Background
Any use of nuclear weapons would cause unacceptable humanitarian suffering and would violate international humanitarian law, environmental law, and human rights law. The humanitarian effects of the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are still felt today, over 70 years later.

On 7 July 2017, 122 states voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)—a landmark international agreement that categorically outlaws the worst weapon of mass destruction and establishes a pathway to its elimination.

The TPNW aims to protect civilians by preventing the use of nuclear weapons. It build upon and further develops norms established through the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, nuclear-weapon-free zones, the biological and chemical weapons conventions, and other prohibitions of weapons that cause unacceptable harm.

The Treaty will open for signature at UN Headquarters in New York on 20 September 2017, during the high-level segment of the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly. This will be a great moment for heads of state, foreign ministers, and other representatives of governments to sign this historic treaty.

This Treaty is a historic breakthrough in the efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, and is a counter-measure to escalating tensions between the nuclear-armed states. The TPNW will set a powerful norm and impact behaviour and policies even in states that initially do not join.

Current context
In the context of rising geopolitical tensions, which have included threats to use nuclear weapons and further demonstrate the increasing risks of a nuclear detonation, states must unequivocally reject nuclear weapons as legitimate tools of war or “security”. The TPNW is the best response states can make to reject the “nuclear sabre-rattling” which is a threat to the international community.

The Treaty prohibits the use, possession, and development of nuclear weapons. It also contains obligations on state parties to provide assistance to victims of nuclear detonations and to work towards remediation of affected environments. These landmark provisions help situate the Treaty in the broader humanitarian disarmament framework, which seeks to outlaw and eliminate weapons that led to human suffering.

ICAN calls on all states to sign and ratify this Treaty as soon as possible, and for all states to stop activities that run counter to its aims.
and objectives. Any state can sign the Treaty, regardless of whether they participated in the negotiations or not. Each state that signs and ratifies this treaty will contribute to strengthening this instrument’s wider impact in global nuclear politics, to delegitimising the role of weapons of mass destruction in security policies, and even to influencing military practices in states that do not initially sign the Treaty.

**Recommendations**

**During First Committee, delegations should:**
- Express support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and declare intentions to become a state party to the Treaty as soon as possible;
- Highlight that the Treaty forms part of the growing body of law regulating means and methods of warfare and that it sets a common standard that nuclear weapons are unacceptable for all, similar to other weapons with indiscriminate and unacceptable effects such as biological and chemical weapons, landmines, and cluster munitions;
- Highlight and condemn any on-going activities that are prohibited under this Treaty, such as threats to use nuclear weapons, testing of nuclear weapons, and the development and modernisation of nuclear arsenals; and
- Call for all resolutions on nuclear weapons to include a reference to the TPNW.

**Beyond First Committee, states should:**
- Become states parties to the TPNW and work to ensure its quick entry into force, including by encouraging other states to join it;
- Develop national measures to implement the Treaty, including those aimed at ending investments in nuclear weapon producing companies and other activities that support the use, development, maintenance, or modernisation of these weapons;
- Designate a focal point within the government to assess the needs and plan implementation of victim assistance and environmental remediation efforts.
- Reject nuclear weapons as legitimate weapons and work to end any military activities related to the development and use of nuclear weapons; and
- Encourage, bilaterally and multilaterally, all states to join the broad international consensus against weapons of mass destruction and for nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear weapons in accordance with the TPNW or other effective measures in accordance with the NPT.

*Author: Beatrice Fihn*

_Civil society applaudes as the TPNW is adopted on 7 July 2017 © xxxx_