



NEW DRAFT TREATY TO BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS RELEASED AHEAD OF UN NEGOTIATIONS

A draft treaty to ban nuclear weapons¹ is now ready for negotiations at the United Nations. The draft “Convention on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons” would make it illegal to “develop, produce, manufacture or otherwise acquire”, to use nuclear weapons or to test them. Negotiations begin at UN headquarters in New York on 15 June through 7 July 2017. The first draft of the treaty was released in Geneva, 22 May 2017. The ban is opposed by states that have nuclear weapons.

The draft treaty stresses both urgency and impact: governments are to “make every effort to ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances”. The text notes that the nuclear weapons’ consequences “transcend national borders, pose grave implications for human survival, the environment, socio-economic development, the global economy, food security and for the health of future generations”.

The text is explicit about the effects on women which are often under-reported, citing “the disproportionate impact of ionizing radiation on maternal health and on girls”, and requiring “gender-sensitive assistance, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support” for survivors of nuclear explosions.

“The draft treaty connects the need to outlaw nuclear weapons with what nuclear weapons do to people and the planet. This sets the stage for the hard negotiations ahead,” said Jonathan Frerichs, disarmament representative in Geneva for Pax Christi International. “Everyone encouraged by this historic opportunity is invited to stay tuned in June. Make sure your government helps get the job done right.”

Pax Christi International and several of its members will be at the negotiations working for a strong, human-centered treaty² both as a global Catholic peace movement and as part of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Our movement will organize a side- event³ on 30 June 2017 aimed at discussing ethical, humanitarian and faith-based assessments of the draft treaty on the negotiating table.

¹ The draft treaty can be found here: <http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/DraftTreaty.pdf>.

² See also our previous statement with four calls to governments for a human-centered treaty: <http://www.paxchristi.net/news/statement-nuclear-weapons-ban-negotiations-four-calls-governments-human-centered-treaty/6582#sthash.Wb9mmQD4.dpbs>.

³ For more information about the Pax Christi International side-event go this website: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/nuclear-weapon-ban/calendar>.

ICAN has reacted to the text by stating that “it is pleased to see that the prohibition is rooted in humanitarian principles and that it builds on previous prohibitions of unacceptable weapons, such as the bans on biological and chemical weapons, landmines and cluster munitions.”

The draft treaty is the first fruit of this year’s unprecedented negotiations among a solid majority of some 130 UN member states to ban nuclear weapons. Elayne Whyte Gómez, the Costa Rican ambassador who is presiding over negotiations of the historic accord, presented the text to diplomats and members of civil society, before answering questions from the media.

The humanitarian focus of the draft convention reflects five years of progress among governments and civil society organizations, including faith-based organizations, in reframing nuclear disarmament around security for all countries. The process has been opposed by governments that have nuclear weapons and by some of their allies. That group of 40-odd countries is being encouraged to take part but has stayed away from the negotiations so far.

There are currently some 15,000 nuclear weapons in the arsenals of nine countries. The task of banning nuclear weapons has eluded the international community since two atomic bombs were used to destroy two Japanese cities in 1945.