



Open Letter to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop: Support negotiating a nuclear weapons ban treaty in 2017

24 October 2016

We, the undersigned organisations, urge the Australian Government to vote “yes” to the resolution “Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations” at the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly.

The resolution has been put forward by Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, South Africa, and is supported by a large majority of states that participated in the UN Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament through 2016.

The heart of the resolution is to “convene a United Nations conference in 2017, to negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.

The Australian Government has said that it intends to vote “no” to this historic resolution.

We expect and urge the Government to reverse this position before voting begins on 26 October.

A new instrument to place nuclear weapons on the same prohibited legal footing as other weapons of mass destruction is urgently needed. The inertia of nuclear weapons states and their allies has paralysed progress on nuclear disarmament, to which they are legally bound. Support for a ban treaty will assist the Australian Government in fulfilling its obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Eight-four percent of Australians want our Government to support a treaty banning nuclear weapons according to a 2014 Nielsen poll. We expect our representatives at the UN to act on our behalf and get on the right side of history and humanity.

We urge you to work with all states committed to preventing the devastating humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons by prohibiting

and eliminating them, with the urgency this acute existential threat to all demands.

Far from diminishing, the risks of nuclear war through cyber attack, technical and human error, or escalation of armed conflict in Ukraine, the Middle East, South Asia, the South China Sea, or the Korean peninsula are growing, and a new Cold War looms. We must grasp and not squander this historic opportunity to outlaw nuclear weapons.

We urge and expect Australia to vote “yes” to the resolution to commence negotiations on a nuclear weapons ban treaty in 2017 now before the UN General Assembly.

Endorsed by:

Anti-Nuclear Alliance of Western Australia

Arid Lands Environment Centre

Australian Conservation Foundation

Australian Democrats

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

Australian Medical Association

Australian Nuclear Free Alliance

Australian Student Environment Network

Beyond Nuclear Initiative

Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament

Conservation Council of South Australia

Conservation Council of Western Australia

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney

Environment Victoria

Everybody for a Nuclear Free Future South Australia

Footprints for Peace

Friends of the Earth Australia

Greenpeace Asia Pacific

Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation

Human Survival Project, University of Sydney

Humanist Society Victoria

Hunter Peace Group

Independent and Peaceful Australia Network

Just Peace Queensland

Marrickville Peace Group

Mayors for Peace Australia

Medical Association for Prevention of War

Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church

Newcastle Peace Group

Nonlethal Security for Peace Campaign

Nuclear-Free Queensland

Oxfam Australia

Pace e Bene Australia, Inc

Pax Christi Australia

People for Nuclear Disarmament

Public Health Association of Australia

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) Victoria

SafeGround

Scientists for Global Responsibility Australia

Spirit of Eureka (Victoria)

Soka Gakkai International Australia

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, Uniting Church in Australia

Synod of Western Australia, Uniting Church in Australia

Union of Australian Women Victoria

United Nations Association of Australia, Queensland

UnitingJustice Australia

Vintage Reds

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Australia

World Citizens Association of Australia

World Federation of Public Health Associations