

New Zealand among first states to sign nuclear ban treaty

20 September 2017

“The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons represents an important step and contribution towards the common aspiration of a world without nuclear weapons. The Treaty reflects growing concerns over the risk posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons as well as awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result if nuclear weapons were ever used again. It is the result of a global campaign focused on the unacceptability of the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances and the hope that the Treaty's adoption will give renewed momentum to nuclear disarmament. Consequently, the signing ceremony will be an important symbolic opportunity to build on the political momentum created by the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.” - United Nations information sheet for opening ceremony, 20 September 2017.

New Zealand will be among the first states to sign the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which opens for signature at United Nations’ Headquarters in New York tonight. Earlier this week, Foreign Minister Gerry Brownlee described New Zealand’s signing at the first opportunity as “consistent with New Zealand's long-standing commitment to international nuclear disarmament efforts”, and described the new Treaty as an important step towards a nuclear-free world because it “establishes the first global prohibition on nuclear weapons and provides the international legal framework for a world without these weapons”.

At least forty eight states are expected to participate in tonight’s High-Level Signature Ceremony for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will be webcast live (details below), and a further five will sign it later this week.

The Treaty was adopted on 7 July 2017 by 122 states during the final session of the UN Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination, in New York - New Zealand was a Vice President of the UN Conference and played a leading role in building support for, and negotiating, the Treaty.

The Treaty bans the development, testing, production, manufacture, possession, transfer, use or threat of use, deployment, installation or stationing of nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, as well as assistance, encouragement or inducement of any of these prohibited activities. It provides a pathway for nuclear-armed states to join the

Treaty and destroy their nuclear weapons in a time-bound, verifiable and irreversible manner.

The Treaty recognizes the ethical imperatives for nuclear disarmament, the urgency of achieving a nuclear weapon-free world, and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. It acknowledges the unacceptable suffering of the atomic bomb and nuclear test survivors, and the disproportionate impact that nuclear weapons and related activities have on indigenous peoples, women and girls.

The Treaty contains provisions for assistance to those affected by nuclear weapons testing and use, as well as for environmental remediation of areas affected by nuclear weapons testing and use - a welcome development for the Pacific, a region that has been irreparably harmed by more than 350 full scale nuclear weapon detonations conducted by Britain, France and the USA since 1 July 1946.

The High-Level Signature Ceremony will take place in the Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations' Headquarters, and will be webcast live at <http://webtv.un.org> as follows:

Opening ceremony: 8am to 8.20am in the Trusteeship Council Chamber (**NZ time** - 12 midnight to 12.20am, Thursday, 21 September). The opening ceremony will be presided over by the Secretary-General, as depository of the Treaty. Other speakers will be the President of the General Assembly, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, a representative of negotiating states and a civil society representative, Beatrice Fihn (Executive Director, **iCAN**);

Signing ceremony: 8.20am to 10.30am (**NZ time:** 12.20am to 2.30am, Thursday, 21 September) - the signing ceremony will be officiated by the UN Legal Counsel, with the assistance of the Chief of the Treaty Section, and the representative of each state signing the treaty will be called to sign in a continuous flow, throughout the event. There is a separate page for the signature of each state, with the name of the state appearing in all six official languages of the United Nations. The representative of each state that also wishes to deposit their instrument of ratification or acceptance will hand it to the Legal Counsel after signing the treaty.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will enter into force 90 days after the 50th ratification.

Further information about the Treaty is available at <http://www.icanw.org.nz>
