

Public Statement to the First Negotiation Conference for a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons  
leading to their elimination

Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons

March 2017, New York

Since the first attack with atomic weapons, in August 1945, when the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed, the terrible consequences of nuclear weapons have demanded their abolition. Since 1945 humankind has been forced to live in the shadow of apocalyptic destruction. Any use of nuclear weapons would not only destroy the past fruits of human civilization, it would disfigure the present and consign future generations to a grim fate.

Our respective faith traditions advocate for the right of people to live in security and dignity. We believe in the commands of conscience and justice; we seek to honour our duty to protect the vulnerable and to exercise the stewardship that will safeguard the planet for future generations. Nuclear weapons manifest a total disregard for all these values and commitments. There is no countervailing imperative—whether of national security, stability in international power relations, or the difficulty of overcoming political inertia—that justifies their continued existence, much less their use. Their catastrophic humanitarian consequences demand that nuclear weapons never be used again, under any circumstances.

We raise our voices in the name of sanity and the shared values of humanity. We welcome these negotiations, necessary to prohibit the worst weapon ever invented. We reject the immorality of holding whole populations hostage, threatened with a cruel and miserable death. We applaud the world's political leaders that have demonstrated the courage to begin these negotiations. We urge those not present to re-examine their positions and, at the very least, make a commitment to join the June- July session in good faith.

As people of faith, we urge those negotiating here to:

1. Heed the voices of the world's Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) and reiterate that the fundamental justification for this new legal instrument is the prevention of the humanitarian harm caused by any use of nuclear weapons. The clear justification for this new legal instrument is to ensure the suffering of those affected must never be visited on any other individual, family or society. The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons remains at the core of all nuclear disarmament efforts;
2. Continue to call upon all states to participate in the negotiations in order to fulfill their obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament;
3. Develop a treaty text that clearly and explicitly prohibits the use, possession, development, production, acquisition, transfer and deployment of nuclear weapons, as well as any inducement, encouragement, investment or assistance with those prohibited acts. The new instrument should also provide for an obligation for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, and a framework to achieve it.