

United Nations launch negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons in spite of Trump and Putin's threats to ignite a new nuclear arms race

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NEW YORK – While Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump announced their desire to strengthen their countries' nuclear capacities, a majority of governments at the United Nations General Assembly voted 'yes' to launch negotiations of a new treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons on Friday evening.

This historic decision heralds an end to two decades of paralysis in multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts, and comes at a time when the two major nuclear-armed states are engaging in nuclear-sabre rattling.

The resolution, first put forward in October and confirmed today in the General Assembly, will set up a UN conference beginning in March 2017 open to all member states, to negotiate a "legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination". The negotiations will then continue in June and July.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a civil society coalition active in 100 countries, hailed the adoption of the resolution as a major step forward, marking a fundamental shift in the way that the world tackles this paramount threat.

"This reckless and aggressive behavior by Russia and US President-elect Donald Trump leaves the rest of the world with a simple choice, silently watch the risk of nuclear war continue to rise or take action and prohibit these inhumane and unacceptable weapons of mass destruction" says Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of ICAN.

Despite significant opposition and concerted diplomatic pressure from nuclear-armed states, the resolution was adopted in a landslide. While all nine nuclear-armed states are engaged in significant nuclear weapons modernization and upgrade programmes, 113 governments voted in favour.

"A treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons will strengthen the global norm against the use and possession of these weapons, closing major loopholes in the existing international legal regime and spurring long-overdue action on disarmament," said Fihn.

"Today's vote demonstrates very clearly that a majority of the world's nations consider the prohibition of nuclear weapons to be necessary, feasible and

urgent. As the United States and Russia are bragging about strengthening their nuclear arsenals, it is time for all governments that are committed to humanitarian law and humanitarian principles to participate in these negotiations to send a clear message that nuclear weapons are unacceptable.” she said.

Biological weapons, chemical weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions are all explicitly prohibited under international law.

Nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction not yet outlawed in a comprehensive and universal manner, despite their well-documented catastrophic humanitarian and environmental impacts. Recent studies have also demonstrated that the risks of accidental or intentional detonations of nuclear weapons have been dramatically underestimated or misunderstood.

Victims and survivors of nuclear weapon detonations, including nuclear testing, have contributed actively. Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the Hiroshima bombing and an ICAN supporter, has been a leading proponent of a ban.

“This is a truly historic moment for the entire world,” she said following today’s vote. “For those of us who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we know that nuclear weapons are inhumane, indiscriminate, and unacceptable. All nations should participate in the negotiations next year to outlaw them.”

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Photos:

[ICAN’s flickr account for media](#)

About ICAN

The **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)** is a global campaign coalition working to mobilize people in all countries to inspire, persuade and pressure their governments to prohibit nuclear weapons.

ICAN has worked closely with governments on this process since 2010, and campaigns in about 100 countries to ensure that this treaty becomes a reality.

More information about ICAN can be found on www.icanw.org