



International Physicians  
for the Prevention of Nuclear War



## **Ban treaty is a “significant forward step” toward elimination of nuclear weapons**

*[The following joint statement has been released by IPPNW, the World Medical Association, the International Council of Nurses, and the World Federation of Public Health Associations. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons opens for signature at the United Nations on September 20, 2017.]*

*September 18, 2017*

The landmark [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#), adopted on July 7 by 122 non-nuclear-weapon states following negotiations earlier this year, prohibits the development, testing, production, possession, stockpiling, use, or threatened use of nuclear weapons. The Treaty completes the process of stigmatizing and delegitimizing nuclear weapons on the basis of their catastrophic health, environmental, and humanitarian impacts.

Our federations, representing millions of doctors, nurses, and public health professional around the world, welcome this treaty as a significant forward step toward eliminating the most destructive weapons ever created, and the existential threat nuclear war poses to humanity and to the survival of all life on Earth. The TPNW’s recognition of the “unacceptable suffering” nuclear weapons have caused to victims of the use of nuclear weapons (hibakusha) and to the victims of nuclear testing, and of the disproportionate impacts of nuclear weapons on women and girls and on indigenous peoples, adds to the moral and legal force of the norms it has established.

We share the Treaty’s evidence-based conclusion that the elimination of nuclear weapons is “the only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances.” The establishment of a new international norm prohibiting nuclear weapons is a crucial step toward their elimination, but it is *only* a first step. The parties to the TPNW must now work diligently and urgently to bring the nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent states into compliance with this norm.

Nuclear weapons violate international law because they are inevitably indiscriminate and disproportionate in their effects. The ionizing radiation produced at detonation kills people from radiation sickness, while radioactive contamination of the environment causes cancers, chronic diseases, birth defects, and genetic damage. Even a small fraction of the nuclear weapons that exist today can damage the global climate and food production so severely that billions of people would starve. The health and international relief communities cannot respond to the terrible devastation caused by nuclear weapons, and no amount of planning or spending on improved capacity can change this reality.

We urge all states to sign the treaty soon after it opens for signature at the United Nations in New York on September 20, and to ratify it as soon as possible thereafter so that it can enter into force.

The states that currently possess nuclear weapons or rely on the nuclear weapons possessed by others can and must completely and irreversibly dismantle the warheads, nuclear weapons programs and facilities, and cease all nuclear-weapons-related activities; which threaten the security of everyone, including their own citizens. The Treaty provides practical and verifiable pathways for them to comply with the prohibitions and with their nuclear disarmament obligations, and we urge them in the strongest possible terms to do so.

*International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*  
*World Medical Association*  
*International Council of Nurses*  
*World Federation of Public Health Associations*