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Time to wrap up the nuclear weapons era!

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Statement of the Abolition 2000 Coordinating Committee, January15, 2021.



On January 22, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons(TPNW) will enter into force. It will specifically prohibit States Parties from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, acquiring, possessing, deploying, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, and from assisting or encouraging such acts. And it will reinforce existing international law obligating all states not to test, use or threaten to use nuclear arms.

Despite the protests of nuclear weapons states, the TPNW is an important measure to support the abolition of nuclear weapons globally. Its preamble highlights the risks posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from their use. The states who have ratified the treaty and those who join later are affirming this understanding, demonstrating their commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world, and accepting additional commitments to advancing this through national nuclear prohibition measures and international promotion.

We encourage all ratifying states to develop and pass comprehensive implementing legislation that includes prohibitions on the transit and financing of nuclear weapons. Prohibiting transit would place additional restrictions on the current deployment of nuclear weapons. And if all of these countries and all the companies and institutions that operate within them were to end investments in the nuclear weapons industry, for example, it would make an even more significant impact on the nuclear arms race. And we encourage the ratifying states to establish ministerial positions and public advisory committees and disarmament education funds to facilitate public education and effective policy to further advance the objective of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The TPNW has been achieved as a result of seventy-five years of nuclear disarmament activism by civil society supported by mayors, parliamentarians, and like-minded governments ever since the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons was demonstrated by the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Such action has been successful in the past in the achievement of treaties to prohibit nuclear testing, reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles, prevent the widespread proliferation of nuclear weapons and ban over 110 countries through nuclear-weapon-free zones. It has also helped develop a taboo against the use of nuclear weapons and prevent their use in armed conflict since 1945. However, this taboo is flimsy, and the possibility that nuclear weapons will be used by accident, conflict escalation, miscalculation or malevolent intent remains so long as the weapons exist and are part of security policies.

Nuclear armed states may refuse to join the TPNW, but they cannot escape their obligations to achieve nuclear disarmament. They agreed to this in the very first resolution of the United Nations, UNGA Resolution 1 adopted on January 24 1946 by consensus. Furthermore, Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty requires States Parties to achieve nuclear disarmament. In addition, all States are bound by treaty and custom-based international law prohibiting the threat or use of nuclear weapons as affirmed by the International Court of Justice in 1996 and the UN Human Rights Committee in 2018.

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Entry into force of the TPNW and the 75th anniversary of UNGA Resolution 1 two days later provides an opportune time to remind all states of the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons and of their nuclear disarmament obligations, and to call on them to implement these immediately.

It's time to wrap up the nuclear weapons era.

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