



# New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

## **United Nations General Assembly: High-Level Meeting for the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**

### **New Zealand Statement**

2 October 2020



Seventy-five years ago the world saw for the first time the devastating humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

The scale of the detonations obliterated the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

They killed tens of thousands of people, destroyed hospitals and inflicted unspeakable suffering upon survivors.

This was the start of the nuclear age.

In the decades since then nuclear weapon tests have left communities with the “burden of transboundary and intergenerational devastation”.

This was acknowledged by the Permanent Representative of Tuvalu when speaking on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum earlier this month.

Our region knows only too well the devastating effects of nuclear testing.

The more than 13,000 nuclear weapons in existence today include weapons many times more powerful than either of those used in Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

Detonation of just one of them would bring unacceptable and long-term devastation.

We have seen what a struggle it has been for the world to respond to the COVID crisis.

How would we cope with the massive deaths and horrific suffering caused by a nuclear holocaust?

The answer is - we couldn't.

Experts have long-warned that “no state, group of states or international organisation is able to prepare for or deal with the effects of nuclear war.”

If preparation is not the answer then prevention must be.

But if prevention is key how can we allow the erosion of nuclear disarmament and arms control frameworks as witnessed over the past decade?

How can we permit important agreements like the CTBT not to enter into force?

How can we fail to universalise and implement the NPT including its important nuclear disarmament undertaking in Article VI?

As UN Secretary-General Guterres has said the international community must reinvigorate its efforts to work together on nuclear disarmament.

Now as a matter of urgency we must work on an agenda which, again in the Secretary-General's words, is focused on 'saving humanity'.

Like climate change nuclear disarmament is not a job we can leave to future generations. We must deal with it now.

New Zealand's strong support for nuclear disarmament is reflected in our support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The TPNW has an important role to play in strengthening international humanitarian law and the global norm against nuclear weapons.

We look forward to the Treaty's imminent entry-into-force and to its first Meeting of States Parties which may occur as soon as next year.

In 2021 we will have an important opportunity to make progress on nuclear disarmament at the Review Conference of States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Our best chance of success at that Review Conference will occur if it builds on the adoption of practical measures such as those put forward in working papers by the New Agenda Coalition, the Stockholm 16, and the De-alerting Group, and on initiatives which reduce the risks which all members of the international community continue to face from the existence of nuclear weapons.

Ultimately we must move forward to eliminate nuclear weapons.

This will require nuclear weapon possessors to join in global negotiations on their elimination.

This Mr President will be the real guarantee that we have prevented a nuclear holocaust.

New Zealand remains dedicated to nuclear disarmament and to working with all countries to achieve it.

Thank you.