



Act now for a global ban on nuclear weapons

Since the detonation of the first atomic bomb in July 1945, the threat of use of nuclear weapons has cast a shadow over the future of the earth.

Since then, each stage of the production of nuclear weapons has caused immeasurable harm to human health and wellbeing, and extensive contamination of the environment - from uranium mining, processing of radioactive materials, manufacturing of nuclear warheads, through to nuclear bomb testing.

Despite ongoing widespread public opposition to nuclear weapons, and the overwhelming majority of governments around the world now supporting the abolition of these weapons of mass destruction, little progress has been made - 20,530 nuclear warheads remain in the arsenals of eight nuclear weapons states.

Yet other weapons of mass destruction - chemical and biological weapons - have been banned by international law, as have some 'indiscriminate' weapons such as anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions.

An international convention to abolish nuclear weapons is long overdue. Let's get serious about negotiating it to achieve a nuclear weapons-free world.

How can the abolition of nuclear weapons be achieved?

The abolition of nuclear weapons is achievable through a Nuclear Weapons Convention - a treaty that would prohibit the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat of use, and use of nuclear weapons. As conventional diplomatic means to achieve a Nuclear Weapons Convention have not succeeded, it is time to use a fast-track process similar to that which led to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.

What can the New Zealand government do?

iCan Aotearoa New Zealand calls on the government to take a leading role in achieving the abolition of nuclear weapons.

1. We call on the 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 Nuclear Weapons Convention.

In 1987, the government took a leading nuclear disarmament role by passing the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act to ban biological and nuclear weapons here. New Zealand was one of six governments that led the Oslo Process to ban cluster bombs which resulted in the 2008 Convention, hosting a key meeting in Wellington as part of the process. It is time for the government to now take a leading role in achieving a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

In the same way that the Oslo Process included representatives of civil society and of communities harmed by cluster munitions, the process of negotiating a Nuclear Weapons Convention must involve non-governmental organisations and representatives of communities affected by nuclear weapons production, deployment, and use.

2. In the interim, we call on the government to take every opportunity to assist in reducing the threat of nuclear weapons by:

- urging the nuclear weapons states to take their nuclear arsenals off high alert, for each to publicly commit to a 'no first use' policy, and for each to assure non-nuclear weapon states that they will not be subjected to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;

These simple steps would greatly decrease the chance of accidental use of nuclear weapons, and reduce the impetus for nuclear weapons proliferation.

- supporting the United Nations Secretary-General's call for greater accountability and transparency from the nuclear weapons states, including their publishing information about the size of their nuclear arsenals, stocks of fissile material, and what they are doing to fulfil their disarmament commitments; and
- promoting the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act 1987 as a model that other states could use to ban nuclear weapons from their territory.

3. We call on the government to lead by example and, in keeping with the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act, in particular to:

- ensure that the eight Crown Financial Institutions do not invest in any company involved in the production or deployment of nuclear weapons;
- desist from entering into contracts for goods or services with any company involved in the production or deployment of nuclear weapons;
- ensure there is no transit of uranium which could be used for nuclear weapons production through ports in Aotearoa New Zealand; and
- extend the prohibition on nuclear weapons beyond the territorial waters to include the exclusive economic zone.

What can you do?

Distribute and collect signatures for the petition to parliament: the petition calls on the government, together with 'like-minded' governments, to initiate a process to start negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Copies of the petition are at www.icanw.org.nz

Lobby politicians: write to the Prime Minister, Minister of Disarmament and Minister of Foreign Affairs including some or all of the points above, and lobby your Member of Parliament. Raise the call for the government to take action on a Nuclear Weapons Convention at election meetings, with parties and with candidates. Please send us a copy of any letter, fax, or message you send, and of any replies you receive, to help with our campaign to abolish nuclear weapons.

Make your views publicly known: in media releases or statements about your support for a Nuclear Weapons Convention - these could be tied to particular organisational events, for example, your Annual General Meeting, conference or Hui a Tau; or to significant dates, for example, Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day (1 March), Hiroshima Day (6 August), Nagasaki Day (9 August), the International Day of Peace (21 September), or Human Rights Day (10 December).

Add your organisation to the list of iCan Aotearoa New Zealand supporters: at www.icanw.org.nz

'Million Pleas to free the world from nuclear weapons': visit the iCan International site and upload your plea to free the world of nuclear weapons - www.millionpleas.com or www.icanw.org



For more information and suggestions about what you can do to help abolish nuclear weapons contact:

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