



CHAIR'S SUMMARY

African Regional Conference on Nuclear Disarmament

Pretoria, 16 August 2018

Introduction

1. Delegations representing 20 African States,¹ the International Committee of the Red Cross, civil society organizations, faith communities and academia met in Pretoria on 16 August 2018 at the invitation of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa to discuss the grave threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity and the importance of achieving the swift entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons of 2017. Mr. Luwellyn Landers, Deputy Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, welcomed participants to the conference, and the Hon. Ela Gandhi, Co-President of Religions for Peace, delivered a keynote address.

Humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons

2. Participants expressed their deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons and acknowledged the consequent need to eliminate such weapons completely. They emphasized the ethical and moral imperatives for nuclear disarmament and the urgency of achieving and maintaining a nuclear-weapon-free world, which is a global public good of the highest order, serving both national and collective security interests.
3. It was noted that nuclear weapons have the potential to cause destruction, death and displacement on a global scale, threatening the very survival of humanity. Their effects cannot be constrained by national borders, having a profound impact on States far away from targeted areas, including those belonging to nuclear-weapon-free zones. Nuclear weapons cause severe and widespread damage to the environment, the climate, human health and well-being, socio-economic development and the social order. The International Committee of the Red Cross stressed that no adequate humanitarian response would be possible in the aftermath of a nuclear attack.
4. The use of multiple nuclear weapons against cities would not only result in tens of millions of immediate deaths, but also severely disrupt the climate, leading to global agricultural collapse and widespread famine. Those most severely affected by a reduction in food production would be individuals who already suffer from food insecurity and malnourishment. Participants stressed that the only option is to prevent the use of nuclear weapons by eliminating them as a matter of urgency.

¹ Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Kenya, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

5. The use of nuclear weapons 73 years ago against the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the testing of nuclear weapons, has demonstrated the devastating immediate, mid- and long-term effects of these weapons. The two thousand nuclear tests conducted since 1945 in various parts of the world, including on Algerian soil, have left a legacy of serious harm to human health and the environment. Radioactive contamination from such tests has disproportionately affected women, children and indigenous peoples, and continues to be measurable in the atmosphere to this day.
6. Participants underscored that the use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, in particular the principles and rules of international humanitarian law, as nuclear weapons are incapable of distinguishing between military and civilian targets, and their effects cannot be controlled in either space or time.

Lack of progress on disarmament

7. Participants expressed concern at the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, the continued reliance on nuclear weapons in the military and security concepts, doctrines and policies of States in other regions of the world, and the waste of economic and human resources on programmes for the production, maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapons. They argued that such resources should be redirected towards implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.
8. Participants expressed concern that, half a century after the signing of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, close to 15,000 nuclear weapons remain in the world and dozens of States still claim that nuclear weapons are a legitimate source of defence. Participants, moreover, questioned the theory of nuclear deterrence and called for a paradigm shift in thinking about nuclear weapons and security. They stressed that nuclear weapons do nothing to address such threats as terrorism and violent extremism, but rather exacerbate these threats. Far from keeping the peace, nuclear weapons breed fear and mistrust among nations and peoples.

A strong new international norm

9. Participants welcomed the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) on 7 July 2017 as a major milestone on the path to a nuclear-weapon-free world. They emphasized the great potential for the new Treaty to strengthen the global norm against the use, production and possession of nuclear weapons and to provide much-needed momentum for nuclear disarmament. They noted the broad and active participation of African States in the negotiation of the Treaty and in the humanitarian-focused process that preceded it.
10. Forty-two African States² voted in favour of the adoption of the TPNW and 17 African States have since signed the Treaty: Algeria, Cabo Verde, the Central African Republic, Comoros, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Ghana, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia,

² Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Chad, the Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Nigeria, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Africa and Togo. Several delegations reported that they are now in the process of ratifying the Treaty. Participants stressed the importance of promptly attaining the 50 ratifications needed for entry into force.

11. No African State possesses nuclear weapons or claims to be protected by the nuclear weapons of an ally, meaning that all African States are likely to be in full compliance with the prohibitions contained in Article 1 of the TPNW. It was noted that the Treaty of Pelindaba of 1996, which establishes Africa as an internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zone, contains similar prohibitions to those contained in the TPNW. Thus, signature and ratification of the TPNW by any State party to the Treaty of Pelindaba should not present any challenges. The TPNW aims to transform the regional norm against the possession of nuclear weapons into a global norm.
12. Participants stressed that the TPNW is fully compatible with and complementary to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of 1968 and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty of 1996. They also noted that nothing in the TPNW affects the inalienable right of its States parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Universalizing the TPNW

13. Participants expressed their strong support for achieving the swift entry into force of the TPNW as a vital step towards achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. States that have not yet done so were encouraged to sign and ratify the Treaty. A high-level ceremony will take place in New York on 26 September 2018 for further signatures and ratifications of the Treaty, at the occasion of the UN International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Those States wishing to participate in the ceremony should notify the UN Office of Legal Affairs.
14. Participants looked forward to the first Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty following its entry into force and recognized the important role of the United Nations, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, parliamentarians and academics in achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.
15. The African delegates expressed their hope that African States would be at the forefront in signing and ratifying the TPNW and that the Treaty would quickly enter into force. They pledged to work with policymakers in capitals to effect the policy processes necessary to ensure signature and ratification of the TPNW and hence the swift entry into force of the Treaty.