



Power of humanity

Council of Delegates of the International
Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

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**COUNCIL OF DELEGATES
OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS
AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT**

Antalya, Turkey
10–11 November 2017

**Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons
Four-year action plan
(Implementation of Resolution 1 of the 2013 Council of Delegates)**

PROGRESS REPORT

**Document prepared by the International Committee of the Red Cross
in cooperation with the Australian Red Cross**

Geneva, September 2017

1) INTRODUCTION

The past two years have seen significant developments towards the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Most notable among these were the convening in 2016 of a United Nations (UN) working group to consider measures to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, and the historic negotiation and adoption in 2017 of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

Instrumental in bringing about these developments was the “humanitarian initiative” led by an informal group of States that focused attention on the “catastrophic humanitarian consequences” and international humanitarian law (IHL) implications of any use of nuclear weapons and ensured that these considerations were central to the nuclear disarmament debate.¹

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (Movement) contributed significantly to this process. The adoption of Resolution 1 of the 2013 Council of Delegates and the implementation of the Movement’s accompanying four-year action plan have increased the engagement of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (National Societies), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in global efforts to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. The Movement has intensified its dialogue with States and other parties concerned, produced publications and social media resources on the topic, and raised awareness of the Movement’s position and goals among the media, the public, and National Society staff and volunteers.

2) BACKGROUND

This report summarizes the main developments and achievements in relation to nuclear weapons since the 2015 Council of Delegates. Section 3 highlights the remarkable progress at the international level. Section 4 gives examples of activities undertaken by Movement components in implementing the four-year action plan.

3) DEVELOPMENTS IN INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Key developments in the nuclear disarmament debate since 2015 include the following:

Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations (2016)

The Open-ended Working Group taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations (OEWG) was established and tasked by the UN General Assembly to examine the legal measures, provisions and norms required to attain a world without nuclear weapons, and to make

¹ The “humanitarian initiative” refers to efforts by a range of States to reframe the debate on nuclear weapons, placing greater emphasis on the catastrophic and lasting consequences of their use on health, societies and the environment. The initiative originated in the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in which, for the first time, States party to that treaty acknowledged “the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons” (Final Document, Vol. I, Part I, para. 80). That acknowledgement had itself been influenced by the ICRC president’s historic speech in April 2010 stating the humanitarian imperative to prevent the use of nuclear weapons and calling on States to prohibit their use and eliminate them on the basis of their destructive power, the unspeakable human suffering they cause, the impossibility of controlling their effects in space and time, the risks of escalation they create and the threat they pose to the environment, to future generations and the survival of humanity.

recommendations for taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. The OEWG met three times in 2016 (in February, May and August).

A major outcome of the OEWG was a recommendation calling for the General Assembly to convene “a conference in 2017, open to all States, with the participation and contribution of international organizations and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.² This recommendation proved controversial: primarily owing to a lack of consensus on this point, the OEWG had to resort to a vote to adopt its concluding report.³

The OEWG also called on States, as a matter of urgency, to take concrete effective measures to reduce and eliminate the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional nuclear-weapon detonations. Such measures included reducing the number of warheads on high alert and taking steps to reduce the significance of these weapons in their military doctrine.

UN conference to negotiate a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons (2017)

On the OEWG’s recommendation, the 2016 UN General Assembly convened a conference “to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.⁴ The conference marked a significant milestone in efforts to advance the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and satisfied the appeal to all States made by the Movement in its own resolution adopted by the 2011 Council of Delegates to negotiate a legally binding international agreement to prohibit the use of and eliminate nuclear weapons.⁵

Over 130 States, several international organizations, including the ICRC and the IFRC, and a range of non-governmental organizations under the umbrella of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), participated in the UN conference, which took place in New York in two sessions (27–31 March and 15 June–7 July 2017). Nuclear-armed States did not attend the conference, nor did, with the exception of the Netherlands, non-nuclear States that rely on nuclear-armed States for their security (i.e. States under a nuclear umbrella). At the end of the negotiations, the States participating in the conference adopted the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.⁶ The treaty clearly prohibits the use and activities that enable the use of nuclear weapons on the basis of their catastrophic humanitarian consequences and of IHL rules applicable to all weapons. The ICRC president hailed the adoption of the treaty as “an important victory for our shared humanity”.⁷ Until the treaty’s adoption, nuclear weapons were the only weapons of mass destruction not explicitly prohibited by international law.

² UN General Assembly, Note by the Secretary-General, *Taking Forward Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations*, A/71/371, 1 September 2016, para. 67.

³ The OEWG’s report was adopted by a non-recorded vote of 62 in favour, 27 against and 8 abstentions.

⁴ UN General Assembly, Resolution 71/258, “Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations”, A/RES/71/258, 23 December 2016. The resolution was adopted in the plenary by 113 votes in favour, 35 against and 13 abstentions. The resolution had earlier been adopted by the First Committee of the UN General Assembly by 123 votes in favour, 38 against and 16 abstentions.

⁵ 2011 Council of Delegates, Resolution 1, “Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons”, para. 3.

⁶ Adopted by 122 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

⁷ ICRC, “Historic agreement banning nuclear weapons a ‘victory for our shared humanity’, ICRC says”, News release, 7 July 2017.

Ongoing support for the “Humanitarian Pledge”

In 2015 and 2016, the Humanitarian Pledge continued to be an important tool to rally support for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. The pledge was first issued by Austria in its own name at the close of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (December 2014). It was subsequently restructured and turned into a resolution of the UN General Assembly to allow countries to ally themselves more easily with its commitments.⁸ Among other elements, the resolution recognizes the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and urges all States party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) “to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of their existing obligations under article VI, and ... to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons”.⁹ The resolution also calls on all States to support international efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. The pledge continues to be a cornerstone of the “humanitarian initiative” and a mechanism to keep the spotlight on the unacceptable and catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and the underlying reasons for a treaty prohibiting them.

Civil society activity

Civil society continues to play a crucial role in raising awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear-weapon use and in providing expert views and research on many humanitarian, legal and technical aspects of the issue.

ICAN, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Global Zero, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War are just a few of the organizations active on this issue and with which Movement components have had contact. These organizations are often active at the national and international levels to raise awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and IHL implications of nuclear weapons and the increased risks of use by intent, accident or miscalculation. They also publish research on themes related to nuclear disarmament and engage with governments on the elements necessary for a prohibition treaty.

4) MOVEMENT ACTIVITY TO IMPLEMENT RESOLUTION 1

Since the 2015 Council of Delegates, the Movement has played a central role in advancing the nuclear disarmament debate. In continuing to implement the 2013 Council of Delegates resolution on this topic, Movement components have focused on raising awareness of the humanitarian consequences and IHL implications of nuclear weapons and on urging States to ensure that such weapons are never used again and to prohibit and eliminate them through a legally binding international agreement. The ICRC maintained its lead role in these endeavours, including by representing its and the Movement’s positions at the UN negotiations, the OEWG and other multilateral forums. National Societies were also active at the national level in informing States and other parties concerned of the Movement’s views and in influencing the debate and policy decisions in these areas. The ICRC and the IFRC also helped coordinate and support the National Societies’ efforts in this respect.

⁸ UN General Assembly, Resolution 71/47, “Humanitarian pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons”, A/RES/71/47, 5 December 2016, adopted by 137 votes in favour, 34 against and 12 abstentions.

⁹ *Ibid.* para. 3.

Below are examples of activities undertaken since the report to the 2015 Council of Delegates on the 2013 resolution and the four-year action plan.

Movement events

Two key events have taken place since 2015, with the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies working to enhance Movement actions on nuclear weapons and to strengthen collective communication and coordination.

First, in April 2016, the ICRC and the IFRC hosted a Movement meeting on the implementation of Resolution 1 just before the May session of the OEWG. The meeting, attended by 16 National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC, provided updates on the work of the OEWG and enhanced the Movement's understanding of the increasing risks of nuclear detonation, whether by accident, miscalculation or intent. It was also an opportunity for National Societies to discuss their activities on nuclear weapons and the challenges they have faced. The timing of the meeting enabled National Societies to attend the opening sessions of the May OEWG.

Second, the Japanese Red Cross Society and the ICRC hosted a high-level Movement conference on the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons in Nagasaki in April 2017. The conference was co-sponsored by the IFRC and the Red Cross Societies of Australia, Austria, the Netherlands and Norway and was attended by the IFRC president, the ICRC vice-president, and the leaders and senior experts of 34 National Societies. The meeting culminated in the "Nagasaki Appeal", which called on all States "to use the unprecedented window of opportunity" presented by the UN negotiating conference "to take a decisive step towards a world without nuclear weapons". They also urged all States to participate in the next session of the UN negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons being held from 15 June to 7 July. As a direct result of this appeal and the work of the Philippines Red Cross, the Philippine Senate passed a motion expressing its full support "to the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons at the global level".¹⁰

The conference also adopted the Nagasaki Action Plan for the Non-use, Prohibition and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. This plan identified specific actions that the components of the Movement had committed to take in the months following the meeting and beyond to convey the Movement's views on nuclear weapons and to advance the development and promotion of a prohibition treaty. National Society leaders agreed to engage with the highest levels of their governments to encourage participation in the UN negotiating conference and to work for a strong treaty. The action plan also reiterated calls for National Society members, staff and volunteers to take part in continued efforts to raise public and media awareness of the issue, as well as to reach out to and cooperate with national organizations working in the health, environment and emergency-response fields. The action plan further called on the ICRC to explore the possibility of launching a global campaign on nuclear weapons to help ensure that the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki would never be repeated. As the four-year action plan adopted by the 2013 Council of Delegates expires this year, the Nagasaki Action Plan called for the drafting of a new resolution and action plan to guide Movement efforts in the coming years.

¹⁰ Seventeenth Congress of the Republic of The Philippines Senate, Resolution No. 47, 10 May 2017.

Humanitarian diplomacy

The ICRC actively participated in all the sessions of the 2016 OEWG, including through formal presentations and statements in the plenary meetings on approaches to prohibiting weapons under IHL and the need to reduce the increasing risks of nuclear detonation by accident, miscalculation or intent. The ICRC was joined in the May session of the OEWG by the IFRC, which delivered a statement on behalf of the Movement. In October 2016, the ICRC vice-president addressed the 71st Session of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, where she urged States to act on the recommendation of the OEWG that the General Assembly convene a conference in 2017, open to all, to negotiate a treaty “to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.

Following the adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution convening a conference in 2017 to negotiate a prohibition on nuclear weapons, the ICRC was active in the lead-up to and during the two negotiating sessions, sharing its views on the issue with the States involved. It took to the floor on numerous occasions during the conference and submitted two working papers with comments and recommendations for States on major elements of the draft treaty.¹¹ The ICRC also engaged bilaterally with negotiating States on key provisions of the draft treaty. The IFRC also participated in the conferences, and the Red Cross Societies of Austria, the Netherlands and Norway took part in the June–July 2017 session.¹²

In its working paper submitted to the first session of the negotiations, the ICRC stressed that the treaty being negotiated should, among other things, be based on a recognition of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the difficulty of envisaging how any use of nuclear weapons could be compatible with the principles and rules of international humanitarian law. It also called for the treaty to contain clear and robust prohibitions. To support National Societies in their dialogue with their governments, the ICRC regularly communicated its positions to them, provided them with talking points and other communication materials, and kept them informed of the progress of the UN negotiations.

The ICRC frequently raised the issue of nuclear weapons in its contacts with government officials, including in bilateral contacts at the senior level. The ICRC president delivered video messages to States on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco and the high-level opening of the UN negotiations. The issue was also on the agenda of meetings on IHL organized by the ICRC for States in Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia and for those forming part of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The ICRC delegation in Pretoria has been particularly active in co-hosting events on nuclear weapons, including a round-table for African embassy officials based in Pretoria and other interested parties held in May 2017.

In accordance with the Movement’s resolutions and action plan, National Societies continued to engage actively with their governments on nuclear weapons through letters, dialogue and briefings. Many promoted the Movement’s views and positions on the issue with ministers and parliamentarians, as well as with officials in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and

¹¹ *Elements of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons*, submitted by the ICRC to the March negotiating session of the UN conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, A/Conf.229/2017/WP.2, 31 March 2017; *Comments of the International Committee of the Red Cross on key provisions of the Draft Convention on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*, A/CONF.229/2017/CRP.2, 14 June 2017.

¹² Officials of the Austrian Red Cross attended as members of the Austrian Government delegation.

Emergency Services.¹³ In addition, some National Societies were able to include nuclear weapons on the agenda of national IHL committee meetings.¹⁴ The Belgian Red Cross spoke on nuclear weapons and the Movement's position on the issue before the Commission on External Relations of the Belgian parliament, and the president of the Czech Red Cross delivered a speech in the senate of the Czech Republic on the "Humanitarian aspects of usage of nuclear weapons". The Netherlands Red Cross co-sponsored a public petition that collected 40,000 signatures, requiring the national parliament to debate a ban on nuclear weapons.

Work also continued in regional forums. For example, several National Societies wrote to their governments in advance of the July 2016 NATO summit in Poland encouraging them to work to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in NATO security policies in order to lower the risk of nuclear-weapon use.

The ICRC and a number of National Societies, including those of Australia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, also continued to engage with States that chose not to participate in the UN negotiations, namely nuclear-armed States and their allies. Despite their choice, the Movement appealed to these States to take steps to reduce the risk of nuclear-weapon use by accident, miscalculation or intent. These steps, which reflect longstanding commitments outlined in NPT action plans, include: reducing the number of nuclear warheads on high alert; reducing the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrine and plans; and agreeing to concrete confidence-building measures to help reduce the risks of a deliberate or inadvertent use of nuclear weapons. The Movement's actions included a keynote statement by the ICRC director-general in April 2017 at a symposium organized by the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on the risks of nuclear weapons, and the ICRC statement at the 2017 Preparatory Meeting for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. The Movement's messages were also conveyed in the IFRC statement to the May session of the OEWG and in opinion editorials placed in national media by the Red Cross Societies of Australia, Japan, the Netherlands and Norway.

Public statements and events

The Movement's components have worked closely with civil society and other organizations to raise awareness of the humanitarian consequences and IHL implications of nuclear-weapon use, and of the need for a prohibition treaty.

The ICRC participated in a range of events in Geneva and New York to convey the Movement's messages on nuclear weapons. In 2017, ICRC representatives spoke at events organized by UNIDIR, the Geneva Disarmament Platform and civil society organizations, highlighting the Movement's expectations of and priorities for the UN negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. ICRC delegations participated in the 26th UN Conference on Disarmament Issues held in Nagasaki (December 2016) and in a round-table organized in Pretoria by the Institute for Security Studies and the International Law and Policy Institute on progress on legally binding measures to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons (February 2016).

National Societies participated in numerous public meetings with specialized civil society organizations such as ICAN and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. For

¹³ Those that have reported on their dialogue with government officials include the National Societies of Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Philippines, Switzerland, Thailand and the United Kingdom.

¹⁴ In particular, the Australian, Belgian, Czech and Danish Red Cross Societies.

example, the Australian Red Cross, along with the ICRC and ICAN, spoke before the diplomatic corps in Canberra at an event hosted by the Austrian ambassador; the Austrian Red Cross participated in a commemoration ceremony organized by the Vienna Peace Movement to commemorate the 71st anniversary of the Hiroshima nuclear attack; and the Japanese Red Cross Society worked with the UN Information Centre in Tokyo, the NGO Peace Boat and ICAN to mark the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Along with others, the German and Japanese Red Cross Societies were active in academic circles, with the Japanese Red Cross publishing a series of articles on the history of aid efforts in the aftermath of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and organizing internal and public film screenings and discussions. The Australian Red Cross attended a series of events exploring the impacts of nuclear testing in Australia and the Pacific.

The IFRC contributed to a series of regional meetings on the humanitarian impact of nuclear-weapon testing and detonations. These meetings, organized by Chatham House, were held in Bangkok, Istanbul, London, Melbourne and Accra and involved representatives of civil society, people affected by nuclear-weapon testing, government officials and academics. The National Societies of Australia, Cameroon, Ghana, Hungary, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon, Nigeria, Serbia, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey and the United Kingdom attended the meetings in their respective regions.

Communication and media tools

Social and traditional media were used to promote the Movement's views. Postings on Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms covered developments in the nuclear disarmament debate and the Movement's activities.

To facilitate communication of the Movement's message and support National Societies in their discussions with governments and other interested parties, the ICRC regularly circulated briefing notes on the latest developments in the nuclear disarmament debate and drafted key messages. Communication materials were also distributed during the OEWG and the UN negotiations to help National Societies convey the Movement's messages through the media. These included public messages, model opinion editorials and news releases, as well as tweets and short video/information segments for posting on social media. The presidents of the ICRC and the IFRC jointly signed opinion editorials on the occasion of President Obama's historic visit to Hiroshima in May 2016. The ICRC director-general also co-signed opinion editorials with the chief executive officer of the Australian Red Cross and the president of the Norwegian Red Cross, which were published, respectively, in Australian and Norwegian media. The IFRC president also produced an opinion editorial for Japanese media, and the ICRC president authored an opinion piece published in Mexico. Many National Societies, including the Australian, Japanese, Norwegian and Swiss Red Cross Societies, issued news releases and engaged with the media on the nuclear-weapon issue.

The *International Review of the Red Cross* dedicated an edition in 2016 to "The human cost of nuclear weapons" highlighting the various aspects of the nuclear-weapon issue. Brochures, leaflets and Movement resolutions on the topic were also widely distributed to government officials and parliamentarians and used to raise public awareness. Many National Societies also published the resolutions on their websites and set up web pages dedicated to promoting the Movement's work on the issue.

Pledges

Six National Societies – Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Japan, Mexico and Spain – made pledges at the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent committing to continue their efforts to raise awareness of and advance the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. These National Societies are encouraged to report on the implementation of these pledges at the 2017 Council of Delegates.

5) NEXT STEPS

The adoption on 7 July 2017 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was a momentous achievement and a fitting response to the Movement's 2011 appeal to all States "to pursue in good faith and conclude with urgency and determination negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement, based on existing commitments and international obligations".¹⁵ Indeed, the prohibition of nuclear weapons is an essential step towards their total elimination.

In addition to clearly and comprehensively prohibiting nuclear weapons on the basis of their catastrophic humanitarian consequences and of IHL, as the ICRC had called for, the treaty provides a solid baseline for the future elimination of nuclear weapons.

The treaty will be opened for signature on 20 September 2017, and will enter into force after 50 States have ratified or acceded to it.

The 2017 Council of Delegates is asked to consider a new resolution and action plan¹⁶ to guide the Movement's actions on nuclear weapons over the next four years, including actions to promote the signature, ratification and/or accession of States to the treaty. The action plan also commits Movement components to continue to urge nuclear-armed States and their allies to implement longstanding obligations and commitments towards nuclear disarmament and, in the meantime, to take measures to reduce the risks of the use of nuclear weapons by accident, miscalculation or intent. It also calls on the components of the Movement to continue to raise awareness among governments, other interested parties and the public of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons.

¹⁵ 2011 Council of Delegates, Resolution 1, "Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons", para. 3.

¹⁶ 2017 Council of Delegates, Draft Resolution 8, "Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons: 2018–2021 action plan".