

Power of humanity

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

8 December 2019, Geneva



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CD/19/19

Original: English
For information

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

Geneva, Switzerland
8 December 2019

**Working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons:
2018–2021 action plan
(Resolution 4 of the 2017 Council of Delegates)**

Progress report

Document prepared by

**the International Committee of the Red Cross in consultation with
the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

Geneva, October 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite growing risks of the use of nuclear weapons and the continued modernization of nuclear arsenals, the past two years have seen substantial progress towards the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Most notable is the increasing support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was adopted by 122 States at the United Nations (UN) in New York on 7 July 2017.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (the Movement) has contributed significantly to this development towards prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons. Acting within the framework of Resolution 4 of the 2017 Council of Delegates – by which the Movement adopted an ambitious four-year action plan on nuclear weapons – 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) are working to increase their engagement in global efforts to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The Movement has further 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 views on nuclear weapons among the media, the public, and National Society staff and volunteers.

Fully implementing the resolution depends on the components of the Movement continuing and scaling up their efforts in the period leading up to the 2021 Council of Delegates to meet their commitments under the 2018–2021 action plan on nuclear weapons, and strengthening their collaboration in those efforts.

1) BACKGROUND

This report summarizes the main developments and achievements in relation to implementing Resolution 4 of the 2017 Council of Delegates and the accompanying 2018–2021 action plan. Section 2A highlights progress towards achieving the resolution's measurable objectives at the international level. Section 2B gives examples of activities undertaken by components of the Movement at the international, regional and national levels to implement the 2018–2021 action plan.

2) ANALYSIS / PROGRESS

A) PROGRESS TOWARDS ACHIEVING OBJECTIVES

Building upon Resolution 1 of the 2011 Council of Delegates and 2013 Council of Delegates and reflecting relevant international developments – notably the adoption of the TPNW, on 7 July 2017 – Resolution 4 of the 2017 Council of Delegates called on States to:

- (a) promptly sign, ratify or otherwise accede to, and faithfully implement the TPNW.
- (b) ratify or accede to, and fulfil their obligations and commitments under, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and regional treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones.
- (c) ensure that nuclear weapons are never used again. Moreover, the resolution called in particular on the nuclear-armed States and their allies to take steps to reduce the risk of intentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons based on their existing commitments.

The following sections assess progress made towards achieving the resolution's objectives since its adoption.

Universalizing and implementing the TPNW

Support for the TPNW has been growing since it opened for signature on 20 September 2017. As of 17 October 2019, 79 States have signed,¹ while 32 States have also ratified or otherwise acceded to the treaty.² Between ten and 20 of the States that have signed the TPNW are reported to have initiated domestic ratification procedures, while a handful of States have signalled intent to sign the TPNW in the near future. The rate of adherence to the TPNW, measured as the number of new ratifications over time, is comparable with that to other treaties regulating weapons of mass destruction.³

In addition, a high number of States have expressed support for the TPNW at meetings of the UN General Assembly and of the NPT. In 2018, 126 States voted in favour of a UN General Assembly resolution welcoming the adoption of the TPNW, while more than 40 States welcomed the TPNW in their statement to the 2019 Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT.

Support for the Treaty has also been voiced at the regional level. In March 2018, for example, the conference of States party to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty (the Treaty of Pelindaba) called upon members of the African Union to sign and ratify the TPNW. Communiqués and statements expressing support for the TPNW have been issued at regional meetings in Guyana, New Zealand and South Africa.

At the same time, several States continue to voice their opposition to the TPNW. Forty-one States, including all of the nuclear-armed States and their allies, either abstained from voting on or voted against the 2018 UN General Assembly resolution welcoming the adoption of the TPNW, and a handful of States voiced their opposition to the treaty in statements to the meeting of the 2019 Preparatory Committee.

In several States, adherence to the TPNW has been an issue of parliamentary or other formal political contestation. In some of these States, notably in Finland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, procedures have been initiated to assess the consequences and/or feasibility of signing and/or ratifying the TPNW.

¹ The following 79 states have signed the TPNW as of 17 October 2019: Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Holy See, Honduras, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam and Zambia.

² The following 32 states have ratified or acceded to the TPNW as of 17 October 2019: Austria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cook Islands (accession), Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Gambia, Guyana, Holy See, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, South Africa, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela and Viet Nam.

³ *Nuclear Ban Monitor 2018*, Norwegian People's Aid (October 2018), available at <http://banmonitor.org>

Universalizing and implementing the NPT

Currently, 191 States are party to the NPT, including the five nuclear-armed States recognized as such under the treaty.⁴ Many States Parties attend the meetings of the NPT, and the treaty continues to be widely recognized as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

States party to the NPT were, however, unable to reach a consensus on a final report from the 2018 and 2019 sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference. Moreover, the States Parties have generally failed of late to make substantive progress on implementing the 2010 NPT action plan, in particular on meeting the commitments to nuclear disarmament and nuclear-risk reduction.

Meeting nuclear-disarmament and nuclear-risk-reduction commitments

In line with the nuclear-disarmament obligation under Article VI of the NPT, the 2010 action plan commits the nuclear-armed States to, *inter alia*, undertake “further efforts to reduce and eliminate all types of nuclear weapons” and meet a range of commitments around nuclear-risk reduction. While the global number of deployed and non-deployed nuclear warheads was reduced from an estimated 14,934 in 2017 to an estimated 13,865 at the beginning of 2019, nearly 2,000 nuclear weapons continue to be kept in a state of high alert, and one nuclear-armed State party to the NPT is reported to have increased its inventory of nuclear weapons from 2018 to 2019.⁵

Moreover, the suspension of bilateral nuclear-arms-control and disarmament agreements, continuing modernization of nuclear arsenals, and the increasing role of nuclear weapons in the military doctrines of certain nuclear-armed States are difficult to reconcile with Article VI and the 2010 NPT Action Plan. These developments risk calling into question the NPT’s credibility and effectiveness as an instrument for nuclear disarmament.

Universalizing the CTBT and regional nuclear-weapon-free zones

Currently, 184 States have signed the CTBT, of which 168 have also ratified it. Eight of the 44 States whose ratification is required for the treaty to enter into force (known as Annex 2 States) have not yet ratified it.⁶ Only one State is known to have carried out nuclear-weapon tests in the past 20 years, with the last test carried out in 2017.

Four of the five regional nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties currently in force⁷ have been signed and ratified by all of the States in the regions in which they apply. As for the Treaty of Pelindaba, all but 14 African States have ratified or otherwise acceded to it,⁸ out of which only one State has neither signed nor ratified it.⁹

⁴ All UN member states are party to the NPT except the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan.

⁵ *SIPRI Yearbook 2019*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2019).

⁶ The following CTBT Annex 2 States have yet to ratify the Treaty: China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Egypt, Iran, Israel, United States, India and Pakistan.

⁷ Namely, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific Nuclear-Free-Zone Treaty, the Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. Other treaties dealing with denuclearization of certain areas include the Antarctic Treaty, the Outer Space Treaty, the Moon Agreement and the Seabed Treaty; these are not considered nuclear-weapon-free zones for the purposes of this report.

⁸ The following States have signed but not yet ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba: Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Liberia, Morocco, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

⁹ South Sudan has neither signed nor ratified the Treaty of Pelindaba.

In 2018, moreover, the UN General Assembly requested the UN secretary-general to convene a regional conference on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East by the end of 2019. While some States have expressed opposition to the initiative, the conference is nevertheless expected to take place in New York in November 2019.

B) MOVEMENT ACTIVITY TO IMPLEMENT RESOLUTION 4

Since the 2017 Council of Delegates, the Movement has played an important role in advancing the argument for nuclear disarmament. In line with Resolution 4 of the 2017 Council of Delegates and its accompanying 2018–2021 action plan, the Movement has focused on raising awareness of the humanitarian consequences and implications under international humanitarian law (IHL) of nuclear weapons and their use. The Movement has also focused on urging States to ensure that such weapons are never used again, including by reducing the risk of the use of nuclear weapons and by adhering to the TPNW, the NPT and other international agreements.

The ICRC has maintained its leading role in these endeavours, including by representing the Movement's position at relevant UN and NPT meetings and in other multilateral forums. National Societies have been active at national and regional levels in informing States and other involved parties of the Movement's views and in influencing the debate and policy decisions in this area. The ICRC and the IFRC have also helped coordinate and support the National Societies' efforts in this respect, including by providing a common space for exchanging information, materials and activities.

Below are examples of activities undertaken since the report to the 2017 Council of Delegates on the 2013 resolution and the four-year action plan.

Movement events

Four key Movement events have taken place since 2017, with the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies working to bolster the Movement's actions on nuclear weapons and to strengthen their collective communication and coordination.

National Society workshop on implementing the 2018–2021 action plan

On 25 and 26 April 2018, the ICRC hosted participants from 24 National Societies in Geneva to discuss implementing the 2018–2021 action plan. The workshop provided an opportunity to: understand the current dynamics and opportunities in nuclear disarmament; strengthen the Movement's capacity to promote the TPNW; and plan how the Movement's advocacy commitments in the 2018–2021 action plan should be met.

Regional National Society workshop on implementing the 2018–2021 action plan

On 30 and 31 October 2018, the Qatar Red Crescent Society and the ICRC brought together participants from the IFRC and 17 National Societies in Doha, Qatar, to discuss the strategies and resources needed to engage with government authorities in States that support the TPNW politically but have not yet signed or ratified the treaty. The participants identified key challenges in advocacy and outreach and identified and committed to undertake a range of measures involving the public, members of parliaments and government authorities.

Online meeting of the Movement Support Group for implementing the 2018–2021 action plan

On 5 March 2019, the ICRC convened the first online meeting of the Movement Support Group, which was established under the 2018–2021 action plan to oversee the plan's implementation. The meeting included global, regional and national updates from the ICRC and National Societies, including on progress towards achieving objectives in the action plan, results of the ICRC's public communication campaign on nuclear weapons and highlights from recent and planned Movement action with regard to nuclear weapons.

Youth Action Forum in Hiroshima, Japan

From 1 to 3 July 2019 in Hiroshima, the Japanese Red Cross Society and the IFRC brought together youth representatives of 11 National Societies. Through visiting historic sites and talking with survivors of the atomic bomb (*hibakusha*), the participants learned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. The forum also provided a space for an action-oriented discussion about activities that participants could carry out to pursue the Movement's objectives in their respective countries and local communities.

Other events

Several National Societies – including in Belgium, France, Lebanon, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Serbia – carried out training sessions or other outreach events to engage with university students, youth chapters or other youth groups on the issue of nuclear weapons. Some National Societies – including in Canada, Italy and the Philippines – organized internal nuclear weapons training sessions for their staff and/or volunteers, while at least two National Societies – in Spain and Belgium – organized training sessions on IHL and nuclear weapons for government officials and/or members of armed forces. In some instances, National Societies have also included nuclear weapons on the agendas of national IHL committee meetings.

Humanitarian diplomacy

The ICRC and many National Societies have actively pursued the resolution's objectives in relevant multilateral forums and in bilateral and regional meetings with States, including with high-level officials of nuclear-armed States and their allies.

Adherence to the NPT and nuclear-risk reduction

On 23 April 2018, the president of the ICRC issued an appeal to all States, world leaders and citizens to act on the increasing risk of the use of nuclear weapons.¹⁰ The appeal called on nuclear-armed States and their allies to take immediate measures to reduce and eventually eliminate that risk. The ICRC reiterated the urgent need for nuclear risk reduction in statements delivered at the 2018 and 2019 sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference and to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, as well as in other meetings, including a 2019 meeting in China with representatives of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, organized by the China Arms Control and Disarmament Association.

Several National Societies have taken steps to promote measures to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons. In the run-up to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization summit in

¹⁰ "Nuclear weapons: Averting a global catastrophe", available at <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/nuclear-weapons-averting-global-catastrophe>.

Brussels on 11 and 12 July 2018, nine National Societies – in Belgium, Canada, Croatia, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom – submitted a joint letter to their heads of government calling for, *inter alia*, immediate measures to drastically reduce the significance of nuclear weapons in military and security doctrines. Moreover, in the run-up to the 2019 session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, in April and May 2019, several National Societies – including in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom – encouraged their governments to take the Movement's messages into account in their preparations for the conference. The British Red Cross also convened a government briefing and a discussion session for civil society ahead of the Preparatory Committee.

Adherence to the TPNW

The ICRC and other components of the Movement have taken specific steps to promote the TPNW's early entry into force in light of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. On 26 September 2018, the president of the ICRC called on all States to sign and ratify the treaty during a signing ceremony for the TPNW at the UN in New York. The call was also reflected in the ICRC statement to the meetings of the NPT and in the First Committee of the UN General Assembly.¹¹

The ICRC has also promoted the TPNW and a humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament in bilateral and regional dialogues with States, including in regional conferences in Africa, South-East Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean. For example, the ICRC facilitated a discussion on the TPNW at the second Pacific Islands IHL Round-Table in May 2019. The same month, the ICRC presented its views on the TPNW in a session of the parliament of the Economic Community of West African States and in a series of regional round-table meetings for diplomats based in New York.

To assist States in their efforts to adhere to the TPNW, the ICRC has published a signature and ratification kit; a model law; and two briefing notes analysing the prohibition of assistance and obligations related to safeguards in the TPNW. In addition, the ICRC has published a booklet with the text of the TPNW and a foreword by the ICRC's president. These resources have been presented in the above-mentioned meetings and, in some instances, submitted for consideration in national parliamentary or governmental processes for assessing the feasibility and implications of adhering to the TPNW.

In accordance with the Movement's resolutions and action plans, many National Societies continued to engage actively with their governments to promote adherence to the TPNW. Several National Societies – including in France, Guyana, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom – have organized or otherwise participated in meetings to facilitate dialogue on nuclear weapons between ministries for foreign affairs, civil society and other actors. For example, in April 2018, the Spanish Red Cross organized a round-table meeting on the TPNW with representatives of the Spanish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, among others. In early 2019, the Norwegian Red Cross hosted a public hearing on the TPNW for parliamentarians and political youth parties.

Some National Societies made submissions to or otherwise promoted the signing and/or ratification of the TPNW on humanitarian grounds in national parliaments. In Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, National Societies have presented their views on the TPNW through submissions to national parliaments.

¹¹ "Why States must sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons: A plea for humanity", available at <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/icrc-president-why-states-must-sign-ratify-treaty-prohibition-nuclear-weapons-plea-humanity>.

Communication and media tools

In February 2019, the ICRC launched a major public communication campaign, in cooperation with the IFRC and several National Societies, to further raise awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and to promote adherence to the TPNW and other nuclear-disarmament treaties. The campaign featured a global press release reiterating the Movement's concerns and positions on nuclear weapons, a video spot, two animation films and a dedicated website. Eighteen National Societies – in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Ireland, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand and Ukraine – participated in efforts to disseminate and further develop those resources. The campaign had a high impact, with news coverage in more than 20 countries around the world.¹² This included interviews with representatives of the ICRC in newspapers in Algeria, Ireland, South Africa and Switzerland as well as a published op-ed by the secretary-general of the Irish Red Cross. The video spot received a Grand Prix award at the 2019 Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, had more than 83,000 complete views and triggered more than 170,000 social-media interactions, exceeding expected engagement by a substantial margin.

In addition to the campaign, the ICRC and several National Societies have continued to regularly communicate the Movement's urgent concerns and positions with regard to nuclear weapons through articles on their websites, published factsheets, social media posts, op-eds and internal and external newsletters. Op-eds urging States to sign and ratify the TPNW have been published by National Societies in Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, among others.

Pledges and commitments

At the National Society workshop in Geneva on 25 and 26 April 2018, representatives from eight National Societies – those of Australia, France, Ghana, Iraq, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway and Qatar – indicated a willingness to intensify their efforts to implement the 2018–2021 action plan in their regions. Furthermore, at the National Society workshop in Qatar on 30 and 31 October 2018, representatives from an additional 14 National Societies – those of Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Georgia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, South Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Yemen – reaffirmed in the Doha Communiqué their commitment to actively implement the 2018–2021 action plan.

3) CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The TPNW's adoption on 7 July 2017 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". Indeed, the prohibition of nuclear weapons is an essential step towards their elimination.

The TPNW's success depends on achieving the broadest possible adherence to it. Resolution 4 of the 2017 Council of Delegates and the accompanying 2018–2021 action plan provide a strong foundation for the Movement's efforts to ensure the treaty swiftly enters into force and is subsequently universalized.

¹² Including in Algeria, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, India, Iran, Ireland, Jordan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Philippines, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tajikistan and Thailand.

The 2018–2021 action plan also commits the components of the Movement to continue to urge nuclear-armed States and their allies to meet their longstanding obligations and commitments around nuclear disarmament and, in the meantime, to take measures to reduce the risks of the use of nuclear weapons. The 2020 Review Conference provides a crucial opportunity for States to fulfil those commitments.

Fully implementing Resolution 4 of the 2017 Council of Delegates depends on the components of the Movement continuing and scaling up their efforts in the period leading up to the 2021 Council of Delegates to meet their commitments under the 2018–2021 action plan on nuclear weapons, and strengthening their collaboration in those efforts.