



## iCAN Aotearoa New Zealand

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**From nuclear weapons-free Aotearoa New Zealand to a nuclear weapons-free world**

### **Presentation notes, December 2013<sup>1</sup>**

Firstly, some brief words about iCAN Aotearoa New Zealand: we are one of the national campaigns of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, iCAN, which is an international campaign with the single goal of eliminating nuclear weapons through a global treaty to ban their possession, production, deployment, use and threat of use.

Peace Movement Aotearoa provides national coordination for iCAN Aotearoa New Zealand, which has nineteen supporting organisations: fifteen national and four local NGOs. Our focus is to persuade the New Zealand government to take a leading role in beginning, and achieving, a process for a global ban on nuclear weapons. We submitted a petition to parliament in pursuit of this goal, which resulted in a favourable Report from the Foreign Affairs Select Committee last year, something I will return to later.

There are many reasons why New Zealand should take a leading role in banning nuclear weapons, in the interests of brevity, here are five:

**Firstly, our place in the Pacific** - Nuclear weapons testing was widespread throughout the Pacific, and the ongoing toxic health and environmental impacts of those nuclear weapons detonations are well known.

**Secondly, New Zealand's historic leadership role in relation to nuclear weapons** which has taken many forms, for example three appearances before the International Court of Justice; sending navy frigates - with a Cabinet Minister on board - to observe nuclear weapons testing at Moruroa; active involvement in establishing the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, and this is one of the few states with legislation prohibiting nuclear weapons

**Thirdly, New Zealand's leading role in the Oslo diplomatic process** that led to the Cluster Munition Convention - launched in February 2007 by the Norwegian government because of the failure of traditional forums to ban cluster munitions, the process was led by Norway and others including Austria, Ireland, New Zealand, Mexico and Peru. New Zealand hosted the key Wellington Conference in February 2008, which was soon followed by the Dublin conference where the text of the Convention was adopted. An excellent model to follow to eliminate nuclear weapons.

**Fourthly, the 2012 Foreign Affairs Select Committee Report** - the conclusion referred to New Zealand's historical record on disarmament matters, as you can see:

*“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.”*

and recommended: *“... we believe New Zealand should move beyond a position of general support to the forefront of negotiations towards a nuclear weapons convention.” - 3 August 2012.*

**Finally, self-interest** - taking a leading role in beginning negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons would certainly help with the government’s bid for a UN Security Council seat and New Zealand’s international reputation in relation to global peace and security.

To move now to some key events of the past year: firstly, the Oslo conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which was hosted by the Norwegian government on the 4th and 5th of March this year. There were three key conclusions from the conference:

Firstly, it is unlikely that any state or international body could address the immediate humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation in an adequate manner and provide sufficient assistance to those affected. Moreover, it might not be possible to establish such capacities, even if it were attempted;

Secondly, the historical experience from the use and testing of nuclear weapons has demonstrated their devastating immediate and long-term effects. While political circumstances have changed, the destructive potential of nuclear weapons remains; and

Thirdly, the effects of a nuclear weapon detonation, irrespective of cause, will not be constrained by national borders, and will affect states and people in significant ways, regionally as well as globally.

In the run up to Oslo, we asked two questions: would it be the start of a series of diplomatic meetings to focus on the prevention of any use of nuclear weapons? Or, even better, the start of a process to ban nuclear weapons? It turned out to be neither.

Between Oslo and the follow up Nayarit conference next February, the Second Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference for state parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) met from [22 April to 3 May] in Geneva, and a Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons was made by 80 states; the Open-Ended Working Group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons held an organisational meeting in March and substantive meetings in May, June and August; the first High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament was held in September, and the Conference on Disarmament continued on -

lots of worthy talk, but as yet no discernible plan of action to start a process to actually ban nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, the Council of Delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement did come up with an action plan in November.

So we come to the Nayarit conference, which will be hosted by the government of Mexico on 13th and 14th February next year. The purpose of the conference is to follow up on Oslo and “to broaden the discussion about the damage and risks of nuclear weapons”.

The programme has four main parts:

**Working session I:** will provide an overview of the Oslo Conference and milestones on the development of the humanitarian discourse.

**Working session II:** The impact of nuclear weapons on global public health,

**Working session III:** The challenges of a nuclear weapon detonation to national, regional and global economic growth and sustainable development, and

**Working session IV:** The risk of a nuclear blast and effects besides radiation.

As with Oslo, there are key questions about the Nayarit conference, the most important being whether it will signal the start of a process to ban nuclear weapons; or not ...

It is clear that the failure to eliminate nuclear weapons has been a concern for many states for a very long time - there are after all only 9 nuclear weapons states, a tiny minority. Although there are some other states who believe their national security can be protected by nuclear weapons, again, they are a small minority.

In October, one hundred and twenty four UN member states and the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See supported the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons in the First Committee, which stated: [“It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances ... All efforts must be exerted to eliminate the threat of these weapons of mass destruction.] **The only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons will never be used again is through their total elimination.**” [Delivered by Ambassador Dell Higgie, New Zealand, 21 October 2013]

The failure of existing processes to ban nuclear weapons makes it clear that substantive progress will most likely be achieved through a diplomatic process, such as that used to negotiate the Cluster Munitions Convention. It is our hope that the start of such a process will be the outcome of the Nayarit conference.

So what are the next steps for New Zealand?

Firstly a simple step that all New Zealand Members of Parliament can take, which is to add their name to the Global Parliamentary Appeal for a Nuclear Weapons Ban, to indicate their support for the statement that “A global ban on nuclear weapons is a humanitarian

imperative of the highest order.” I should mention that currently there are more Australian parliamentarians supporting the global appeal, and more parliamentarians of a nuclear weapons state, Britain, than there are New Zealand MPs - and we can't be having that!

So for your convenience, copies of the Appeal are available here, please sign it now if you are an MP. If you are not a politician, please write or go and visit your MP and ask them to support it. The Global Appeal is also on the iCAN Aotearoa New Zealand site and at [www.converge.org.nz/pma/NuclearWeaponsBan,GlobalParliamentaryAppeal,NZ.pdf](http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/NuclearWeaponsBan,GlobalParliamentaryAppeal,NZ.pdf)

For the New Zealand government there now are two key questions - firstly, if other governments are prepared to declare their support to get a diplomatic process to begin negotiations for a global ban on nuclear weapons underway, will New Zealand stand with them?

Secondly, will New Zealand take the floor in Mexico to announce support for negotiations to begin on a global ban, its preparedness to take a leading role in this, and its willingness to host a diplomatic conference in Wellington as part of that process?

*[iCAN ANZ slide + “we believe New Zealand should move to the forefront of negotiations towards a global ban on nuclear weapons”.]*

There has been enough talking about the urgent need to eliminate nuclear weapons; it is now time for action. We urge New Zealand to follow the advice of the Select Committee and to take action on negotiations for a global ban without further delay.

In conclusion, the Nayarit conference takes place two weeks before Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Day - which next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the 'Bravo' nuclear bomb detonation close to the surface of Bikini Atoll. It was part of a series of nuclear weapons tests that obliterated atolls and devastated the lives, homes and livelihoods of the people of the Marshall Islands, as well as causing widespread radioactive contamination throughout the Pacific - Bravo alone caused nuclear fallout initially covering an area of 7,000 square miles, and fallout from the blast was later detected around the globe.

It is time for the governments of the world to work together to ensure that a clear process to ban nuclear weapons is underway by March next year, to make certain that no other communities or nations are subjected to the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear bomb detonation. Thank you.

Edwina Hughes, December 2013

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<sup>1</sup> **Presentations:** at parliament on 5 December 2013 (organised by the United Nations Association, Wellington branch, and IPPNW); and at the 'Hot Topics in Humanitarian Disarmament' forums for NGOs and diplomats, in Auckland on 16 December 2013 and in Wellington on 18 December 2013 (both organised by Peace Movement Aotearoa).