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. No test of any nuclear explosive device should ever occur again.

On 7 July 2017, 122 states voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) at a specially convened United Nations diplomatic conference. The TPNW is a landmark disarmament agreement that comprehensively outlaws the most destructive weapon ever devised and establishes a pathway to its total elimination. The Treaty prohibits all development, production, possession, and use of nuclear weapons. In addition, the TPNW obligates states parties to provide assistance to victims of nuclear detonations and to work towards environmental remediation of affected areas. These landmark provisions help situate the Treaty in the broader humanitarian disarmament framework, which seeks to outlaw and eliminate weapons that lead to human suffering.

The TPNW builds upon and adds to the norms established by the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the regional treaties creating nuclear weapon free zones, and the Partial and Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban treaties, as well as the biological and chemical weapons disarmament treaties and other prohibitions of weapons that cause unacceptable harm.

The TPNW opened for signature at UN Headquarters in New York on 20 September 2017. As of early September 2018, a total of 60 states have signed the TPNW, of which 14 have also ratified, and one state has acceded directly. A further 35 states must either ratify or accede to the TPNW to trigger its entry into force. The Treaty will enter into force as binding international law 90 days thereafter. A first Meeting of the States Parties must then be convened within a year of the TPNW’s entry into force.

A special ceremony is being held at the UN Headquarters in New York on 26 September, though a state may also sign, ratify, or accede to the TPNW at any time.

Current context
The nine nuclear-armed states continue to invest billions of dollars into the so-called modernisation of their nuclear arsenals and related infrastructure. Tensions between some of these states are on the rise, along with threats to use nuclear weapons.
At the same time, the TPNW has established a powerful norm against nuclear weapons and is already begun to impact on behaviour and policies even in states that have not yet adhered to it. Major financial institutions in two umbrella states, for instance, have indicated their intention to exclude nuclear weapon-producing companies from their investment portfolio and parliamentary processes are underway in several non-signatory states, while local authorities in nuclear-armed states, such as the California state Senate in the United States, have expressed support for the Treaty and called for the Federal Government to begin disarmament negotiations.

In the context of rising geopolitical tensions, which have included threats to use nuclear weapons, further demonstrating the increasing risks of a nuclear detonation, states must unequivocally reject nuclear weapons as inherently illegitimate. The TPNW is the best response states can make to put an end to “nuclear sabre-rattling”, which is a major threat to international peace and security. 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, for those that have not yet done so, declare their intention to become a state party to the Treaty as soon as possible;
- Highlight and condemn as illegitimate any ongoing 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:**
- Sign and ratify the TPNW and work to ensure its quick entry into force, including by encouraging other states to join it;
- Adopt national legislation and other measures to implement the Treaty, including by 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.

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