear test explosions and an effective global monitoring system to detect and deter nuclear tests. Nevertheless, the Treaty has not formally entered into force because eight states, including six parties to the NPT, have failed to ratify it. In particular, the United States and China have failed, without a defensible explanation, to ratify the treaty and fulfill their Article VI responsibility to do so. If NPT states parties are serious about strengthening the NPT, they must prioritise the ratification of the CTBT. The most effective way to resolve concerns about the potential for very low-yield nuclear explosions and enforce compliance with the CTBT is for the United States, China, and the other CTBT hold-out states to ratify the Treaty and help bring it into force. When it does, states have the option to demand intrusive, short-notice on-site inspections.

The achievement of the obligations outlined in Article VI is facilitated by a legally binding norm to prohibit nuclear weapons, since otherwise a world free of nuclear weapons can neither be achieved nor maintained. The most recent multilateral instrument in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament toolbox is the TPNW. The TPNW unequivocally endorses and supports the NPT and provides an opportunity for nuclear-armed states to further implement their NPT Article VI commitments. The TPNW strengthens the non-proliferation norm enshrined in the NPT by legally obliging its state parties to keep in place their safeguards obligations; should a state not already have a safeguards agreement in force, it would be required to negotiate one.

As a whole and in its preamble, the TPNW is a powerful statement of the moral, political, and legal norms—including international humanitarian and human rights law—that should drive the abolition of nuclear weapons. We have heard the criticism that the TPNW is divisive, but we find this assertion distracts attention from the larger, more profound way that the threat of nuclear annihilation divides humanity into those with the ability to threaten mass extinction and those who live under this threat.

The NPT Review Conference should welcome the entry into force of the TPNW as a complementary and mutually reinforcing instrument.

Regional issues require cooperation

Many countries have demonstrated their commitment to nuclear disarmament by joining regional Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs). The NWFZs are a major contribution to the common goal of eliminating the threat of nuclear war and eliminating nuclear weapons. Despite the success of NWFZs in many parts of the world, certain regional issues continue to challenge the NPT, and require cooperation and political will to be overcome.

The Middle East

Another very serious threat facing the NPT is the failure of the United States and Iran to negotiate a path to promptly and mutually return to compliance with the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA remains a crucial instrument to address serious concerns about Iran's nuclear capacity and its potential to produce bomb-grade nuclear material. NPT states parties should support full implementation of the agreement and should call on the United States and Iran to return to compliance with their JCPOA obligations immediately. This would open the way for follow-on negotiations on a potential win-win agreement that builds upon the JCPOA and sets new standards for non-proliferation and disarmament for the region. It would also contribute to the goal of a nuclear and weapons of mass destruction (WMD)-free zone in the Middle East. Failure to find a win-win diplomatic solution—and soon—will increase the risk of a major new nuclear proliferation crisis in the region.

In addition, it is vitally important that Iran fully cooperate with ongoing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) efforts to verify compliance with its comprehensive safeguards obligations. We urge Iran's leaders to immediately conclude arrangements with the IAEA to restore key monitoring capabilities at Iran's enrichment sites. Especially while talks on restoring JCPOA compliance continue, we urge NPT states parties to call upon Iran to refrain from a further acceleration of its uranium enrichment capacity, and we urge NPT states parties to call on other states, including the only nuclear-armed state in the Middle East, Israel, to refrain from further acts of sabotage and assassination against Iran, which only serve to escalate the crisis.

NPT states parties also need to support and help advance constructive steps toward an inclusive, sustainable dialogue on a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, and to refrain from exploiting this issue for unrelated purposes. The [outcomes](#) of the 2019 and 2021 Conferences on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction should be welcomed by all states parties as a contribution to build upon.

To help advance progress and improve the conditions for multilateral negotiation on such a zone, we call on each of the states in the region to undertake concrete measures consistent with other such zones and with the NPT itself, such as refraining from the acquisition or operation of sensitive nuclear fuel cycle technologies, signing and ratifying the CTBT, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the TPNW, and the Additional Protocol to their IAEA nuclear safeguards agreements.

Northeast Asia

Another essential step to preserve and strengthen the global non-proliferation and disarmament system is the successful negotiation of a verifiable, durable, diplomatic agreement on peace as well as denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula. Such an agreement would, among other things, provide security assurances to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK); permanently halt, reverse, and eventually eliminate the DPRK's growing nuclear weapons and means of their delivery; end the Korean war; and permanently remove all nuclear weapons and nuclear umbrella from the Korean peninsula. At their 2018 summit, the US and DPRK leaders agreed to establish new relations, build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and work toward complete denuclearisation of the Korean

Peninsula. They also stated that mutual confidence building can promote the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

But this agreement has not been implemented and talks are stalled. The US and DPRK have sought different approaches and they are not on the same page about the end goals, pace, and sequencing of the years-long technical and political process to denuclearise the Korean Peninsula. While the DPRK has kept the promise of suspending its nuclear and ICBM tests from 2018, the Republic of Korea (ROK)-US joint military exercises resumed in 2019 and the ROK has continued armament at an unprecedented pace. The DPRK declared its intention to advance its nuclear capabilities and strengthen military power in January 2021 and tested several missiles. Tensions are rising again and the DPRK's nuclear and missile capacity continues to increase.

NPT states parties should aim to be more constructive and point to effective solutions. This NPT Review Conference could express support for a realistic diplomatic strategy that takes a comprehensive and phased approach to improve relations, denuclearise, reduce mutual military threats, and ease sanctions against the DPRK.

NPT states parties should also note that these important steps, and other more substantial denuclearisation actions such as the irreversible dismantlement of key DPRK production and testing facilities, are not possible without reciprocal moves on the part of the United States and the ROK, with the support of the international community. Reciprocal steps could include: some combination of partial and phased easing of sanctions; effective humanitarian assistance; mutual security guarantees including non-use of nuclear weapons; a joint statement on the end of the Korean War and formal negotiations and early conclusion of a peace treaty to replace the Korean War Armistice; steps toward the normalisation of US-DPRK relations; concrete progress toward implementation of NPT Article VI; suspending US-ROK joint military exercises; revising the US-ROK operational war plan; and reducing military deployments on both sides of the demilitarised zone (DMZ) in a manner consistent with a future peace treaty. Such measures would create the conditions for the establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) in the Northeast Asia region.

Other states in the region are urged to actively contribute to this process and begin consultations on establishing a lasting security mechanism in the entire region, including a nuclear-weapons free zone in Northeast Asia. More than seven decades have elapsed since the outbreak of the Korean War and it is past time to take the steps necessary to formally bring an end to the state of war and to realise a nuclear-weapons-free Korean peninsula.

Europe and nuclear sharing

As many as 180 US nuclear gravity bombs continue to be forward deployed in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey. Although technically non-nuclear-armed states under the NPT, these countries have special responsibilities regarding nuclear disarmament. In all but one of these countries, their own military personnel train to receive control over nuclear weapons.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) bureaucrats have resisted any changes to this decades-old forward-deployment policy. In 2010 they began to insist that "NATO is committed to arms control,

disarmament and non-proliferation, but as long as nuclear weapons exist, it will remain a nuclear alliance.”⁵

Such an approach is contradictory, it is counterproductive to the NPT commitments of NATO member states, and it is undemocratic because it is contrary to the views of publics, and of parliaments. Instead, we call upon NPT states parties to encourage NATO member states to reevaluate their national policies regarding nuclear sharing.

The five NPT-recognised nuclear-armed states are not alone in bearing responsibility for reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. If the countries that consider themselves to be under the shadow of the nuclear umbrella continue to encourage the ongoing possession of nuclear weapons, their actions make the effort to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons far more difficult to realise.

III. HOW OTHER ACTORS ARE RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

While the ultimate responsibility to disarm lies with nuclear-armed states and their allies, other actors are mobilising in ways that will compel disarmament and move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. Civil society actors are proud of their contributions to this goal and we present some initiatives here⁶ to demonstrate our commitment to the goals of the NPT—but also to show that we will no longer accept the status quo.

Parliamentarians have an obligation to look out for the best interests of their society, most certainly including the risks posed by nuclear weapons. Overwhelmingly, parliaments have been delegitimising nuclear weapons and demanding attention to the means and materials that build long-term sustainable societies. Many legislators have been active proponents of nuclear disarmament, the NPT, and other related agreements. The [Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#) has adopted two consensus resolutions on nuclear disarmament, one of which focuses on securing the entry into force of the CTBT. As outlined in an [Action Plan](#) developed by the IPU and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), parliamentarians have roles to play in the NPT review cycles including by promoting the implementation of key elements agreed in 1995, 2000, and 2010.

Over 1,600 parliamentarians across the globe have [pledged](#) their support for the TPNW, and countless resolutions or motions have demonstrated overwhelming support for urgent action towards a nuclear weapon free world. Whether through budget oversight, demanding an end to nuclear sharing, or promoting treaty ratification, parliaments are taking action to achieve the end of nuclear weapons.

Cities are the primary targets of nuclear weapon use. In the blink of an eye, a nuclear bomb can incinerate a city. Mayors are primarily responsible for public safety. As such, they have a special

⁵ See NATO Nuclear Deterrence Factsheet, February 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/2/pdf/200224-factsheet-nuclear-en.pdf.

⁶ This section identifies some specific organisations and initiatives in order to provide examples. It would not be possible to capture in a few pages the full scope of contributions that have been made by diverse individuals, organisations, professional networks, and constituencies over the last several decades toward nuclear disarmament. We encourage readers to visit the websites of endorsing organisations or to [view past statements](#) from civil society delivered at NPT conferences to learn more.

responsibility to their constituents to speak out against nuclear weapons. In 2018, the United Nations announced that 55 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 68 per cent by 2050. When governments fail to act nationally, cities are on the frontlines, taking the lead in promoting real solutions to the problems they face.

Municipalities around the globe are mobilising in support of nuclear disarmament. For example, [Mayors for Peace](#), with more than 8,000 member cities in 165 countries, advocates for the elimination of nuclear weapons, safe and resilient cities, and promotion of a culture of peace, as indispensable measures to achieve lasting world peace. The [Cities Appeal](#) of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) calls on national governments to sign and ratify the TPNW. It has been supported by hundreds of cities worldwide, including major capitals and is endorsed by Mayors for Peace. More than 50 US cities have adopted resolutions supporting the [Back from the Brink Campaign](#), calling on the US government to actively pursue a series of risk reduction measures and a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

A growing number of cities in countries around the world, including most recently, New York City, are divesting their pension funds from nuclear weapons makers.

Most nuclear-armed states rely on **private companies** for the production, maintenance, and modernisation of their nuclear weapons. Publicly available [documentation](#) shows that companies are involved in the nuclear arsenals of, at least, China, France, India, Russia, the UK, and the US. When financial institutions invest in companies associated with nuclear weapon production, they provide the financing to maintain, refurbish, test, and modernise nuclear weapons. In short—no money means no production. Investments are not neutral. Financing and investment are active choices, based on a clear assessment of a company and its plans. Global markets are changing, and significant financial actors are avoiding investments in companies that produce controversial weapons or their key components—weapons which cannot be used without causing indiscriminate harm or violating international humanitarian principles. Recently, a number of major national funds have divested from nuclear weapon producers, citing the TPNW as justification.⁷ This trend is also cited as part of the reason that one major contributor to the UK nuclear arsenal, [Serco](#), has decided not to pursue new nuclear weapon related contracts.

There is also a growing norm among states that financing or investing in companies that produce controversial weapons is a form of assistance with the production of those weapons. The *Financial Times* [reported](#) recently that the trend in sustainable financing is already creating problems for some defence companies, especially those involved with the production of controversial, inhumane, or indiscriminate weapons, to generate the capital they need.

The [importance of diversity](#) among those participating in discussions about nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is slowly being recognised. After decades of this field being dominated by men,

⁷ This includes the [Irish Sovereign Wealth Fund](#), the [Norwegian Government Pension fund](#), Norway's largest private pension fund, [KLP](#), and the Rotary Foundation.

particularly straight, cisgender men of the global north, certain disarmament-related forums have begun to encourage participation of women in debates and negotiations. During this NPT review cycle, several side events have been held and respective Chair's summaries have highlighted the importance of the full and effective participation of women in the work of the NPT. However, discussions about diversity that stop at the inclusion of women fall short of the crux of the issue.

The demand for [women's participation](#)—while necessary and welcome—is insufficient for truly making change in weapons policy. Nuclear disarmament requires new understandings, perspectives, and approaches to nuclear weapons. This requires the effective and meaningful participation of all those who have been marginalised in the nuclear debate, including non-Western, non-white, and non-cisgendered or heteronormative people; survivors of nuclear weapons use, testing, and production; and people at a socioeconomic disadvantage and with disabilities. Diversity is not just about including women, especially women who come from the same or similar backgrounds as the men who already rule the table. It's about completely resetting the table; or even throwing out the table and setting up entirely new ways of working.

For decades, non-governmental organisations and **health professionals**, including the [International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War](#) (IPPNW), recipient of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize, have worked tirelessly through research, campaigning, and lobbying to generate awareness about the impact of these weapons on humankind, impressing upon world leaders and the general public that prevention is the only cure for nuclear war. The World Health Organization (WHO) stated in 1984 that “Nuclear weapons constitute the greatest immediate threat to the health and welfare of mankind.” In January 2021, in a [joint statement](#) celebrating the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the World Medical Association (WMA), World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Council of Nurses, and International Federation of Medical Student Associations, joined IPPNW in stating: “even a limited nuclear war would loft millions of tons of smoke from burning cities high into the atmosphere, causing global famine, putting billions of people in jeopardy. Ending nuclear weapons before they end humankind and many other lifeforms is an urgent health and humanitarian imperative.”

The average age of the **Hibakusha** is now more than 83 years. The Hibakusha have continued to appeal for “No More Hibakusha,” so that no future generations will have to experience the living hell they suffered through. They call for the realisation of a world free from nuclear weapons in their lifetimes and have attended meetings of the NPT for decades, to bring this message of personal loss and to fulfill Article VI obligations. The [Hibakusha Appeal](#), which called for a treaty to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons, has now been supported by the signatures of more than 13 million people worldwide. Now Hibakusha have begun a new signature campaign to call for all states to join the Treaty.

Second-generation Hibakusha in Japan are nuclear victims as well because there is no scientific evidence to clearly deny the trans-generational genetic health effects of A-bomb radiation. In 2018, a delegation of second-generation Hibakusha attended the Second Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference for the first time. During their side events, they argued that one of the most serious human rights violations caused by nuclear weapons is the radiation effect on future generations. They also appealed for recognition of the human rights of radiation victims including second-generation

Hibakusha and future generations, and for further progress towards the realisation of a nuclear-free world so that there will be no more radiation victims.

Faith communities across the globe recognise the fearfulness that has driven nations to take up arms against threats to their security. They have collectively chosen to face that fear not with additional posturing or intimidation but with continued action for a world based on trust, compassion and equality and belief that peacebuilding requires courage, resilience and imagination.

In November 2019, Pope Francis [visited Nagasaki and Hiroshima](#), and declared that both the use and the possession of nuclear weapons are immoral. Breaking away from security policies based on the intimidation of nuclear weapons is both a humanitarian and a moral demand. Further, it is also consistent with the purpose of the founding of the United Nations 75 years ago—to never repeat the scourge of war. Pope Francis’ pronouncement is in keeping with the [views and beliefs of other major faith traditions](#), in particular their shared emphasis on the sanctity of life, the principle of unity, and shared security. His declaration is rooted in a broader necessary paradigm shift from accepting the existential threat to humanity that nuclear weapons pose to adopting a universal ethic of nonviolence to counter the profoundly destructive spiritual impact and pervasive menace of nuclear weapons.

We must also heed the voices of youth in both the climate change and nuclear disarmament fields. They are reminding us that nuclear weapons and climate change threaten the very survival of current and future generations, that both issues require global cooperation and human, common security, and that the massive budgets and investments devoted to militarism including nuclear weapons need to be reallocated to protect the climate, build back better from the pandemic and achieve the sustainable development goals. **Young people** are tired of cleaning up the messes older generations have left for them. It should not be their responsibility to make governments take action to save the planet from climate change and nuclear weapons. But the leaders who stubbornly cling to weapons of mass murder and refuse to implement policies to save nations from drowning leave young people no choice. They will speak [clear-headed truth](#) to the few countries that keep nuclear weapons in spite of their devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences. Older generations must heed their call.

IV. CONCLUSION

To achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons and a global society that is more fair, peaceful, and ecologically sustainable, we will need to move from the irrational fear-based ideology of deterrence to the rational fear of an eventual nuclear weapon use, whether by accident, miscalculation, or design. We will also need to stimulate a rational hope that security can be redefined in humanitarian and ecologically sustainable terms that will lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons and dramatic demilitarisation, freeing up tremendous resources desperately needed to address universal human needs and protect the environment.

The world is woefully unprepared to deal with mass tragedy, like nuclear use. The global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the lack of global health care capacity, and the problematic nature of

public policy driven by corporate interests. Scientists have been sounding similar alarm bells about the climate crisis for decades, the consequences and impacts of which are becoming more obvious each day. The problem of nuclear weapons bears uncomfortable similarities to both the pandemic and climate change, and the major loss of life around the globe should serve as warning that what's been done so far just isn't good enough. Nuclear weapons have no place in the world. As the former executive secretary of the CTBT Organization (CTBTO), Dr. Lassina Zerbo, wrote, the tragedy of COVID-19 "has thrown a stark light on the need for preparedness. The threat of nuclear weapons cannot await a similar crisis. The only option is prevention," because "nuclear weapons leave no curve to be flattened."⁸

Scientists issued grave warnings for decades of the potential for a massive global pandemic, and they were ignored. We've all suffered as a result. Once again, science and society are ringing the alarm on nuclear weapons. The global pandemic has revealed our unpreparedness to deal with catastrophe on a large scale. Recovery from a nuclear war would be impossible.⁹ The only sensible path is prevention.

⁸ Dr. Lassina Zerbo, "Nuclear weapons leave no curve to flatten," *Kyodo News*, 12 April 2020, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/04/5661822b3b47-opinion-nuclear-weapons-leave-no-curve-to-flatten.html>.

⁹ The destruction caused by nuclear weapons is multi-dimensional. Cities become inaccessible and uninhabitable for long periods of time, and the atrocious effects of acute and chronic radiation will affect survivors throughout their lives and their progeny. There is no possibility of recovery or first response, as most healthcare workers will have died, most hospitals, clinics and communication infrastructure will have been destroyed, and radiation will make it impossible for external first responders to aid the victims of a nuclear detonation. Victims will be left to suffer and die alone. Moreover, a high-altitude electromagnetic pulse (HEMP) will disrupt electrical devices in a radius far greater than the physical devastation caused by the nuclear detonation, causing the breakdown of automobiles, computers, telephones, the Internet, and telecommunications.