

ICAN Statement

UN Open-ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament

Increasing understanding on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons

*Delivered by Muhadi Sugiono
Geneva, Wednesday 4 May 2016*

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for permitting me to take the floor on behalf of the Institute of International Studies, Universitas Gadjah Mada, in Indonesia – a partner organization of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

Let me begin by thanking the excellent panellists, Dr. Ira Helfand and Sara Sekkenes, for their informative – and alarming – presentations on the dire humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons.

Let me also pay my deep respect to Setsuko Thurlow – a tireless advocate for a treaty banning nuclear weapons – whose dedication, conviction, passion and courage bring much inspiration to people throughout the world.

The unique perspective of Madam Thurlow and other survivors of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – as well as the survivors of nuclear testing – must continue to inform all disarmament deliberations.

We encourage the organizers of the proposed negotiating conference in 2017 for a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons to consider how best to ensure that the views of victims and survivors are properly heard.

It is incumbent upon us all to ensure that no one else ever suffers as they have. Eliminating nuclear weapons is the only guarantee. We consider a nuclear-weapon-ban treaty as an essential first step towards this urgent goal.

The ban treaty – like other recent humanitarian-focused disarmament treaties – should include provisions on victim assistance. We strongly encourage this working group to examine that topic in further detail.

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Mr. Chairman,

The focus of this session is on additional measures to increase awareness and understanding of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. This, in our view, is essential for advancing and achieving nuclear disarmament.

The three conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in 2013 and 2014 served as a dire warning to humanity. They laid bare the irrefutable scientific evidence that nuclear weapons are inhumane and must be banned.

Mindful of the findings and conclusions of these landmark conferences, 127 nations have now endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge to fill the unacceptable “legal gap” in the current regime governing nuclear weapons.

We warmly welcome this strong commitment to act. Prohibiting nuclear weapons is the only responsible course of action in light of our newfound knowledge. Anything less than a total ban would be insufficient.

We support the proposal by Pacific Island states in Working Paper 14 for the establishment of an agency to promote implementation of the future treaty banning nuclear weapons, and for that agency to have a mandate to educate the public about the humanitarian harm these weapons inflict.

Indeed, the very process of negotiating the ban treaty and bringing it into force would itself serve an important educational function – generating public and parliamentary debate on this issue where it is presently lacking.

We note that many of the states here today have called for greater emphasis on disarmament education. But among them are states whose own commitment to disarmament has been less than satisfactory.

We urge all states that claim protection from nuclear weapons in their military doctrines to share information on the scenarios in which they envisage that these ultimate weapons of mass destruction would be employed on their behalf. What would be the impact of such use on human beings?

In addition, we call on those states present today that have permitted and helped carry out nuclear test explosions on their territory to provide information on the long-term impact of those explosions, in particular the impact on indigenous communities.

Mr. Chairman,

The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons invalidate all arguments that we hear in favour of their retention. Nuclear weapons – like all other weapons of mass destruction – must be banned. We look forward to participating in the first negotiating conference towards that end.

Thank you.