Advancing nuclear disarmament and climate protection in the UN human rights bodies

Report to Abolition 2000 Annual General Meeting

Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Basel Peace Office, Hawai‘i Institute for Human Rights, World Future Council and Youth Fusion

Introduction:

On October 30, 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) adopted a new General comment No. 36 (2018) on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), on the right to life, which concludes that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the Right to Life and may amount to a crime under international law.

The HRC also affirmed that States parties to the ICCPR, which includes almost all countries in the world, must refrain from developing, producing, testing, acquiring, stockpiling, selling, transferring and using nuclear weapons, as well as take action to destroy existing stockpiles, pursue negotiations to achieve global nuclear disarmament, and provide adequate reparation to victims of nuclear weapons testing or use.

And the HRC affirmed that “Environmental degradation, climate change and unsustainable development constitute some of the most pressing and serious threats to the ability of present and future generations to enjoy the right to life.”

Following the adoption of General Comment 36, the partners in this project (listed above) have made submissions on nuclear weapons (and climate-change) policies of nuclear armed and allied states that have come up for review in various UN treaty bodies. This has included the Human Rights Committee (for review of the ICCPR), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (for review of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) and the Human Rights Council (for the Universal Periodic Review which includes human rights obligations from all human rights treaties and the UN Charter).

For most of the countries under review, the project partners have also involved civil society organizations from those countries in the submissions.

Submissions in 2023:

In 2023 the project partners made submissions to the UN Human Rights Committee for the Universal Periodic Reviews on the nuclear weapons and climate policies of Germany and Canada and on the nuclear weapons policies of Russia.

The submission on Canada was done in cooperation with Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, ClimateFast, Religions for Peace Canada, Rideau Institute, Science for Peace, and World Federalist Movement Canada.

The submissions on Germany and Canada argued that these countries were not meeting their obligations under human rights law to reduce the threat of nuclear war, advance negotiations to achieve global nuclear disarmament and limit their carbon emissions sufficiently to protect the climate for current and future
generations. The submissions made concrete proposals on how Germany and Canada could bring their policies in line with their human rights obligations.

The submission on Russia focused solely on their nuclear weapons policies due to the seriousness of nuclear threats being made by Russia in their invasion of Ukraine.

**Geneva events 2023**

The partners also held two events in Geneva in 2023 to build awareness about the submissions and encourage the Human Rights Council to take up the recommendations in them:

a) **January 25.** Human Rights and the Doomsday Clock, which followed up on the submissions made regarding Japan and Korea in late 2022 which were still under review by the Human Rights Council;

b) **July 6.** Nuclear weapons, climate change and human rights, which followed up on the submissions of Canada and Germany and Russia.

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**Human Rights and the Doomsday Clock**

*Using international human rights law to address existential threats posed by nuclear weapons and climate change.*

**January 25, 2023**

1:15-2:45pm  
Mont Blanc meeting room  
Sidley Austin Law Firm  
Rue du Pré-de-la-Bichette 7, Geneva

Light refreshments provided

A side event to the 42nd Universal Periodic Review  
(Until Human Rights Council)

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**Moderator**

* Joshua Cooper (Hawaii, USA)  
  Director, Hawaii Institute for Human Rights.

**Speakers**

* Alyn Ware (New Zealand/Czech Republic)  
  lit. Representative, ActionAid Lawyers for Peace.  
  Director, Basel Peace Office.

* Anselmo LEE (South Korea)  
  Regional Coordinator, Asia Civil Society Partnership for Sustainable Development.

* Tadashi INUZUKA (Japan)  
  Executive Director, Coalition 9.13 for a North-East Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone. Former Nagasaki Senator.

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**Nuclear weapons, climate change & human rights**

*Applying human rights law to address existential threats to humanity*  
Implementing General Comment 36 of the UN Human Rights Committee on the right to non-nuclear weapons and climate change. Includes current challenges by the Universal Periodic Review to policies of Russia, Canada and Germany. Event held under Chatham House Rules.

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**Events we organized in Geneva on January 25 and July 6, 2023.**