



**£205 billion  
and rising...  
FOR WHAT?**

# **UN NEGOTIATIONS TO BAN NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE A CHANCE TO END NUCLEAR DANGERS AND PROLIFERATION**

**NEGOTIATE ON DISARMAMENT NOW OR RISK BRITAIN'S FUTURE SECURITY BY BOYCOTTING THE TALKS – YOU DECIDE!**

On 27 March 2017, the United Nations will undertake negotiations with the aim of achieving a new, universally applicable treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

For decades successive UK governments have argued in favour of multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. Now that international conditions have at last made it possible for the UN to convene multilateral negotiations, why is the UK Government threatening to boycott?

Mandated by a large majority of the UN General Assembly, these negotiations are the responsibility of all UN Member States. This is a ground-breaking international step that will make the UK – and everyone else in the world – much safer. Our MPs and Parliament need to make sure that the UK – including Scottish Government representatives - are in the room, negotiating constructively.

## **What are these UN negotiations?**

It's extraordinary that in the UK the out-dated Trident discourse has drowned out awareness of the international humanitarian initiatives that last year resulted in the United Nations deciding that it is now time to negotiate an effective treaty to prohibit the use and development of nuclear weapons.

Deriving from consensus language agreed at the 2010 review conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), states like Austria, Norway, Mexico, Ireland, Brazil and South Africa began a process of international conferences and meetings on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons. In 2013 and 2016, the UN convened working groups of all member states in Geneva to assess the evidence and consider legal measures to prevent the use and proliferation of nuclear weapons and achieve multilateral nuclear disarmament. In October, the UN's disarmament and international security committee voted overwhelmingly for a resolution "to negotiate a legally binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination".

On 23 December 2016 the UN General Assembly confirmed by 113 to 35 the decision to convene full negotiations in New York in March, June and July 2017, inviting all UN Member States to take part. Relevant international organisations and civil society will also participate, including the Red Cross and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), supported by parliamentarians from around the world, including Westminster and Holyrood.

At a preparatory organisational meeting on 16 February at the UN, Ambassador Elayne Whyte of Costa Rica was confirmed as chair of the negotiations. UN Members agreed that the first week, 27-31 March, would mainly discuss the basic principles, objectives, preambular elements and core prohibitions and institutional arrangements of the treaty they want to achieve, which the majority have identified as a nuclear ban treaty, bringing nuclear weapons in line with other indiscriminate and mass-destructive weaponry.

## **Why is a Nuclear Ban Treaty needed?**

**TO HALT PROLIFERATION** - As the world reels from shocking events that no-one thought possible a year ago, there has been an increase in nuclear sabre-rattling by irresponsible leaders of some if not all the nine nuclear-armed states that now exist, 49 years after the NPT. Despite reductions after the Cold War ended, today there are more than 15,000 nuclear weapons in these arsenals. And whether they are inside or

outside the NPT, those nine countries keep upgrading and producing more deadly weapons with impunity. This is possible because the NPT did not ban nuclear weapons, unlike the treaties that stigmatised and prohibited biological and chemical weapons. We won't succeed in halting proliferation as long as nuclear weapons are treated as high status objects of political power and desire.

**TO REDUCE NUCLEAR DANGERS** - Recent events have reminded everyone that as long as nuclear weapons exist, they may be detonated, by accident or intention. Heightened tensions among nuclear-armed states and the susceptibility of command and control processes to human or computer error - and now also deliberate cyber attacks - mean that there is now an increased risk of a nuclear weapon explosion occurring. The countries that transport and deploy nuclear warheads, like Britain, are most vulnerable of all.

Last year ICAN's **Nukes of Hazard** report highlighted 40 serious incidents since 2002 involving the MoD's truck convoys that transport Trident warheads on public roads between AWE Burghfield and the Coulport nuclear weapons depot in Scotland. In February the Nuclear Information Service report **Playing with Fire** documented 110 serious accidents, near misses and dangerous incidents affecting Britain's nuclear weapons programme, some of which were covered up for years.

**TO PREVENT HUMANITARIAN CATASTROPHE** - The impact of a nuclear weapon detonation, irrespective of its cause, would not be containable. It would likely have regional and even global consequences, causing destruction, contamination, death and displacement as well as profound and long-term damage to the environment, climate, agriculture, socioeconomic development and human health and well-being. Multiple nuclear detonations and nuclear war would threaten humanity's survival.

The UN and Red Cross confirmed that no state or international body could address in an adequate manner the immediate humanitarian emergency and long-term consequences caused by a nuclear weapon detonation in a populated area, nor provide adequate assistance to those affected.

## **What kind of legal instrument will be negotiated?**

The majority of UN states are aiming to conclude a comprehensive Nuclear Ban Treaty. This will be a major step towards removing the value attached to nuclear weapons and accelerating the elimination of nuclear arsenals towards global zero. It will build on the NPT, diminish proliferation incentives, and reinforce international disarmament efforts. While the details will be worked out through the negotiations among UN Member States, these core elements will be important:

- The treaty should prohibit its parties, their nationals and other individuals subject to those states' jurisdiction from engaging in activities such as development, production, testing, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, deployment and use and threat of use of nuclear weapons.
- The treaty should also prohibit its parties from assisting, financing, encouraging, and inducing prohibited acts.
- The treaty should include an explicit positive obligation and framework for the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals, but will not require at this stage to establish specific provisions or timelines. It should be understood that states parties to the treaty will have to take forward the implementation of the treaty through the development of relevant mechanisms for elimination, including verification, which could, for example, be done through protocols to the treaty or other appropriate legal instruments.
- The treaty should include other positive obligations for states parties, such as ensuring the rights of victims and survivors of nuclear weapons activities; assurances to protect people from threats or uses of nuclear weapons; actions to address damage to affected environments; and international cooperation and assistance to meet the treaty's obligations.



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