The 76th session of the UN General Assembly First Committee on disarmament and international security will take place 4 October to 4 November 2021 at the United Nations in New York, with general debate and thematic discussions. Statements, working papers and resolutions will be posted online including on Reaching Critical Will.

The First Committee will include discussion on nuclear weapons, which has faced some challenges and successes over the past year. The risk of nuclear weapon use, which would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences, continues to increase and can only be eliminated with the elimination of nuclear weapons. The recent announcement that Australia will acquire nuclear-powered submarines with the assistance of the United States and the United Kingdom is just one recent example of these growing risks to proliferation and disarmament and threatens global health and security. In 2020, nuclear-armed states spent $72.6 billion on their nuclear arsenals. All nuclear-armed states are qualitatively expanding their arsenals and six nuclear-armed countries – China, India, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia and the United Kingdom – are increasing the size of their stockpiles. This is a clear violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’s Article VI to pursue disarmament for states-parties.

In recognition of this perilous security situation and Article VI, countries around the world are signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW achieved its 50th ratification during 2020’s First Committee, triggering its entry into force on 22 January 2021. The TPNW is a significant step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world that all countries should sign and ratify.

During First Committee, we urge delegations to:

- Express deep concern at the continued risk for humanity represented by the continued possession and modernisation of nuclear weapons and the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons;
- Reiterate the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-armed states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, to which all states parties are committed under NPT Article VI;
- Condemn nuclear-armed states’ qualitative and quantitative advancement and modernisation of their nuclear arsenals;
- Call on nuclear-armed states to undertake nuclear disarmament, for relevant states to stop hosting other countries’ nuclear weapons on their territories, and for all states to reject the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons on their behalf;
- Welcome the entry into force of the TPNW in January 2021; call on all states to sign, ratify, and adhere to the TPNW; and note that the TPNW complements and strengthens the NPT as an effective measure as foreseen in NPT Article VI; and
- Include a reference to the TPNW in resolutions related to nuclear weapons.
Beyond First Committee, we request that states:

- Sign and accede to the TPNW and work for its universalisation, including by encouraging other states to join it;
- Adopt national legislation and other measures to implement the Treaty, including by ending investments in nuclear weapon-producing companies;
- Develop relevant mechanisms nationally to assess the needs and plan implementation of victim assistance and environmental remediation efforts, where states are responsible for affected populations or areas; other states should develop frameworks and actions for international cooperation and assistance to support affected states in this work. Affected communities and civil society should be actively involved in victim assistance and environmental remediation work, and the rights and needs of affected communities centered.
- Reject nuclear weapons and work to end any military activities related to their development and use; and
- Encourage, bilaterally and multilaterally, all states to join the broad international consensus against weapons of mass destruction and for nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear weapons.