Media briefing note

States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons meet at the UN to strengthen the ban

The states parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) will be meeting at the UN in New York from 27 November to 1 December to review progress on the treaty’s implementation and agree on action to further strengthen it. With the Manhattan Project, New York was where nuclear weapons began; the second meeting of TPNW States Parties is where their end is being designed.

Background on the TPNW

The TPNW was adopted by 122 countries in 2017 and came into force in 2021. It now has the support of 140 states with almost half of UN members already having signed, ratified or acceded to the treaty. ICAN is the civil society coordinator for the treaty.

The states parties, or members, of the treaty held their first meeting, known as 1MSP, last year where they took two significant actions. In light of Russia’s nuclear sabre rattling over Ukraine, they condemned any and all threats to use nuclear weapons in terms that have since been echoed by the G20 and individual leaders, including President Xi, Chancellor Scholz and NATO Secretary-General Stoltenberg. The meeting also agreed the Vienna Action Plan to implement the treaty and this year’s meeting will hear the progress the countries are making.

Why cover the meeting?

The meeting, known as 2MSP, matters because it will be the only venue where there will be multilateral action on nuclear disarmament in 2023, given progress under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been stalled since 2010. Urgent action is needed to eliminate nuclear weapons given the threat that they could be used in conflict is at its highest since the Cold War due to Russia’s nuclear threats around its invasion of Ukraine, the conflict involving nuclear-armed Israel in Gaza and acute nuclear tensions on the Korean peninsula.

What will come out of the meeting?

In addition to reporting on what they have done to implement the Vienna Action Plan, counties will strengthen the treaty with decisions on high stakes matters such as the verification regime and assistance to victims of nuclear use and testing which will boost the implementation and impact of this young treaty. ICAN has these specific expectations from the meeting:

• More states will sign and ratify the TPNW, encouraged by the leadership of the states that are already members. Currently 97 states have either signed, ratified or acceded to the treaty which is the same number as the NPT had at the same stage in its life. The states parties have also been urging nuclear-armed states and their allies to, at the minimum, start engaging with the TPNW by being observers at this meeting, following the example of NATO members Belgium, Germany, Norway and The Netherlands, as well as Australia, which all observed the first MSP last year.
The meeting will hear reports from states on their work to implement the Vienna Action Plan agreed at the first meeting of states parties last year demonstrating the seriousness of their normative and practical work that is strengthening the treaty.

The meeting will reiterate the call on all states to abandon nuclear deterrence theory as an unacceptable threat to humanity and the planet and will call for an end to deployment of nuclear weapons in third states, so-called nuclear sharing.

- Deterrence is an unproven gamble, based on the implicit threat to use nuclear weapons, that has brought the world close to nuclear war on a number of occasions, whereas nuclear sharing is a dangerous practice that further exacerbates the risks of proliferation and nuclear use. Both of these activities are banned by the TPNW.

The meeting will call for all states to commit not to resume nuclear testing and urge the eight states that have yet to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the United States) to do so, and for Russia to reverse its recent de-ratification of the CTBT.

States attending will listen to the survivors of nuclear weapons use and testing who have seen these weapons cause harm across generations, and act on their calls for assistance, justice, environmental remediation and an end to these weapons of mass destruction, and ensure space for their participation in this process.

Everyone has a right to get involved in the work to eliminate nuclear weapons, and this meeting provides all different sectors of society with the space to do so. The meeting will bring in a variety of sectors – from government and civil society to the financial community – each acting on their own area of responsibility such as health, finance, environment and climate change.

Nuclear Ban Week actions

Alongside the UN meeting, ICAN will be hosting and coordinating a series of events for the accompanying Nuclear Ban Week across New York City and elsewhere, bringing together parliamentarians, scientists and campaigners from all over the world to demand an end to nuclear weapons and show their support for the TPNW as the established, practical legal path to achieve this.

At least 30 events will be taking place, ranging from marches and rallies, to art exhibitions and concerts, as well as debates and presentations. A full list of events is available here.

What ICAN can do for you

ICAN can facilitate interviews with people whose lives and communities have been directly affected by the use and testing of nuclear weapons, as well as parliamentarians, experts and campaigners.

ICAN can provide background briefings to individual journalists on the meeting and the issues it is dealing with as well as regular email updates to media on key developments from the meeting.

ICAN will also hold a press conference on Friday 1 December to give its response to what has been decided during the week.

For more information and interview requests contact ICAN’s Head of Media, Alistair Burnett who will be in New York alistair@icanw.org +41 78 238 7179