

APLN Co-Convenors Welcome Negotiations on a Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons

On 27 October the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted, by the overwhelming vote of 123-38 (with 16 abstentions) a resolution on “Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations.” [Resolution A/C.1/71/L.41](#) calls for negotiations to commence in 2017 on a “legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.”

We welcome this historic decision as a contribution to global efforts to delegitimize nuclear weapons, contain and reverse their spread, and begin the process of first banning and then eliminating nuclear weapons. Delegitimizing nuclear weapons is central to the longer term goal of abolishing this uniquely inhumane and devastating weapon of mass destruction. The decision to start negotiations is recognition that a ban treaty can be a useful building block, amongst others, for creating the structures necessary to support a world free of nuclear weapons.

A legal ban treaty by itself cannot deliver disarmament. But it can be a vital element to revive flagging momentum and re-energize efforts to move from a ban to total elimination of nuclear weapons stockpiles and dismantlement of the nuclear weapons infrastructure. A legal ban will further reinforce the normative boundary between conventional and nuclear weapons, strengthen the norm of non-use of nuclear weapons, and reaffirm both the non-proliferation and disarmament norms. Accordingly a ban treaty will be complementary to the disarmament goal of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), and provide an impetus to efforts to an eventual Nuclear Weapons Convention that is universal, non-discriminatory and fully verifiable.

All 191 NPT States Parties have committed in Article VI to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.” In 1996 the International Court of Justice advised that they have an obligation to bring these negotiations to a conclusion. The 27 October UN General Assembly’s First Committee vote conforms to this obligation and attempts to give practical expression to it.

October 31st, 2016

Signed



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