

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and Sustainable Development Goals

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The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons (by intent, accident or miscalculation) anywhere in the world threaten the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, by banning and working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, reinforces implementation of the SDGs.



SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

More than 2 billion people could be at risk of famine following even a limited nuclear war. Massive fires would release enough soot into the air to block warmth and light from the sun, cooling the earth and causing crops to fail.¹ Regions already suffering from food and water shortages would be the most dramatically affected. A nuclear famine would also lead to mass displacement and create refugee camps all over the African continent.²



SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

The detonation of nuclear weapons would cause immediate health effects such as burns and deafness. Municipal and medical services would be completely destroyed or not functional. Disease outbreaks including radiation diseases, cholera, typhus, malaria, and plague, as well as the spread of Ebola and various skin-disease conditions, would overwhelm Africa.³



SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Ionizing radiation from a nuclear weapon attack would disproportionately harm women and girls, according to research.⁴

Female atomic bomb survivors have also suffered discrimination and stigma due to fears about problems with reproduction.

¹ Ira Helfand, "Nuclear Famine: Two Billion People at Risk?" International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, November 2013.

² Robert Mtonga, "Health Impact," Banning Nuclear Weapons: An African Perspective, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, 2012

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Atomic Radiation is More Harmful to Women," Nuclear Information and Resource Service, 2011.



SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

A 2019 study by leading climate scientists found that a limited nuclear war could also cause a dramatic decline in precipitation – so extreme that China and India could receive no rain for almost a decade.⁵

In addition, nuclear waste contamination at nuclear weapons facilities threaten nearby water sources and a nuclear weapon detonation would contaminate water supplies.⁶



SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

The possession of nuclear weapons by a few states at the expense of the safety and security of the rest of the world is inherently unequal.

Indigenous people and land have been disproportionately harmed by nuclear weapons testing.⁷



SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

There is no adequate humanitarian response capacity in the immediate aftermath of a nuclear weapons detonation in a populated area.

A nuclear weapon blast would level a city and nuclear fires would rapidly coalesce, burning such city to completion. Historically, nuclear weapon targets have been cities and communities.⁸



SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

A limited nuclear war would cause significant climate disruption worldwide, including depletion of the stratospheric ozone.⁹

A more expansive nuclear war could result in global temperatures plummeting up to 10°C, a severe ice age that could end all human life.¹⁰

⁵ Toon et al, “Radically expanding nuclear arsenals in Pakistan and India portend regional and global catastrophe,” Science Advances, 2 October 2019.

⁶ Rebecca Moss, “Wait for Los Alamos chromium plume cleanup not uncommon,” Santa Fe New Mexican, 11 November 2017.

⁷ “Nuclear War: Uranium Mining and Nuclear Tests on Indigenous Lands,” Cultural Survival Quarterly Magazine, September 1993.

⁸ “Declassified US Nuclear Targets,” Future of Life Institute.

⁹ Toon et al, “Radically expanding nuclear arsenals in Pakistan and India portend regional and global catastrophe,” Science Advances, 2 October 2019.

¹⁰ Robock et al, “Nuclear winter revisited with a modern climate model and current nuclear arsenals: Still catastrophic consequences” J Geophys Res 2007;112: D13107.



SDG 14: Conserve the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development

A limited nuclear war would reduce net primary productivity in oceans by 5 to 15% and could cause a drop in global ocean temperatures of 1-3 °C.¹¹



SDG 15: Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation; and halt biodiversity loss

In addition to the long-lasting impacts of radiation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there are numerous reports of hazardous contamination at nuclear weapons production facilities and testing sites.

A limited nuclear war could result in a net primary productivity drop of 15-30% on land.¹²



SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

The continued existence and modernization of nuclear arsenals, and their increasing likelihood of use, poses a clear threat to peace.

The TPNW promotes justice by requiring victim assistance and environmental remediation for people and places harmed by nuclear weapons use and testing.

The TPNW promotes the rule of law by strengthening the international legal disarmament architecture and requiring national legal implementation of the treaty by all states parties.

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¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.