

MEDIA RELEASE

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Historic global conference on humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons prepares ground for new initiative towards ban treaty

For immediate release

The historic Oslo Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons has concluded with the announcement of a follow-up meeting to be hosted by Mexico. A wide range of states and organisations agreed that an understanding of the global humanitarian consequences of nuclear detonations should be the starting point for urgent action to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons.

At the meeting hosted by Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide, around 130 states, several UN agencies—including OCHA, UNDP and UNHCR—as well as the international Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, and ICAN, presented their findings on the environmental, developmental, and health consequences of nuclear detonations. They concluded that no international response plan could effectively be put in place to respond to such an event. As the facts and evidence sank in, many states expressed their recognition of a shared responsibility to act to prevent any accidental or intentional use of these weapons of mass suffering.

The announcement by Mexico to build on the Norwegian initiative by hosting a further meeting provides a new platform from which to consolidate the humanitarian arguments and to engage all states in a constructive dialogue to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons.

Dr Rebecca Johnson, ICAN Co-Chair said: “This Conference has shown that any use of nuclear armaments would cause mass suffering, with calculations of climate disruption and famine in non-nuclear as well as nuclear-armed countries. This global impact makes it the responsibility – and right – of everyone to take action to stop this from happening. The P5 have missed an opportunity for dialogue here, but it has not stopped countries moving forward. On the contrary, Mexico’s welcome decision to host a further meeting on this issue recognises that the nuclear weapon free countries have an important role to play.”

Thomas Nash, ICAN Steering Group member, said: “This conference is a new beginning towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. It is the first time states have come together to consider the humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons. 130 countries have chosen to confront the horror of these weapons and have realised that far from being powerless to do anything about it, they can and must take responsibility for putting in place a long overdue international ban.”

Dr Bob Mtonga, ICAN Steering Group member and physician from Zambia: “This Conference has shown us that the countries that have renounced nuclear weapons and concluded regional Nuclear Weapons Free Zones, such as Africa and Latin America, are providing important moral leadership to carry forward international efforts to free the world of nuclear weapons and prevent the global public health disaster that their use would create.”

Interviews

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Opinion articles from ICAN experts can also be provided upon request.

An opinion piece from Desmond Tutu:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/mar/04/nuclear-weapons-must-be-eradicated>

Video statement of civil society screened during the opening ceremony:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7t6BmRzDS0&feature=youtu.be>

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.

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

Resources

For information about the effects of nuclear weapons see:

- **Unspeakable Suffering (2013)**
Download at: <http://www.icanw.org/resources/publications>
- **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>