



**International Physicians**  
for the Prevention of Nuclear War



**Health Through Peace 2017**  
**IPPNW 22<sup>nd</sup> World Congress**  
**York University**  
**September 4, 2017**

As doctors, medical students, other health professionals, and other concerned citizens gathered at York University for the international conference Health Through Peace 2017 and IPPNW's 22<sup>nd</sup> World Congress, we celebrate a milestone in the global campaign to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

The new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted on July 7 by 122 UN Member States, is a major step toward the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons. For the first time, nuclear weapons have been explicitly condemned and declared illegal because of their medical, environmental, and humanitarian consequences, placing those who continue to possess and rely upon them on the wrong side of a powerful new international norm.

The “Humanitarian Initiative” process that produced the Treaty was driven by an unprecedented coalition of states, international organizations, and civil society groups determined to shift the debate about nuclear disarmament away from the strategic security interests of the nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent states and to focus instead on the catastrophic medical, environmental, and humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons themselves, regardless of who possesses them.

IPPNW can be proud of the role we played throughout this decade-long process, starting with the launch of ICAN in 2007. Within only a few years, ICAN blossomed into a global campaign coalition of more than 400 organizations in 100 countries, with IPPNW, as the lead medical partner, providing detailed scientific evidence about health and environmental consequences on which the political case for the Ban Treaty was based. We presented that evidence at three successive landmark international conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, at subsequent UN meetings that laid the foundation for treaty negotiations, and at the negotiations themselves.

We did not—and could not—do this alone. In addition to our ICAN partners who coordinated an extraordinarily effective global lobbying campaign in support of the Treaty, we were joined in this effort by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and other leading health federations, including the World Medical Association, the International Council of Nurses, and the World Federation of Public Health Associations. We are enormously grateful to our colleagues at ICRC for helping to ensure that the Treaty would be fully grounded in the principles of International Humanitarian Law. By collaborating with IPPNW on a working paper summarizing the evidence about the health and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons and nuclear war, and the impossibility of any meaningful response—a document that became an official working paper of the negotiating conference—the WMA, the ICN, and the WFPHA added the weight and prestige of the entire international health community to the stigmatization of nuclear weapons and the urgent imperative for their prohibition and elimination.

The Ban Treaty exists today because of strategic partnerships among states, international organizations, and civil society groups determined to assert a new kind of leadership for nuclear disarmament. The medical movement building emphasized at this joint Medact “Health Through Peace” Forum and IPPNW World Congress is key to nurturing these partnerships, which must now focus on bringing the Treaty into force as soon as possible after it opens for signature at the UN on September 20.

Ratification by 50 states is needed for entry into force, and obtaining these ratifications promptly is our immediate campaign goal. With this powerful new legal, moral, and political tool in hand, we can increase the pressure on the nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent states and bring them into compliance with the Treaty through the complete and irreversible elimination of all nuclear weapons, delivery systems, and infrastructure. Only then will we achieve our goal of abolishing nuclear weapons as the only sure way to prevent nuclear war.

Even with the Ban Treaty in hand, we face daunting challenges. The nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent states, who boycotted the negotiations and have declared their unwillingness to join the Treaty or to respect its provisions, are determined to hold on to nuclear weapons for as long as possible. All nine nuclear-armed States, which continue to possess 15,000 nuclear weapons among them—are together investing more than \$100 billion dollars every year in new and more accurate arsenals. The risk that nuclear weapons will be used is increasing almost daily. The increasing tensions between the US and DPRK (North Korea), exacerbated recently by large-scale military exercises and a new nuclear test, the destabilizing presence of nuclear weapons in South Asia and the Middle East, and heightening tensions between the US and its NATO allies and Russia have brought us closer to nuclear war than at any time since the end of the Cold War. The escalation of any of these conflicts could lead to the use of nuclear weapons against cities and their populations for the first time since Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Should we cross that threshold, human extinction in a nuclear winter cannot be ruled out.

We know from experience that stigmatizing and prohibiting unconscionable weapons is an effective first step toward their elimination. From the 1990s onward, IPPNW’s participation in the campaigns to ban antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions, and to place strong restrictions on trafficking in small arms and light weapons has had a positive impact in saving lives and reducing the carnage from armed violence. We therefore regret that the world’s leading conventional arms trade fair, Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI), is going ahead in London later this month, and condemn this event as a violation of the letter and the spirit of the Arms Trade Treaty. Nevertheless, to the Mine Ban Treaty, the Cluster Munitions Convention, and the ATT, we have now added a Treaty that explicitly declares the world’s most destructive and abhorrent weapons illegal.

There is much more we need to do. While nuclear war puts all of humanity at risk, armed violence in any form destroys countless lives every year, and undermines our efforts to provide for the health, well being, and security of people throughout the world. At this York Congress, we pledge our continuing commitment to a world where peace and health are achieved for all, and nuclear weapons have been abolished for all time.