

VITAL SIGNS

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS FOR THE PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR (IPPNW)

ASTANA CONGRESS CHARTS COURSE TO NUCLEAR-WEAPONS-FREE WORLD



PHOTO: XANTHE HALL

An IPPNW Congress is a periodic opportunity for physicians, medical students, and supporters from every corner of the world to gather in one place where they can assess progress towards the Federation's most cherished goals—nuclear abolition and the prevention of armed violence—and set priorities for achieving those goals more quickly in the years ahead.

The 21st World Congress, this past August in Astana, Kazakhstan, added another dimension—a chance to reconnect with an important part of IPPNW's history, and to take inspiration from our successful work to halt nuclear testing as we step up the campaign to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons entirely.

The Astana Congress took place in the shadow of armed conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, where the specter of nuclear weapons has

been unavoidable. For many participants, even the trip to Kazakhstan was complicated by the need to reroute flights around Ukraine and parts of Russia. This lent a sense of gravity and urgency to the entire weeklong program.

The historical backdrop was IPPNW's participation in the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement and massive public protests that led to the closing of the nuclear test sites and the moratorium on testing in both the former Soviet Union and the United States. Kazakhstan was one of the former Soviet republics (Ukraine and Belarus were the others) that renounced nuclear weapons and returned the missiles and warheads based on their territories to Russia at the end of the Cold War. Since then, the Kazakh government has been an outspoken advocate for a nuclear-weapons-free world.

It was only natural, therefore, that Congress participants would hear repeatedly about the experiences of victims of the nuclear testing program from speakers including the Minister of Health, Dr. Salidat Kairbekova, and Atom Project ambassador Karipbek Kuyukov.

Past and present came together in the movement to build support for a humanitarian initiative to eliminate nuclear weapons. Ronald Sturm of the Austrian foreign ministry spoke about plans for the third international conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which will take place in Vienna in December.

"It may be true that nuclear disarmament takes time and is difficult," he said, "but the world is certainly not moving in the right direction"—a reference to the inadequate disarmament efforts and modernization programs of the nuclear-armed States.

[Continued on pg. 2]

Breaking news!

Race to 50 won!
The Arms Trade Treaty will enter into force this year.

See pg. 4

Astana Congress

Continued from page 1

"The non-nuclear weapons states are now trying to take more control of the issue," he added.

Congress highlights included a video message from former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias, presentations by Rutgers University climate scientist Alan Robock, John Borrie of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, Jacques Villetaz of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Ward Wilson of the Rethinking Nuclear Weapons Project.


Another theme that resonated throughout the Astana student and main congresses was the moral imperative for the medical community to act to prevent armed violence. Speakers who addressed this included Dr. Jasmin Nario Galace from the Philippines, a leading expert on non-violent conflict resolution, and Dr. Christopher Mikton from the World Health Organization's Department of Injury and Violence Prevention.

The Congress opened with a heroes welcome for a small but courageous group of medical students and young doctors who bicycled 1,140 kilometers from Semey to Astana, speaking out along the way about the links between peace, health, the environment, and nuclear abolition. More than 100 Congress participants returned to Semey on the final day of the program, to visit the former nuclear test site at Kurchatov City and to meet with victims of nuclear testing at Semey Medical University.

The statement issued at the end of the Astana Congress was a unified expression of IPPNW's commitment

to a world without nuclear weapons, in which armed violence no longer wreaks havoc on the health, security, and aspirations of the world's people:

"Even in a world without nuclear weapons, we face severe challenges from unsustainable living patterns, global warming, militarism and armed violence, economic inequalities, resource depletion,

and the inexcusable poverty that afflicts billions of people on Earth...We live in dangerous times, surrounded by challenges that can seem intractable. Yet we also see signs of hope. We leave Astana recommitted to achieving a world without nuclear weapons and without war, which provides for the health, safety, and security of all." 

Snapshots from the 21st IPPNW World Congress

Astana, Kazakhstan

The Astana Declaration, keynote addresses, plenary speeches, and workshop reports are available online:

ippnw.org/astana-2014-presentations.html

PHOTO CREDITS: XANTHE HALL



PHOTO: MARIA VALENTI




"The obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament and to achieve a world free from nuclear weapons is indisputable... States without nuclear weapons and civil society are seeking to take more ownership of the debate by focusing on the potential humanitarian consequences."

—Ronald Sturm, Austrian foreign ministry



RACE TO 50 WON! THE ARMS TRADE TREATY WILL ENTER INTO FORCE THIS YEAR

 Read the full Treaty in Arabic, English, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish:
www.un.org/disarmament/att

The fifty ratifications required for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) to enter into force were achieved recently at the United Nations (UN), as IPPNW armed violence prevention activists and their colleagues around the world acclaimed the historic moment. Eight states, including Argentina, the Bahamas, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, St. Lucia, Portugal, Senegal, and Uruguay helped to exceed the magic number at a special UN ceremony. The Treaty enters into force on December 24th.

“This is a victory for health and humanity,” said Dr. Robert Mtonga, IPPNW/Zambia, and past co-president of IPPNW, who has been instrumental in leading IPPNW advocacy for a humanitarian-based ATT.

“The deposit of the 50th Instrument of ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty marks a very important watershed on our journey to alleviate human suffering caused by an unregulated international trade in conventional weapons. Yes, more work lies ahead of us, but we have crossed the Rubicon.”



“THIS IS A VICTORY FOR HEALTH AND HUMANITY,” SAID DR. ROBERT MTONGA.


IPPNW doctors and medical students worldwide have been working for years in their countries, as well as at UN meetings, to advocate for the ATT as a health imperative. Last year, IPPNW delivered a Medical Alert for a Strong ATT petition, with more than 1700 signatures from 58 countries, to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon.

Dr. Mtonga participated in the Meeting of States Parties on the ATT in Mexico, in September, where he said “With so many crises evident today, and a rise, not a

decrease, in the number of casualties from armed violence, we need effective implementation of the treaty right now. Each day delayed portends further humanitarian suffering.”

Campaigners from the Control Arms Coalition, of which IPPNW served on the steering committee for several years, hailed the historic moment but cautioned that the ATT must be implemented to the highest possible standard.


The ATT is the first global agreement to regulate the more than \$70 billion annual trade in arms and ammunition. Every day, more than 1,000 people are killed by armed violence and millions more are injured or maimed or live in fear of rape, assault and displacement caused by weapons getting into the wrong hands. Under the ATT, states must assess the risks of weapons and ammunition being misused to commit human rights abuses or violations of humanitarian law, before they can authorize transfer.

Once the ATT enters into force, the next major challenge will be to ensure the treaty is implemented robustly. 

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND THE ARMS TRADE TREATY

Health professionals have a vested interest in ensuring signature, ratification and effective implementation of the ATT as a public health imperative.

If rigorously applied, a robust ATT will prevent deaths and injuries from armed violence, and help shift resources from arms investments to vital social and public health services.

 For specific action steps, download IPPNW’s *Health Professionals Guide to the ATT*
www.ippnw.org/pdf/health-guide-to-att.pdf



LEFT: DRS. MICHAEL SCHOBER (AUSTRIA), DANIEL BASSEY (NIGERIA, NEW IPPNW CO-PRESIDENT), SHANNON GEARHART (US) SHARED THEIR PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT WHAT MOTIVATES THEM TO WORK TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE DURING THE ASTANA *AIMING FOR PREVENTION* PLENARY.



RIGHT: DURING HIS PLENARY ADDRESS, WHO'S DR. CHRISTOPHER MIKTON CALLED UPON IPPNW MEMBERS TO BECOME ENGAGED IN VIOLENCE PREVENTION.

JOIN US!

IPPNW's *Aiming for Prevention* campaign mobilizes the unique expertise and authority of physicians and public health professionals with a multifaceted approach. We support affiliates through program development, communications, campaign materials, technical assistance, training and sharing resources.

FOUR KEY *AIMING FOR PREVENTION* PROGRAM AREAS

1 Action-oriented research – on violent injury to help define risk factors, inform intervention strategies, and illuminate the human dimensions of armed violence - includes hospital-based research and *One Bullet Story* case studies.

2 Education – of colleagues, the public, policy makers, and the media about how we can prevent violence, especially armed violence, via policy forums, professional meetings, conferences, publishing, and via the internet.

3 Policy Advocacy – to policy-makers at policy forums on disarmament including the United Nations and at regional and national forums and meetings, and to health authorities and medical practitioners at the local level.

4 Care and Rehabilitation – of victims of violence, and working to improve health systems for survivors of violence.

WHO'S GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION



GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION
CAMPAGNE MONDIALE POUR LA PREVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE
VIOLENCE PREVENTION ALLIANCE / ALLIANCE POUR LA PREVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE

The World Health Organization is poised to release another landmark report on the status of violence prevention and health in 133 countries.

After nearly two years of data gathering, it will include assessments of how countries have implemented the recommendations of its 2002 *World Report on Violence and Health*. This new summary of world violence will cover such topics as armed violence, gang violence, youth violence prevention programs, victim services, and sexual violence. A goal is to identify gaps in prevention strategies, and opportunities for interventions at the national level.

IPPNW participates in VPA annual meeting in DC

The *Global Status Report* and what it means for the WHO Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) was discussed at the recent VPA annual meeting in Washington, DC.

AFP's Director Maria Valenti provided an update on IPPNW's global armed violence prevention work to the more than 60 participants. She also presented on the VPA "Storybank" project group she leads.

Storybank is exploring using the VPA web platform as an avenue to pro-

vide members and the public online access to stories about victims and survivors of violence to use for education and policy work. Each VPA member would curate their own stories and provide descriptions and links. IPPNW's *One Bullet Stories* and *Medical Voices Against Violence* would be among those posted.

Stay tuned at the WHO Violence Prevention Alliance web page at <http://www.who.int/violenceprevention/en/>. 

WE ARE CALLED TO BE ADVOCATES FOR OUR PATIENTS

INTERVIEW WITH DR. HELLEN BARSOSIO, IPPNW REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT, AFRICA

PHOTO: MARIA VALENTI



Dr. Barsosio is a public health physician and researcher who is dedicated to the empowerment of vulnerable communities, medical peace work addressing small arms and nuclear disarmament, and the mentorship of medical students. In addition to being elected the 2014-2016 IPPNW Regional Vice President, she is also the Deputy Board Chair

VS: How did you first become involved in IPPNW?

HB: I joined IPPNW in 2007 as a medical student, when I was selected to participate in the IPPNW Kenya-Germany *MedEx* student exchange program for my winning essay “Healing the wounds of war in Africa: The Role of the Health Professional”. My experience in this program left a lasting impression and was my first introduction to nuclear disarmament and medical activism, with the highlight being a Target X demonstration in Freiburg. I haven’t looked back since then.

VS: What motivates you?

HB: Peace allows us to live our lives fully; enjoy dinner with our families without fear that a bomb will fall; traveling without worrying about a rebel army hijacking; living without the constant threat of nuclear annihilation. What keeps me going is knowing that whatever efforts we invest in peace will eventually pay off. It took more than 10 years to

achieve an Arms Trade Treaty, but it eventually happened because of the dedication of peace activists all over the world. I’m hopeful that our children will have a safer, kinder and more peaceful future.

VS: Africa has proven leadership in the anti-nuclear struggle by eliminating all nuclear weapons from its territories and declaring itself a nuclear weapon-free zone. Where do you see the role of Africa in nuclear disarmament today, and what will be the impact of the 2015 K-Project - Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro for Peace?

HB: In this crucial time, we need all the 116 nuclear weapon-free states to speak up and push for a global nuclear ban treaty. We obviously cannot rely on the countries that own these weapons to lead such a treaty.


Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa, is really a symbol that it’s possible to achieve such a lofty goal as a Global Ban Treaty. It will help bring awareness and engage new activists.

We know it’s possible to declare Earth as a planet that is nuclear-free.

VS: In the past few years, we have seen more African countries entering the uranium market: Niger, Mali, Namibia and, recently, Tanzania. In a growing market, Africa is already producing over a sixth of the world’s uranium production, with devastating effects on human health and the environment. How can medical professionals fight this trend?

HB: The K-project is also about uranium mining. I see the hypocrisy in mining uranium in a continent that declared itself a nuclear-weapon-free zone; that some of this uranium will find its way to nuclear weapons is not far-fetched. In walking our talk as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, we have to actively participate in curbing nuclear disarmament and take responsibility for the part we play in the nuclear chain; we have to stop uranium mining.

On a continent where safety measures for miners and the environment are minimal, uranium mining has far reaching effects beyond TB in miners. The long term radiation in the environment, with attendant medical conditions such as cancers, add a heavier burden to our already strained health systems; not to mention that unborn child who will have a congenital malformation.

As medical professionals we are called to prevent what we cannot treat; we are called to be advocates for our patients both now and in the future. This gives us the opportunity to educate our policy makers in a language they can understand and influence our national assemblies to change some laws. 

MOVING FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ACTION

VIENNA CONFERENCE ON HUMANITARIAN IMPACT: DECEMBER 6-7, 2014

The third international conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons will take place in Vienna from December 8-9, 2014. Hosted by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the conference is expected to build upon the scientific evidence presented at previous gatherings of States in Oslo and Nayarit, and to open up space for discussion about how to accelerate the pace of nuclear disarmament.

ICAN has announced plans for a Civil Society Forum, designed to link the government conference with the campaign for a treaty to ban nuclear


weapons and to pave the way for their elimination, on December 6-7.

During his keynote address at the 21st World Congress in Astana, Ronald Sturm of the Austrian ministry said this third HINW conference needs to move beyond Oslo and Nayarit.

“The more we know and talk about the humanitarian consequences of these weapons and the risks associated with them, the more we will reach the understanding that it means taking an irresponsible risk and a gamble that we should not take. Thus we can generate momentum and the sense of urgency and political will needed to make real and directional progress.”

IPPNW program director John Loretz, who serves on the ICAN steering group, explained why the Vienna conference is so important.

“Vienna must be a turning point from knowledge to action. We educate ourselves because we have a responsibility to act and, in the case of nuclear weapons, that action has to be comprehensive and decisive, and it has to be taken urgently. The measure of success in Vienna will be the number of States that declare themselves ready to work for a ban treaty, and to take the political leadership on nuclear disarmament that the nuclear-armed States have refused to take.”

The ICAN Civil Society Forum website, with links to the government conference online: goodbyenuk.es 



ICANW.ORG

AMICUS BRIEF FILED IN MARSHALL ISLANDS SUIT

COPIES OF THE LAWSUITS, NEWS UPDATES, AND OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE ONLINE: NUCLEARZERO.ORG


In April, the Republic of the Marshall Islands sued the United States in the Federal District Court in San Francisco on the grounds that it had failed to fulfill its nuclear disarmament obligations under international law. A parallel lawsuit naming all nine nuclear-armed States was launched in the International Court of Justice.

The Marshall Islands, whose people suffered through more than a decade of nuclear testing, has asked the courts to rule that the US and the other eight are legally required to comply with their disarmament obligations, established either under the NPT or customary international law. The US government, to no one's surprise, asked the federal court to

dismiss the case. In August, IPPNW, its US affiliate, Physicians for Social Responsibility, and Pax Christi International submitted an *amicus curiae* (“friend of the court”) brief advising the court that “the risk of nuclear war, either intentional or accidental, poses a substantial risk of injury sufficient to give [the] plaintiff standing” and that it should not dismiss the case as the US has requested.

The brief describes the dangers of reliance on a policy of nuclear deterrence; the record of near misses and miscalculations that could have led to the failure of deterrence or to an “accidental” nuclear war at any time over the past several decades; and

the humanitarian consequences of such a failure. Using IPPNW's nuclear famine findings as the primary example, the brief informs the court that the damage to the atmosphere, to agriculture, and to food production from a nuclear war involving 100 Hiroshima-sized bombs “will put up to two billion innocent people far from the warring states at risk of famine and death by starvation.”

Marshall Islands Foreign Minister Tony de Brum said, “I remain hopeful that the US Federal Court will recognize that the US must meet their legal and moral obligations if we are to leave the world a safer place for all of humanity.” 



- December 6, 2014
Waltham Woods, Massachusetts, USA
Conference: Caring for Patients at Risk for Gun Violence Medical, Legal and Ethical Issues
Online: www.goo.gl/IRIADT
- December 6-7, 2014
Vienna, Austria
ICAN Civil Society Forum
Online: www.goodbyenuk.es
- December 7-8, 2014
Vienna, Austria
Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons
Draft Program online: www.goo.gl/EGbt3O
- April 2015
Berlin, Germany
European Student Conference (still in the planning stages)
Online: www.ippnw-students.org
- May 2015
New York, New York, USA
Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference
Online: www.goo.gl/bZYu8S
- July 9-16, 2015
Mt. Kilimanjaro/Moshi, Tanzania
K-Project - Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro for Peace
International peace advocates will have a conference in Moshi, Tanzania and climb Mt. Kilimanjaro, as a sign for peace and to raise awareness of the effects of uranium mining and nuclear weapons.



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To join, please use the form on the reverse side of the enclosed donation slip, call 1.617.440.1733 x304, or email IPPNW Development Associate, Garrett FitzGerald: gfitzgerald@ippnw.org.

IPPNW is a non - partisan federation of national medical organizations in 64 countries dedicated to safeguarding health by working to ban nuclear weapons and to address the impact of militarism and war on human health.

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Editor and Designer: Aki Morizono IPPNW Staff: Michael Christ, John Loretz, Maria Valenti, Aki Morizono, Garrett FitzGerald, Anne Kieran, and George Cani.

