



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**

Geneva, Switzerland
7 December 2015

**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
with contributions from the Australian and Norwegian Red Cross
and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

Geneva, October 2015

Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons: Four-year action plan

Report on the implementation of Resolution 1 of the 2013 Council of Delegates

1. Recent developments in the nuclear disarmament debate

There have been many encouraging developments since the adoption of Resolution 1 of the 2013 Council of Delegates and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's four-year action plan.¹ Overall, the efforts of the Movement, civil society organizations and States to highlight the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons (including within what is often referred to as the "Humanitarian Initiative") have been highly successful. This subject has, for the first time in decades, become a clear reference point in the discussions about nuclear weapons at the international level and, increasingly, in national contexts.

However, it appears that nuclear weapons continue to be a central component of the security policies of nuclear-armed States and most are currently modernizing their arsenals. The failure of the States party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to agree on any additional steps to advance nuclear disarmament at their May 2015 Review Conference highlights the precarious situation facing States and indeed humanity. The "catastrophic humanitarian consequences"² of the use of nuclear weapons, whether by intent or accident, remains an ongoing threat and their elimination a humanitarian imperative.

Key developments in the nuclear disarmament field since 2013 include the following:

- ***Increased recognition by States of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons as a driver for nuclear disarmament***

The international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons – which were held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna in 2013 and 2014 – have provided a great deal of new information on the immediate and long-term effects of nuclear weapons and shed light on the dangers associated with their potential use and continued possession.

Today, a large majority of countries emphasize the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons in all relevant disarmament fora and argue that these concerns warrant greater action on nuclear disarmament. This includes a series of statements made in the UN General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament, many of which highlight the Movement's views and concerns. Support for this message reached new levels at the 2015 NPT Review Conference, when 159 countries joined a statement delivered by Austria stressing that "awareness of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons must underpin all approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament." At the same meeting, Ireland more clearly highlighted the changed environment when it emphasized that "the

¹ Resolution 1: "Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons: Four-year action plan"

² As recognized by all NPT State Parties at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. See NPT/CONF.2010/50, available at www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010

level of support enjoyed by the humanitarian impacts discussion, including among a growing number of civil society organisations, international organisations including the ICRC, demonstrates beyond any doubt that the parameters of our discussion on nuclear disarmament has changed forever. That is the new reality.”

- ***Growing support for the “Humanitarian Pledge”***

The Humanitarian Pledge was first issued by Austria in its own name at the close of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in December 2014. Although other States were invited to join the Pledge at that time – and some 50 did so – it was subsequently restructured to more easily allow countries to associate themselves with its commitments. Amongst other things, the Pledge recognizes the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and calls on all NPT States Parties “to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of existing obligations under Article VI, and to this end, to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.” Support for the Pledge has steadily increased and, as at 1 August 2015, 113 States had associated themselves with it.

- ***The failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference***

The NPT Review Conference takes place every five years and is one of the main fora for nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-armed States to discuss nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in addition to other related issues. Five years ago, the 2010 NPT Review Conference was hailed as a success, in part because for the first time NPT States explicitly expressed their “deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons” and reaffirmed “the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.” These themes had not previously received significant attention in the NPT context. At the same time, nuclear-armed States Parties made commitments to “accelerate concrete progress” towards nuclear disarmament and to diminish the importance of nuclear weapons in security policies on the basis of an “unequivocal undertaking” to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

The 2015 Review Conference was held from 27 April to 22 May and attended by 172 (of the 192) NPT States Parties. Many States and organizations saw this as an important opportunity to advance nuclear disarmament, based on existing NPT obligations. Unfortunately, very little progress was reported on the implementation of the commitments made in 2010. More importantly, States Parties were unable to agree on recommendations to further NPT implementation over the next five years. Although this failure was primarily due to a lack of agreement on the convening of a conference to make the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction, it was clear from the conference that nuclear-armed States were not prepared to accept new disarmament commitments or to accept any timeline for the implementation of those commitments.

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- ***Civil society activity***

Today, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons has some 425 partner organizations in 95 countries. These and other organizations, such as Global Zero, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, have been increasingly active at the national and international levels raising awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, the risk that such weapons may be used or detonated accidentally and the need to prohibit and eliminate them once and for all. These efforts are leading to more focused discussions on nuclear weapons in national parliaments and academia and amongst faith-based groups and the public at large.

2. Examples of Movement activity to implement Resolution 1

The Movement has played a central role in highlighting the humanitarian consequences and international humanitarian law (IHL) implications of nuclear weapons. The Movement components have been active at the international and national levels to inform States and key stakeholders of the Movement's views and to help influence the debate and policy decisions in these areas.

Below are examples of activities undertaken by components of the Movement since the adoption of the 2013 Council of Delegates Resolution and its four-year action plan:

- The Movement had a strong presence and played an active role in the conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in 2014. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and representatives from 21 National Societies participated in the Nayarit Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons organized by the Government of Mexico. Statements were delivered by the ICRC vice-president and the secretary-general of the Mexican Red Cross. There was also a joint ICRC / Federation statement. The Movement had a similar presence at the Vienna Conference organized by the Government of Austria in December. The ICRC president, its director for international law and policy, the secretary-general of the Austrian Red Cross and a number of National Society representatives addressed the meeting and 25 National Societies attended the event as part of the Federation delegation.
- Three National Society workshops were held to help further the Movement's implementation of the 2011 and 2013 Council of Delegates resolutions. A workshop was hosted by the Mexican Red Cross ahead of the Nayarit Conference in which 21 National Societies participated.³ A second workshop, attended by 16 National Societies, was organized by the Netherlands Red Cross for Societies in States that possess nuclear

³ Specifically, the National Societies of Austria, Australia, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Japan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Surinam and Trinidad and Tobago.

weapons or rely on them as part of their national security policy.⁴ A third event was organized by the Austrian Red Cross on the sidelines of the Vienna Conference in which 25 National Societies took part.⁵ These workshops, which were organized with the assistance of the Norwegian Red Cross and the ICRC, updated participants on the most recent developments in the work on nuclear weapons and provided an opportunity to share experiences and ideas for future cooperation. The International Federation also participated in these events and lent its experience and expertise to the discussions.

- On 15 February 2015, the ICRC president gave a major speech on nuclear weapons to the Geneva Diplomatic Corps. Officials from 53 Geneva missions attended the event at ICRC headquarters. The speech outlined the Movement's concerns and views on nuclear weapons and urged States to use the 2015 NPT Review Conference to advance nuclear disarmament, in line with their existing NPT commitments. The ICRC reiterated these messages in a statement to the Review Conference itself on 30 April 2015 in New York.
- The ICRC, the International Federation and many National Societies commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. Press releases, archive video footage and social media messaging were all used to observe this tragic moment in human history. On behalf of the Movement, the president of the International Federation participated in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki memorial ceremonies and an opinion editorial signed by both the ICRC and International Federation presidents was placed in newspapers in Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. A number of National Societies also spoke at commemorative events in their countries. To coincide with these anniversaries, the ICRC, in cooperation with the Japanese and Norwegian Red Cross, published an information note highlighting the ongoing health consequences for those who survived the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts, including the thousands of survivors who still receive treatment at Japanese Red Cross hospitals.

National Societies have taken a range of domestic action to implement the Movement's resolutions. Many already informed their governments and/or members of parliament of the Movement's views on nuclear weapons following the adoption of the 2011 Council of Delegates resolution and have since disseminated the resolution through their website and other means. Some Societies, including those in Austria, Australia, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Norway, have frequent contact with government officials to discuss the nuclear weapons issue.

National Societies have also organized specific activities and events. For example, in April 2014 the Spanish Red Cross co-organized a workshop on IHL, the protection of the civilian population and weapons of mass destruction (with a focus on nuclear weapons). The Irish Red Cross also

⁴ Specifically, the National Societies of Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Norway, Russia, the Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom and United States.

⁵ Specifically, the National Societies of Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Latvia, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Serbia, Sweden, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and United States.

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held an event focused on nuclear weapons and IHL. The Netherlands Red Cross co-sponsored a public petition that collected 40,000 signatures and will require the national parliament to debate a ban on nuclear weapons. The Japanese Red Cross and the Malaysian Red Crescent have also been active in university and academic circles.

The Australian, New Zealand and Norwegian Red Cross Societies have ongoing public campaigns on nuclear weapons, which include the distribution of posters, pamphlets and newsletters, outreach to parliamentarians, the organization of public events, engagement with students and youth groups, and social media components. Along with the Japanese Red Cross, these National Societies were also involved in the “paper cranes” initiative, inspired by the Japanese atomic bomb survivor Sadako, to support a world free of nuclear weapons.

These actions have helped to change the global debate about nuclear weapons at the national and international levels, bringing a greater focus to their humanitarian consequences and IHL implications. They have also helped to position the Movement as a key stakeholder and reference point as the work on this issue continues. However, the Movement’s efforts to date are far from achieving the key objectives set out in the Movement position: “ensuring that nuclear weapons are never again used” and “prohibiting the use of and prohibiting nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement” based on existing obligations. Further action within the framework of the 2013 Council of Delegates four-year action plan (2013-2017) is essential.

3. Next steps

The past two years have produced a significant increase in activities highlighting the humanitarian consequences and IHL challenges of nuclear weapons. These concerns have focused and re-energized the debate about nuclear disarmament. Today, there is a much clearer understanding of the global consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, the continuing risks associated with their possession, and the lack of an adequate humanitarian response in most countries and at the international level in the event of a detonation. A large majority of States have recognized that far more needs to be done to prevent the use of nuclear weapons, including by working to prohibit them and to ensure their elimination. The Movement has played an important role in bringing about this understanding and recognition.

The failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to adopt recommendations to further NPT implementation was a missed opportunity to advance nuclear disarmament. As of August 2015, States are reflecting on the implications of this failure and the feasible next steps. The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and practical approaches to achieving nuclear disarmament will surely be addressed by many States during the 2015 session of the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) of the UN General Assembly. Although resolutions calling for the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention and a treaty prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons have been adopted in the past in the Conference on Disarmament and not taken forward, the failure of the NPT Review Conference may inspire States to revisit these proposals or to consider alternative approaches.

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The human costs and IHL implications of nuclear weapons are likely to remain key themes in States' consideration of how best to prevent the use of these weapons and advance nuclear disarmament. While the next steps by States are not yet clear, the Movement's activities and messaging are as important and as relevant as ever and will continue to influence both the perceived acceptability of nuclear weapons and States' actions in this field.