



WORKING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

ICAN CAMPAIGNERS MEETING/GENEVA

Building parliamentary support for a nuclear weapon ban treaty

Almost 900 parliamentarians around the world have joined ICAN's call for a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons.

Working with elected representatives is an important way for us to ensure that nuclear disarmament is high up the political agenda. Especially in countries where the governing party or parties oppose a ban on nuclear weapons, parliaments are the best way to put pressure on governments to improve their positions on nuclear disarmament.

Given that the arguments against a ban are untenable if thought through, making the case for a ban can be an excellent way for skilled MPs to build their reputation and put the government under serious pressure to come up with a coherent stance on nuclear disarmament.

Even if this does not succeed, the discourse around it can help pave the way for a government's eventual participation in negotiations on a ban.

During the OEWG on nuclear disarmament in Geneva, campaigners should reach out to their elected representatives. This document offers some ideas for specific actions. Parliamentary systems differ significantly from one country to another, so we have tried to keep these suggestions as general as possible.

Feel free to contact us if you want further guidance

info@icanw.org.

FOR MORE INFO ON ICAN'S WORK WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS :

<http://www.icanw.org/projects/appeal/>

1 Resolutions

In many parliaments, members are able to propose resolutions or motions to be adopted. These typically do not have legal weight but are nonetheless an important way to draw attention to a particular issue and demonstrate support for a certain course of action. A resolution could be adopted that:

- Welcomes the convening of the UN open-ended working group on multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations;
- Expresses deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons;
- Welcomes the Humanitarian Pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons;



- Calls on the government to join negotiations for a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

2 Questions

MPs are typically able to ask questions to the government, which have to be answered. Here are some suggested questions to the foreign ministry:

- What are the government's objectives for the UN open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament? (If the government is not participating, why not?)
- Does the government support the Humanitarian Pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons?

- Does the government agree that nuclear weapons should be prohibited just as all other weapons of mass destruction have been prohibited, and that prohibition should precede elimination?
- Does the government oppose the use of nuclear weapons under all circumstances?
- Does the government support the negotiation on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons?

3 Speeches

A member of parliament could deliver a speech in parliament drawing attention to the UN open-ended working group. This could also be published in the parliamentarian's newsletter to constituents or a local newspaper. Putting the topic on the foreign affairs committee agenda is also a good way to force other, less convinced MPs to engage with the ban idea. Here are some points worth including:

- To date, 127 nations have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge to stigmatize, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.
- Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not yet outlawed; we must urgently address this legal anomaly.

- It is time to launch negotiations for a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons and establish a framework for their elimination.
- Momentum for this is building rapidly and our country should not be left behind.

4 Events

Holding an event at your parliament house is a good way to draw attention to the issue of nuclear disarmament and build support for a ban. MPs will have access to their group's or to their own budget, and can hold events to promote their causes even if the content may not fully align with the party position.

If you organize events in the parliament, try to do so in cooperation with a large parliamentary group, offering to display their logos on promotional materials. This is a good way to give them ownership of our topic, but avoid allowing one party to monopolize the issue. Nuclear weapons should not become politicized along party lines, as this could push the issue to the fringes of the political spectrum, instead of engaging all of society.

Ideally, you will cooperate with multiple parties, at least one of which should be in government, but often opposition parties can more

easily be motivated to criticize a government's lack of action on nuclear disarmament.

This could be anything from the launch of an NGO report or a photographic exhibition on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to a roundtable discussion with parliamentarians from different political parties, involving actors such as the local Red Cross society and progressive think tanks.

Timing is everything in politics. Before an election, prospective MPs will be far more willing to sign on to public pledges such as the ICAN Parliamentary Appeal. Resolutions too can best overcome resistance within the parliament if tabled at well chosen moments, such as

before NPT conferences, or when a number of nuclear weapons issues appear at the same time (OEWG, Nuclear Security Summit, G7 Foreign Ministers in Hiroshima).

A panel-event, parliamentary breakfast or report launch event in parliament can be used to increase the visibility of our topic, helping to increase chances that friendly parliamentarians succeed in putting a vote on your resolution to the plenary's agenda.

5 Lobby meetings

One-on-one meetings with parliamentarians from different political parties are useful for



explaining why a treaty banning nuclear weapons is currently within reach and how parliamentarians can work with ICAN to achieve this objective.

Focus on pragmatic messages: MPs will be more willing to invest their energy in goals that are achievable in the short term. If they are unavailable to meet you in person, ask to speak by phone or meet one of their advisers.

Parliamentarians are many, so where should you begin? Partner organisations, youth groups and party think tanks may have established contacts, but the easiest way is to contact them directly. Highlight your connection to ICAN's

global campaign, and its membership of over 400 organizations in 95 countries. Do not overburden them with detail, but do use ICAN's or your own briefing materials to make it clear that a legal ban on nuclear weapons is within reach.

Opposition MPs will be more willing to openly criticize the government, but governing MPs may have more success in the short term.

Pick principled MPs who are not afraid to speak their mind, as well as those who sit on your parliament's foreign affairs or defense committees with direct access to the parliamentary processes relating to



security and defense.

Check which MPs have been active on this topic before, be it on previous resolutions or via other networks dealing with nuclear weapons.

6 Appeal

For the past two years, ICAN has been collecting signatures for its Global Parliamentary Appeal for a Nuclear Weapons Ban.

Here is the full list of signatories so far:

<http://www.icanw.org/projects/ap-peal>.

It is not too late to encourage your parliamentarians to sign it and ask them to promote it among their colleagues. This is a useful way to demonstrate the strength and breadth of political support for a ban.

*Authors: Tim Wright, ICAN
Leo Hoffmann-Axthelm, Liaison EU, ICAN
Layout and art direction: Daniela Varano*

“ Parliamentarians and parliaments play a key role in the success of disarmament and non-proliferation efforts ”

UN Secretary-General
Ban Ki moon

7 Additional ideas and

If you have additional action ideas aimed at building parliamentary support for a ban, please share them with the ICAN campaigners' e-list ican-campaigners@googlegroups.com.

Please also share reports on your progress in reaching out to parliamentarians.

BAN NUCLEAR

WEAPONS NOW