“Austria pledges to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders ... to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.”

– AUSTRIAN PLEDGE
The Vienna conference was the third and most widely attended in a series of major diplomatic conferences held over the past two years to examine the grave risks and catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapon detonations. Beginning in Oslo in March 2013 and continuing in Nayarit, Mexico, in February 2014, this humanitarian-centred process has shed new light on the dangers of living in a world armed to the brink with thousands of nuclear weapons, and underscored the necessity and paramount urgency of eliminating this intolerable threat to humanity and the planet as a whole.

The compelling and bold pledge delivered by Austria at the conclusion of the conference is a resounding call to action, a tool with which governments and civil society can now transform this process from a fact-based dialogue to the start of diplomatic negotiations for a ban. Outlawing nuclear weapons is not a radical proposition: it enjoys widespread support among governments and the public, and is the logical and responsible course of action in light of the indiscriminate and unacceptable effects of any use of nuclear weapons.

Although Austria presented the “Austrian Pledge” solely in its national capacity, and not as a consensus outcome of the Vienna conference, the Austrian foreign ministry has since invited all other interested states to endorse it. ICAN is confident that, over the coming months, many will do so—and signal their intention to start negotiations in 2015 on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. As a global civil society coalition working to achieve such a treaty, ICAN stands firmly behind the Austrian Pledge and will mobilize our campaigners around the world to promote it to governments and the public alike.

**A commitment to act**

**From fact-based discussions to the start of negotiations**

The landmark Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, hosted by Austria from 8 to 9 December 2014, concluded with an extraordinary pledge “to fill the legal gap” for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Nations must now commence negotiations on a treaty banning these weapons completely.

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**SUMMARY**

- Delegates from 158 governments attended the Vienna conference, up from 146 in Nayarit and 128 in Oslo.
- Around 100 governments delivered national statements, with many calling for negotiations on a ban.
- The UN secretary-general and Pope Francis issued strong messages denouncing nuclear weapons.
- The perspectives of nuclear test survivors and the Red Cross movement featured prominently.
- Austria concluded with a pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.
- All governments have since been invited to join the Austrian Pledge to show their support for abolition.

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**Factual conclusions**

The Vienna conference built on the evidence-based findings of the Oslo and Nayarit conferences, and added a new legal dimension to the debate. Conclusions drawn from the panels, as reflected in the Austrian chair’s summary, included:

- The impact of any nuclear weapon detonation, irrespective of cause, would not be constrained by national borders, and could have regional and even global consequences.
- Nuclear weapon detonations cause destruction, death and displacement, as well as profound and long-term damage to the environment, the climate and human health. Indeed, they threaten the very survival of humankind.
“Austria pledges to cooperate with all stakeholders to the urgent and full implementation of existing obligations under article VI, and to this end, to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, and Austria pledges to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.”

“Austria calls on all states parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of existing obligations under article VI, and to this end, to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, and Austria pledges to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.”

The scope, scale and inter-relationship of the humanitarian consequences caused by nuclear weapon detonations are catastrophic and more complex than commonly understood.

The use and testing of nuclear weapons have demonstrated their devastating immediate and long-term effects. Nuclear testing around the world has left a legacy of serious health and environmental harm. Radiation has contaminated the food chain and is still measurable in the atmosphere to this day.

The risks of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional use of nuclear weapons are evident due to the vulnerability of nuclear command-and-control networks to human error and cyber-attacks, and the maintaining of nuclear arsenals on high levels of alert.

Limiting the role of nuclear weapons to deterrence does not preclude the possibility of their use, nor does it address the risks stemming from accidental use. The only assurance against nuclear weapon detonations is the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

No state or international body could address in an adequate manner the immediate humanitarian emergency or long-term consequences caused by a nuclear weapon detonation in a populated area, nor provide adequate assistance to those affected.

There is no comprehensive, universal legal norm prohibiting the possession, transfer, production or use of nuclear weapons. The mere existence of these weapons raises profound ethical and moral questions on a level transcending legal discussions.

As noted also in the chair’s summary, many delegations argued that humanitarian concerns should be at the core of all deliberations on nuclear disarmament, and affirmed that it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances. They criticized other states for continuing to adhere to the doctrine of “nuclear deterrence”, and for expending vast, precious resources on upgrading their nuclear arsenals.

Given the lack of progress in recent years towards nuclear disarmament, many delegations called for a diplomatic process to negotiate a legal instrument clearly prohibiting nuclear weapons, in order to advance the cause of abolition.

Austria calls on all states parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of existing obligations under article VI, and to this end, to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, and Austria pledges to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.”

Statement: Indiscriminate weapons get banned

Nadja Schmidt

We have heard alarming evidence about the devastat-
ing effects of nuclear weapons. We have heard about the risks of detonations, either accidental or intentional. We have heard that no effective response is possible.

We have also heard the stories of people who have survived the use or testing of nuclear weapons. Their stories illustrate that nuclear weapon-

ons are unacceptable and should therefore be clearly prohibited.

What stands out from the ses-

sion on legal frameworks is that we are currently lacking an instrument that explicitly characterizes nuclear weapons as unacceptable under international law. Our next step as supporters of the humanitarian ini-

tiative should be to explore the best way to address this legal deficit.

The chair of the Nagoya confer-
ence concluded that, in light of the devas-
tating immediate and long-
term effects of nuclear detona-
tions, the time has come to start a diplomatic process to negotiate a legal binding instrument prohibit-
ing nuclear weapons.

This is not a radical proposal.

Indiscriminate weapons get banned. We have done it before with other weapon systems, including bio-

logical and chemical weapons. An international prohibition is merely the logical outcome of an examina-
tion of the risks and consequences of nuclear weapon detonations. A new legal instrument prohibiting these weapons would constitute a long-overdue implementation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

This is a meaningful proposal. It would establish a comprehensive set of prohibitions and provide a framework under which the elimina-
tion of nuclear weapons can be pursued. This is a feasible, achiev-
able proposal. It can be negotiated now, and have normative and practi-

cal impacts.

We have heard some say that the calls for a new legal regime on nuclear weapons fail to take into ac-
count security interests. But whose security are they talking about?

We believe that states should put a prohibition in place now. The 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks is the appropriate milestone to launch such a process.

This will take courage. We have confidence that the overwhelm-

ing majority of states will join this process, and we look forward to ac-
companying you along the road to a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Nadja Schmidt is director of ICAN Austria. This is a shortened version of the statement she delivered on behalf of ICAN at the Vienna confer-
ence on 9 December.
conference, she implored governments to work courageously “to establish a legally binding framework to ban nuclear weapons”. Borrowing language from the chair’s summary of the Nayarit conference, she argued that the 70th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to be commemorated in August 2015, are the “appropriate milestone” by which to achieve our goal. Several national delegations, and ICAN, repeated this message during the general debate.

In a video statement, ICAN supporter Desmond Tutu, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his efforts to end apartheid in South Africa, said: “I very much hope that next year [2015] will mark the beginning of negotiations for a ban. What better way to honour the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the 70th anniversary year of the atomic bombings ... Together, let us seize this historic opportunity.”

**Compelling stories of test survivors**

The Vienna conference drew attention not only to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons in war, but also to the impact of nuclear testing. Since the dawn of the atomic age in 1945, more than 2,000 nuclear test explosions have been carried out at some 60 sites globally. The toll on human health and the environment has been staggering. The legacy of the tests underscores the need for concerted action to ensure that nuclear weapons are never detonated again – whether in war, by accident or as part of testing programmes.

The Marshall Islands’ foreign minister, Tony de Brum, delivered a keynote address at the ICAN civil society forum eloquently and powerfully describing the suffering that his people have endured over many decades as a result of US nuclear testing. He recounted the unforgettable sound and bright light of the blasts conducted during his boyhood years. Though the tests ended in 1958, parts of the Marshall Islands remain uninhabitable to this day due to radioactive contamination. Abacca Anjain-Maddition, a former Marshallsean senator, spoke in Vienna of the wounds inflicted on her people, and their ongoing displacement from their home atolls.

In April 2014 the Marshall Islands, a nation of just 50,000 people, initiated legal proceedings in the International Court of Justice against all nine nuclear-armed nations, in an effort to compel them to pursue negotiations for the total prohibition and elimination of their nuclear armaments. These landmark cases will continue in 2015.

Sue Colem-Hasehline, an Aboriginal woman of the Kokatha Mula nation of South Australia, described the impact of British nuclear tests and plutonium experiments on her homeland, carried out in the 1950s and ’60s with the full and active support of the Australian government of the day. “Many people died and became sick in the immediate test areas,” she said. “There are many Aboriginal people who cannot go back to their ancestral lands, and their children and children’s children will never know the special religious places it contains.”

Michelle Thomas, from Utah in the United States, provided searing testimony on the effects of her government’s nuclear test programme on her health and that of others living in “downwind” communities. “At school, we learn that A stands for ‘atomic’, B stands for ‘bomb’, C stands for ‘cancer’ and D stands for ‘death’,” she said.

From Kazakhstan, Karipbek Kuyukov – born with no arms due to radiation exposure from Soviet-era nuclear tests conducted at the Semipalatinsk site – called on governments the world over to unite in efforts to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. The chair of the Vienna conference, in his closing remarks, said that the testimonies of nuclear test survivors, and of survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, “exemplified the unspeakable suffering caused to ordinary civilians by nuclear weapons”.

**United Nations’ support**

In a message to the conference, the UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, praised the Austrian government for its leadership, commenting that the humanitarian initiative had “energized” civil society and governments alike. “The more we understand about the humanitarian impacts, the more it becomes clear that we must pursue disarmament as an urgent imperative,” he told delegates. Nuclear weapons are neither “a rational response to growing international tensions” nor “a symbol of national prestige”.

The secretary-general was especially critical of nuclear-armed nations for continuing to pour funds into modernizing their nuclear arsenals while the world is failing to meet the challenges posed by poverty, climate change and extremism. He encouraged all governments to pursue “effective measures” to achieve nuclear disarmament.

It was the first time that the UN secretary-general had sent a message to one of the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, reflecting the heightened global interest in this process.
Statement: Let us move forward, courageously, to a ban

Setsuko Thurlow

To the government of Austria, on behalf of all survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I would like to express my deep gratitude and respect for hosting this extremely important follow-up conference to the Oslo and Nayarit conferences. Deep thanks also to ICAN, whose inspiration has brought us together, and to the Red Cross and other civil society groups from all over the world, working with governments to call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It gives me great satisfaction that these conferences have renewed the focus on the humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons – the fundamental issue, long neglected by the shifting of the world’s attention to the doctrine of deterrence in the name of national and international security.

Today, a 13-year-old schoolgirl I witnessed my city of Hiroshima blinded by the flash, flattened by the hurricane of heat, burned in the heat of 4,000 degrees Celsius and contaminated by the radiation of one atomic bomb. A bright summer morning turned to dark twilight with smoke and dust rising in the mushroom cloud, dead and injured covering the ground, begging desperately for water and receiving no medical care at all. The spreading firestorm and the foul stench of burnt flesh filled the air. Mercifully, I was rescued from the rubble of a collapsed building, about 1.8km from ground zero. In the same room were burned alive, I could see through the red glassy lenses of their mothers and God for help. As I escaped with two other survivors, we saw a procession of ghostly figures slowly shuffling from the centre of the city – grotesquely wounded people whose clothes were tattered, or who were made naked by the blast. They were bleeding, burned, blackened and swollen. Parts of their bodies were missing and skin hanging from their bones, some with their eyeballs hanging in their hands, and some with their stomachs burst open, their intestines hanging out. Within that single flash of light, my beloved Hiroshima became a place of desolation, with heaps of rubble, skeletons and blackened corpses everywhere. Of a population of 360,000 – largely non-combatant women, children and the elderly – most became victims of the indiscriminate massacre of the atomic bombing. As of now, over 250,000 victims have perished in Hiroshima from the effects of the blast, heat and radiation.

Today, 68 years later, people are still dying from the delayed effects of one atomic bomb, considered crude by today’s standard for mass destruction. Through months and years of struggle for survival, rebuilding lives out of the ashes, we hibakusha, or “survivors”, became convinced that no human being should ever have to repeat our experience of the inhumane, immoral, and cruel atomic bombing, and that our mission is to warn the world about the reality of the nuclear threat and to help people understand the illegality and ultimate evil of nuclear weapons. We believe that humanity and nuclear weapons cannot coexist indefinitely.

Thus, we have a moral imperative to abolish nuclear arsenals, in order to ensure a safe, clean and just world for future generations. With this conviction we have been speaking out around the world for the past several decades for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. Yet, hibakusha are increasingly frustrated, just as all of us here are, by the lack of tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament. This, in spite of our baring our souls with painful memories over the past 69 years to warn people about the hell on earth that we experienced in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. How much longer can we allow the nuclear-weapons states to continue threaten- ing all life on earth? At Nayarit we declared that the time has come for action to establish a legally binding frame- work to ban nuclear weapons.

In Vienna let us move forward, courageously, by concrete- izing our vision, so that we can make the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki the appropriate milestone to achieve our goal: to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. Let us start this process, beginning here in Vienna where negotiations on a ban treaty.

Pope denounces deterrence

Pope Francis has put the full weight of the Catholic Church behind the global movement to ban nuclear weapons. In a message to the Vienna conference, he urged governments and civil society “to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home”. While the Holy See has long championed a nuclear-weapon-free world, the papal statement in Vienna went beyond previous declarations in that it condemned the policy of nuclear deterrence in unequivocal terms. Deterrence, it said, “cannot be the basis for an ethics of fraternity and peaceful coexistence”. During the conference, the Holy See also released a detailed policy document on nuclear disarmament, which stated: “Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to abolition.”

At the height of the Cold War, the Holy See had given limited acceptance to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as a temporary state of affairs. However, in more recent years, it expressed concern that deterrence was being used to legitimate the modernization and build-up of nuclear arsenals. In his statement to the conference, the pope warned of the extraordinary, uncheckable power of the military–industrial complex, urging concerted action by citizens around the world to defeat it. “The human family will have to become united in order to overcome powerful institutionalized interests that are invested in nuclear armaments,” he said.

He also scorned nuclear-armed nations for squandering resources on nuclear weapons, “which would be far better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health, and the fight against extreme poverty”. The Holy See’s clear denunciation of nuclear weapons should prompt at least some Western governments that currently subscribe to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, or “extended” nuclear deterrence, to question the morality of this position.

The pathway forward

In light of the tremendous success of the Vienna conference, the year ahead promises to be a watershed for global efforts to ban nuclear weapons. ICAN believes that treaty negotiations can and should begin in time for the 70th anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 2015. The Austrian Pledge, once it is wisely endorsed, will constitute a clear commitment by states to advance the goal of abolition. We have no doubt that some nations will refuse to participate in ban treaty negotiations, while others will do their utmost to undermine the process. But forward we must go, for continued inaction is no option, as the Vienna conference so starkly proved: it would all but guarantee a repeat of the horrors of seven decades ago, or much worse. It is time to “fill the legal gap” – by pursuing with courage and conviction a treaty to outlaw these ultimate weapons of terror.
Which countries called for a ban in Vienna?

More countries than ever before called for the start of negotiations on a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons. Here is a selection of what they said.

MEXICO
“The discussions and conclusions [of the Oslo, Nayant and Vienna conferences] should now feed a diplomatic process leading to the negotiation and conclusion of a legally binding instrument for the prohibition of nuclear weapons.”

GUATEMALA
“We join the call at the conference of Nayant to begin as soon as possible a process that will lead us to the negotiation of a legally binding instrument.”

EL SALVADOR
“We support an inclusive negotiating process with civil society for a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.”

COLOMBIA
“In Oslo and Nayant we had concrete proof that we have a real opportunity to prohibit nuclear weapons - the only ones that could end life on Earth.”

CHILE
“These inhuman weapons are not legitimate. We need to create the conditions so that these weapons would be abrogated, or at least their use banned, through a convention that would complement the Non-Proliferation Treaty.”

CUBA
“It is time to begin, without delay, a diplomatic process to negotiate a legally binding instrument banning nuclear weapons.”

JAMAICA
“It is therefore with a sense of urgency that we engage in the discourse on nuclear disarmament and move towards a ban on these lethal weapons.”

ST VINCENT & THE GRENADINES
“We raise our voice and join the call for the initiation of a diplomatic process to negotiate a legally binding instrument constraining and banning nuclear weapons.”

GUINEA-BISSAU
“Guinea-Bissau thinks that it is time to trigger a diplomatic process that should be transparent and inclusive in order to negotiate a legal instrument banning nuclear weapons.”

GHANA
“Ghana joins the call for a treaty banning nuclear weapons.”

TOGO
“The exchanges over these two days should lead to the launching of a diplomatic process aimed at negotiating and adopting a legal instrument banning nuclear weapons.”

ZIMBABWE
“We must immediately embark on concrete measures on how the legally binding international instrument that outlaw the use, production, deployment, stockpiling and transfer of nuclear weapons can be realized.”

UGANDA
“Uganda believes that the time has come for a diplomatic process to negotiate a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons.”

KAZAKHSTAN
“We strongly believe that this conference will greatly contribute to the further promotion of the humanitarian issue in the context of a nuclear weapons ban.”

HOLY SEE
“I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all”

JORDAN
“Jordan joins the UN’s calls for the early start of negotiations on a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons.”

COLOMBIA
“Austria pledges to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders – to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.”

MONGOLIA
“This conference in Vienna strengthens further our resolve to support the growing trend to ban nuclear weapons.”

LEBANON
“More countries than ever before called for the start of conferences that will ban nuclear weapons – the only opportunity to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.”

GHANA
“It is time to start a serious diplomatic process to negotiate a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons.”

ANDorra
“[Ecuador] shares the wish of the international community to begin a negotiating process to finally create a legally binding instrument prohibiting the production, deployment, stockpiling, testing, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons.”

UGANDA
“Uganda believes that the time has come for a diplomatic process to negotiate a legally binding instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons.”

BURUNDI
“Burundi observes that the meetings of the Governing Board of the CTBTO should now be translated into meaningful action towards a treaty to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons.”

CAMEROON
“... it is high time to start a diplomatic process to outlaw nuclear weapons.”

KENYA
“We reiterate that it is time for states to start working on a legal ban on nuclear weapons.”

MALDIVES
“The growing recognition among governments of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is a positive development which cannot be ignored nor be denied. This must now be translated into meaningful action towards a treaty to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons.”

MALAYSIA
“This is the time to outlaw nuclear weapons, before the world experiences a nuclear terror.”

ZAMBIA
“Zambia joins the call for a treaty banning nuclear weapons.”

Read the full statements at www.reachingcriticalwill.org
ICAN in action

The courage to ban nuclear weapons

From 6 to 7 December 2014 – immediately before the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons – ICAN organized a major civil society forum with the theme “the courage to ban nuclear weapons”. More than 600 campaigners attended from 70 nations, representing over 100 organizations.

This was ICAN’s largest gathering to date, and one of the largest civil society meetings on nuclear weapons in recent years. Participants discussed strategies for building effective coalitions, attracting media attention, advocating with officials and parliamentarians, and raising public awareness about nuclear dangers. The two-day programme offered 16 hours of inspiring, informative and hands-on activities, including workshops, interactive panel discussions, “lightning” speeches, meet-and-greet sessions and a marketplace exhibiting partners’ work.

Speakers included Ela Gandhi, granddaughter of Mahatma Gandhi; Tony de Brum, foreign minister of the Marshall Islands; Christopher Weeramantry, former vice-president of the International Court of Justice; Setsuko Thurlow, survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima; Eric Schlosser, bestselling author of *Command and Control*; and parliamentarians from Canada, Scotland and the United Kingdom. The Austrian federal president, Heinz Fischer, along with retired US general Lee Butler and Nobel Peace Prize winners Desmond Tutu and Jody Williams, sent video messages to the forum.

The topics discussed included the immorality of nuclear weapons, their lack of military utility, their financing by banks and other institutions, and the need for “resolute normative leadership”. The forum provided an open platform for debate and the exchange of best practices among campaigners around the world. It sent a clear message to delegates attending the Vienna conference that civil society stands united behind the goal of a treaty banning nuclear weapons, and is a force to be reckoned with.

To support the participation of campaigners from developing countries, including nuclear-armed countries, ICAN administered a sponsorship programme for both the civil society forum and government conference, generously funded by several donors (see list on inside cover). ICAN Austria led the project team that organized the forum, ably supported by dozens of volunteers, without whom it would not have succeeded.

ICAN advocacy work

In the months leading up to the Vienna conference, ICAN campaigners around the world carried out various actions aimed at ensuring strong and effective participation by governments. These included roundtable meetings with key stakeholders in capitals, press conferences, outreach to Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, street actions, public events such as film screenings and panel discussions, and meetings with parliamentarians and other elected representatives. Campaigners also produced informational materials, collected petition signatures, and promoted the campaign through social media. All of this helped raise the profile of the conference and the idea of a ban.

A strong ICAN delegation of more than 200 campaigners participated in the Vienna conference. By coordinating our advocacy work on a regional and sub-regional basis, we were able to meet with government delegates from all participating nations to brief them on our objectives and explain the logic and necessity of a ban treaty. Two large interactive touch-screen maps at the conference venue provided an outlet for instant commentary by ICAN and others on national statements. In the opening session, ICAN presented a powerful video statement (since viewed 90,000 times on YouTube), which drew links to other successful movements, followed by an oral statement in the general debate.

ICAN in action

The courage to ban nuclear weapons

Above: MCs Therese Nordhus Lien and Martin Thomas Pesl welcome participants to the ICAN civil society forum on 6 December 2014.

Right: Kazakh artist and nuclear test survivor Karipbek Kuyukov (left) addresses the civil society forum via an interpreter.

“The elimination of nuclear weapons is not an ephemeral goal to be pursued at the whim of the nuclear-weapon states, but rather a moral imperative.”

– Retired US general Lee Butler, video message

10
Widespread media coverage

The Vienna conference attracted much media attention – considerably more than the two previous conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Many media outlets deemed the participation of the United States and United Kingdom to be an especially significant development, as both countries had earlier dismissed the humanitarian process as a “distraction”, choosing to boycott the Oslo and Nayarit conferences. ICAN campaigners were interviewed for stories and had their opinion pieces featured online and in print. In all, more than 100 news items were published about the forum and conference. Several television segments were broadcast, mostly by Japanese news outlets, whose journalists were present throughout. There was unique coverage in at least 17 countries. With approximately 22 articles in the United States, 16 in Austria and 16 in the United Kingdom, the media attention was unusually high for a conference on nuclear disarmament.

“Action to limit the risks of a deliberate or even accidental nuclear attack is ‘insufficient’, a pan-global group of political, military and diplomatic figures has warned,” Britain’s Guardian newspaper reported, while the AFP wrote: “The United States and Britain … for the first time attended a global conference discussing the risks posed by nuclear weapons, reversing their snubbing of previous rounds.”

Amnesty International backs a ban

On the first day of the Vienna conference, ICAN and Amnesty International hand-delivered a letter to the Austrian foreign minister, Sebastian Kurz, congratulating him on his leadership and encouraging him to take the next step of pursuing negotiations on a nuclear weapon ban. This was the first time that Amnesty International centrally had lent its support to the campaign for a ban; a number of national Amnesty chapters had previously participated in ICAN actions.

For several years, the organization has had in place a policy opposing “the use, possession, production and transfer of nuclear weapons, given their indiscriminate nature”. Nuclear weapons, in Amnesty’s view, threaten the most fundamental of all human rights – the right to life. In the joint letter, we wrote that the humanitarian initiative “represented an important turning point”, with the conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna having opened space for greater engagement from civil society, international organizations, and states. “It is clear to us and to a growing number of states that the logical conclusion of these evidence-based gatherings will lead to a diplomatic process to prohibit nuclear weapons,” the letter read. This process should proceed “with all those states ready to participate”, and Austria was “well placed” to lead. Amnesty International played a leading role in the successful Control Arms campaign to achieve the Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force just two weeks after the Vienna conference concluded. The joint letter signals Amnesty’s readiness to participate in a diplomatic process to ban nuclear weapons.

Indicators of success

Many factors demonstrated that ICAN’s advocacy work leading up to and during the Vienna conference was successful, including:

- An increase in the number and diversity of ICAN partner organizations around the world, and their high attendance in Vienna;
- The meaningful engagement for the first time of major organizations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace International;
- A large number of nations participating in the Vienna conference – more than at the two previous humanitarian conferences;
- An increase in the level of interest in ICAN’s work and the idea of a ban treaty from media, think tanks and the general public;
- A significant increase in the number and clarity of calls by states for the start of negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons;
- A pledge by the Austrian government to “fill the legal gap” for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons;
- A growing acceptance among governments that a treaty banning nuclear weapons can – and should – be pursued now.

Promoting the Austrian Pledge

ICAN’s activities over the coming months will focus on enlisting widespread support for the Austrian Pledge. Seven decades on from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks, this must be the year to begin negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. The forthcoming review conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to be held in April and May 2015, will be an important opportunity to build on the success of the Vienna conference by affirming the need to “fill the legal gap” for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Austria has vowed to present the factual findings of the Vienna conference, together with the Austrian Pledge, to all NPT parties. This should form the basis for concerted action. Article VI of the NPT obliges nuclear and non-nuclear states alike to pursue “effective measures” to achieve nuclear disarmament. The New Agenda Coalition, a cross-regional group of like-minded nations, has proposed a nuclear weapon ban treaty as a possible pathway to implement article VI. Such a treaty should be pursued now, despite continued resistance from nuclear-armed states and some of their allies.

A ban is the logical and necessary response to the increased global awareness of the unacceptable effects of nuclear weapons from a humanitarian standpoint. We cannot afford to sit back and wait for nuclear-armed states to live up to their decades-old legal obligations, or for the magical “conditions” to be right for nuclear disarmament. While we wait, we get no closer to elimination. While we wait, the risks of the use of nuclear weapons remain. While we wait, the catastrophic and overwhelming consequences of such use do not diminish. This is the year for action. ICAN looks forward to accompanying states along the road to a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Message: The momentum of this campaign is unstoppable

Desmond Tutu

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Amnesty International backs a ban

On the first day of the Vienna conference, ICAN and Amnesty International hand-delivered a letter to the Austrian foreign minister, Sebastian Kurz, congratulating him on his leadership and encouraging him to take the next step of pursuing negotiations on a nuclear weapon ban. This was the first time that Amnesty International centrally had lent its support to the campaign for a ban; a number of national Amnesty chapters had previously participated in ICAN actions.

For several years, the organization has had in place a policy opposing “the use, possession, production and transfer of nuclear weapons, given their indiscriminate nature”. Nuclear weapons, in Amnesty’s view, threaten the most fundamental of all human rights – the right to life. In the joint letter, we wrote that the humanitarian initiative “represented an important turning point”, with the conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna having opened space for greater engagement from civil society, international organizations, and states. “It is clear to us and to a growing number of states that the logical conclusion of these evidence-based gatherings will lead to a diplomatic process to prohibit nuclear weapons,” the letter read. This process should proceed “with all those states ready to participate”, and Austria was “well placed” to lead. Amnesty International played a leading role in the successful Control Arms campaign to achieve the Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force just two weeks after the Vienna conference concluded. The joint letter signals Amnesty’s readiness to participate in a diplomatic process to ban nuclear weapons.

Indicators of success

Many factors demonstrated that ICAN’s advocacy work leading up to and during the Vienna conference was successful, including:

- An increase in the number and diversity of ICAN partner organizations around the world, and their high attendance in Vienna;
- The meaningful engagement for the first time of major organizations such as Amnesty International and Greenpeace International;
- A large number of nations participating in the Vienna conference – more than at the two previous humanitarian conferences;
- An increase in the level of interest in ICAN’s work and the idea of a ban treaty from media, think tanks and the general public;
- A significant increase in the number and clarity of calls by states for the start of negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons;
- A pledge by the Austrian government to “fill the legal gap” for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons;
- A growing acceptance among governments that a treaty banning nuclear weapons can – and should – be pursued now.

Promoting the Austrian Pledge

ICAN’s activities over the coming months will focus on enlisting widespread support for the Austrian Pledge. Seven decades on from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki attacks, this must be the year to begin negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. The forthcoming review conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to be held in April and May 2015, will be an important opportunity to build on the success of the Vienna conference by affirming the need to “fill the legal gap” for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Austria has vowed to present the factual findings of the Vienna conference, together with the Austrian Pledge, to all NPT parties. This should form the basis for concerted action. Article VI of the NPT obliges nuclear and non-nuclear states alike to pursue “effective measures” to achieve nuclear disarmament. The New Agenda Coalition, a cross-regional group of like-minded nations, has proposed a nuclear weapon ban treaty as a possible pathway to implement article VI. Such a treaty should be pursued now, despite continued resistance from nuclear-armed states and some of their allies.

A ban is the logical and necessary response to the increased global awareness of the unacceptable effects of nuclear weapons from a humanitarian standpoint. We cannot afford to sit back and wait for nuclear-armed states to live up to their decades-old legal obligations, or for the magical “conditions” to be right for nuclear disarmament. While we wait, we get no closer to elimination. While we wait, the risks of the use of nuclear weapons remain. While we wait, the catastrophic and overwhelming consequences of such use do not diminish. This is the year for action. ICAN looks forward to accompanying states along the road to a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

Message: The momentum of this campaign is unstoppable

Desmond Tutu, a supporter of ICAN, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. This is the transcript of his video message to the civil society forum.
“Nuclear deterrence took a hit at the Vienna conference, with most states reiterating long-held views that nuclear weapons bring insecurity and instability, not safety and protection. Yet despite the consistent and overwhelming objections to the concept and practice of nuclear deterrence, human society has still failed to establish law prohibiting and setting out a framework for the elimination of nuclear weapons in the same way it has for biological and chemical weapons. Why?

“It is not because nuclear weapons have some sort of inherent magical value that other weapons of mass destruction do not have. It has much more to do with the way nuclear weapons are positioned within the political-military-academ–industrial nexus than anything else. Any ‘magic’ these weapons are perceived to possess has been falsely granted to them by those who benefit from them materially or politically. But like all magic, the illusion can be unmasked and its power taken away.”

Analysis: ICAN partners react online to the Vienna conference

Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
Ray Acheson

“Though these nuclear-armed governments [the United States, United Kingdom, India and Pakistan, as well as China in an unofficial capacity] were warmly welcomed [in Vienna], some of their statements were troubling, as they seemed unable to engage with the evidence demonstrating the security dangers and military uselessness of such weapons of mass suffering, choosing instead to underline their desperate reliance on nuclear weaponry for the foreseeable future.

“The United States shocked many – including its own allies – by following the powerful testimonies of two survivors of American nuclear testing, Michelle Thomas of Utah and Abacca Anjain-Maddison of the Marshall Islands, with a tone-deaf, standard text that just reiterated US nuclear policies and positions. A later US statement tried to regain some of the goodwill engendered by the Obama administration’s decision to participate in the Vienna conference, but still largely missed its mark.”

Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy
Dr Rebecca Johnson

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International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War
John Loretz

“The Austrian Pledge means that we can now begin the real work of bringing willing states together around a political process to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons... The chair’s summary is a powerful and persuasive document, spelling out in precise language all of the evidence and key conclusions of the three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. And while it reflects the full range of views that were expressed during the discussions about how to deal with this evidence, it also indicates which of those views had substantial support. By the end of the conference, more than enough states had taken up ICAN’s call for a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons to make a start down that road... The Austrian Pledge completes the transition from learning about the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons to acting upon the evidence and pursuing a ban treaty as the real ‘game changer’ that will deliver a world without nuclear weapons.”

Vienna Conference: List of participating states (158)

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Cote d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Rep., Dem. Rep. of Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Rep., Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, FYR Macedonia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Rep. of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & Grenadines, Sao Tome, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Statement: The future forever belongs to the next generation

Sue Coleman-Haseldine

I was born on Koonibba Aboriginal Mission in 1951. From east to west, Koonibba is in the middle of Australia but right down south where the desert meets the sea. Atomic bomb tests began in the desert areas north of my birthplace in 1953 when I was two years old, first at Emu Fields and then Maralinga. The area was picked because the British and Australian governments didn’t think our land was valuable. But Aboriginal people were still looking after and living off the land. There are lots of different Aboriginal groups in Australia. For all of us, our land is the basis of our culture. It is our supermarket for our food, our pharmacy for our medicine, our school and our church. Aboriginal people have special places throughout Australia, including in the vast and areas. Looking after these places is our religion.

Our old people remember the good life of hunting for wild game and collecting bush fruits. Life was healthy. There were still Aboriginal people living and travelling this way in the Emu Field and Maralinga region when the bomb tests started.

The government was no good at ensuring everyone was safe. Australia was even more racist then. At this time, Aboriginal people did not even have the right to vote. The government really didn’t care what happened to Aboriginal people. Many people died and became sick in the immediate test areas. So did the animals. We shouldn’t forget about the animals. The first atomic bomb called “Totem 1” spread far and wide and there are lots of stories about the “black mist” it created, which killed, blinded and made people very sick. The bomb tests continued for many years right until 1963: big atomic tests that the British and Australian governments were proud of, and then a whole lot of secret tests that the British did with plutonium. These tests contaminated a huge area and everything in it.

There’s a cemetery at Woomera which we call the children’s cemetery. It’s filled with children who died around the time of the tests. And these were just the non-Aboriginal children. There’s no record of how many Aboriginal children died. The Aboriginals were not allowed to be buried in white cemeteries.

In 2006 I went to an Australian Nuclear Free Alliance meeting to learn more about radiation fallout. What I learnt devastated me. To find out that our bush foods were possibly contaminated was a real blow to me. It was at these meetings I also learnt about other places where tests had happened and more about Japan during the war. I also learnt that uranium mined in Australia was used in these weapons of destruction. To know that uranium from our country was devastating other countries and people was a horrible lesson for me.

There are too many cancer deaths in our Country. I believe it is caused from radiation contamination. I am not the only one to notice the sickness and death that remains in this part of Australia. It doesn’t matter if you’re Aboriginal or not, everyone has a sad story about premature sickness and death in their families. Cancer is the big one but it is also common for people to suffer from thyroid conditions. This is the case for myself and one of my granddaughters. Fertility problems, still births and birth defects became more common at the time of the testing. But even today we wonder if women have trouble because of the ongoing radiation in the area or genetic changes passed down through generations.

Not knowing the true impact of the nuclear tests causes a lot of anguish and we would like to have answers and hopefully find some solutions. We don’t want others to suffer as we have. The bombs have destroyed a large part of Australia and despite several attempts it will never be safe or clean.

There are many Aboriginal people who cannot go back to their ancestral lands and their children and their children’s children will never know the special religious places it contains. Having whole displaced communities has also created confusion and conflict between Aboriginal groups. These are ongoing issues which cause stress and heartbreak.

We are telling the story so that our history is not forgotten, but also to create a better future for all people, all over the world. This is why we want nuclear weapons permanently banned and the uranium that can create them left in the ground. If you love your own children and care for the children of the world, you will find the courage to stand up and say “enough” – always keeping in mind that the future forever belongs to the next generation.

This is Sue Coleman-Haseldine’s speech to the Vienna conference.
“A treaty banning nuclear weapons is on its way. The momentum of this campaign is unstoppable.”

– DESMOND TUTU, ICAN SUPPORTER

“Every generation has a chance to change the world. This is the generation that will ban nuclear weapons forever.”

– ICAN VIDEO STATEMENT, VIENNA CONFERENCE