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Select Committee Report to parliament supports government action on a global nuclear weapons ban

"we believe New Zealand should move beyond a position of general support to the forefront of negotiations towards a nuclear weapons convention." - Report of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee, August 2012.

3 August 2012

As the world prepares to remember the overwhelming tragic horror of nuclear warfare with commemorations for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Aotearoa New Zealand (iCAN ANZ) welcomes the Report of the cross-party Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee on the iCAN ANZ petition to parliament.

The Report (available at <http://www.icanw.org.nz>) was sent to the Bills Office then released today.

The Select Committee has supported iCAN ANZ's call for the New Zealand government to actively engage with 'like-minded' governments committed to abolishing nuclear weapons to launch, without delay, an initiative to start the process of negotiating a global ban on nuclear weapons - a treaty to prohibit the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat of use, and use of nuclear weapons.

The Report's concluding paragraphs state:

"On balance we believe that the time is right for the New Zealand Government to support a nuclear weapons convention. We see New Zealand's geopolitical role as one of pushing the boundaries towards peaceful resolutions. It has been traditionally ahead of the pack in matters of disarmament, and this is a good opportunity to take an active role regarding the abolition of nuclear weapons, as it did regarding cluster munitions. New Zealand has had a significant impact in this area and we look for this to continue."

While New Zealand is involved with the New Agenda group, their talks are at an impasse. This presents an opportunity to align ourselves with like-minded countries such as Costa Rica and Malaysia. While the ministry says our energies are best spent on measures to achieve small practical steps, we believe a more forthright and proactive approach to the issue is appropriate. The President of the United States recently provided momentum by articulating a vision of a world without nuclear weapons, and we believe now is an opportune time to push for all countries to abandon such weapons.

While we acknowledge the difficulty, complexity, and cost of negotiating a convention, we believe New Zealand should move beyond a position of general support to the forefront of negotiations towards a nuclear weapons convention."

The Report will be tabled in parliament on the next sitting day of the House of Representatives, Tuesday, 14 August (parliament is in recess next week).

The next step will be to get the government to act on this and, as the Report states, to move to the forefront of negotiations to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Thank you from iCAN ANZ to: everyone who signed the petition and collected signatures for it; the national NGOs* and overseas iCAN campaigns (iCAN Australia, iCAN Norway and iCAN UK) who wrote letters of support that we submitted as supplementary evidence; Mary Wareham (Coordinator, Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition / Campaign Against Landmines Joint Working Group) who provided a briefing to the Select Committee hearing on the petition along with Edwina Hughes (Coordinator, Peace Movement Aotearoa); John Hayes, Chairperson of the Select Committee, who presented the petition to parliament in December 2011 on our behalf, and the Committee members and other Members of Parliament who supported the call for action.

Now that the Select Committee's Report has been released, all of the supplementary written evidence will be uploaded to the iCAN ANZ web site and will be available at <http://www.icanw.org.nz> next week.

**Letters of support were provided by: Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Disarmament and Security Centre, Engineers for Social Responsibility, Greenpeace Aotearoa New Zealand, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Pacific Institute of Resource Management, Pax Christi Aotearoa New Zealand, Peace Foundation, Peace Movement Aotearoa, Quaker Peace and Service Aotearoa New Zealand, The City is Ours, United Nations Association of New Zealand Wanganui Branch, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Aotearoa, and the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand Te Taahi Tuuhauwiri / Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).*