

# Briefing Paper: First Committee

October 2019

## Background

On 7 July 2017, 122 nations voted to adopt a landmark global agreement to outlaw nuclear weapons, known as the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). It opened for signature on 20 September 2017 and will enter into legal force once 50 nations have ratified or acceded to it. As of September 27, 2019, 79 States have signed and 32 States have ratified the Treaty.

## At the 2019 meeting of First Committee, ICAN encourages all States to:

- Call on all States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the TPNW without delay;
- Announce their intention to sign/ratify the TPNW; OR indicate that they have already signed/ratified the TPNW;
- Underscore the importance of the TPNW in strengthening global norms against the use, proliferation and possession of nuclear weapons by any State;
- 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;
- Underscore that the TPNW complements other treaties relating to nuclear weapons, including the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties;
- Note that the TPNW contains strong safeguards provisions, including for States that currently possess nuclear weapons;
- Emphasize that nuclear weapons are not in any way a legitimate means of defence, and their use or threatened use can never, under any circumstances, be justified;
- Express deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and the growing risk of such use;
- Underscore that each new signature and ratification of the TPNW builds pressure and momentum for the total elimination of nuclear weapons;
- Look forward to the early entry into force of the TPNW and the convening of the first meeting of States parties.

## Quick Facts on the TPNW

### Prohibitions

The TPNW prohibits states from developing, testing, producing, transferring, possessing, hosting, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons. It also prohibits them from assisting, encouraging, or inducing anyone to engage in any of these activities.

### Positive Obligations

The TPNW, once it enters into force, also includes positive obligations for states-parties to provide assistance for victims of nuclear weapons use and testing and environmental remediation for places impacted by nuclear weapons use and testing.

### Safeguards

The TPNW, like the NPT, requires all states-parties to have a comprehensive safeguards agreement in force. In addition, all TPNW states-parties that already have an Additional Protocol in force at the time of the TPNW's entry into force must maintain it. All nuclear-armed states and former nuclear-armed states that are party to the treaty must also bring into force an Additional Protocol.

### Joining the TPNW

A state with nuclear weapons may join the treaty, so long as it agrees to destroy them in accordance with a legally binding, time-bound plan. Similarly, a state that hosts another state's nuclear weapons on its territory may join, so long as it agrees to remove them by a deadline.

### Global Support for the TPNW

A report by the Norwegian People's Aid found that in 2018, 155 states, nearly four-fifths of the world's 197 nations, maintain policies and practices that are compliant with all the Article 1 prohibitions of the TPNW. The same report found that support for the TPNW is high in all regions apart from Europe, with only 4 non-supporters (less than 9%) of the 45 states in the Americas, 4 non-supporters (25%) of the 16 states in the South Pacific, 9 non-supporters (16%) of the 54 states in Africa, and 14 non-supporters (32%) of the 43 states in Asia<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Norwegian People's Aid, *Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor 2018*, October 2018.