

ICAN

Beatrice Fihn: Statement for 2020 World Conference

It is an honor to deliver remarks on these historic anniversaries about our work with the Hibakusha to bring about the sunset of the nuclear age.

ICAN's work is inspired by the Hibakusha's call for "No More Hiroshima's, No More Nagasaki's, No More Hibakusha" and their tireless efforts to make that call a reality. We are honored to have worked alongside the Hibakusha to achieve the first treaty banning nuclear weapons in 2017, and to work with Hibakusha to achieve its universalization.

It's hard to look back at this year and not share a sense of growing concern about nuclear weapons and the security situation in the world. We've seen the unravelling of arms limitation treaties and that all nuclear-armed states are increasing investments in their nuclear forces to the tune of \$73 billion per year. The risk of nuclear use continues to grow, augmented by new developments in cyber operations and military artificial intelligence. We must loudly protest the actions of nuclear-armed states and the nuclear weapon endorsing states; their reckless behaviour is threatening to unleash unprecedented suffering and catastrophic humanitarian harm across the world. These few governments are putting us all at risk and endangering their people in order to hold on to their weapons of mass destruction.

But throughout all of this, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is a bright light on the international arena, the proof that the majority of the states in the world do not believe that nuclear weapons are acceptable or legitimate and are willing to take action. This treaty is the pathway towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Every country that joins this treaty pushes us that much closer to the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Even in the midst of a global pandemic, countries continue to sign and ratify this treaty, sending in ratification documents through the mail and participating in signature ceremonies over Zoom.

ICAN campaigners around the world have raised their voices to work with Hibakusha and to achieve the end of nuclear weapons. Our workshops and persistent outreach to governments enhanced decision-makers' understanding of the treaty and prompted them to act. Regional meetings in the Caribbean and Africa, in particular, helped galvanize support for the treaty and built momentum towards entry into force.

But we are also working in nuclear-armed states and their allies by rallying the public, local governments and parliamentarians. Over 200 cities, including Washington D.C., Paris, Manchester, Geneva, Canberra, Berlin, Oslo, Toronto and Zurich have publicly supported the treaty and urged their governments to join it. Over 1,400 sitting parliamentarians around the world have committed to work to get their government to join the treaty and they are now putting forward motions, debating the treaty, asking questions to the executive branch and increasing the pressure in other ways. We have also worked to involve the private sector by getting financial institutions to divest from nuclear weapons producing companies. In 2019, 14 new banks and pension funds developed policies against investments in nuclear weapons producing companies and have sold off any tainted assets. This is increasing the financial pressure on nuclear weapons-producing companies and showing them that the time is up for these weapons of mass destruction.

We must strengthen the public's understanding of the horrors nuclear weapons cause. It is critically important in the current climate that we expand public support for nuclear disarmament.

We must reach not just audiences already committed to our cause, but new people who can be persuaded by our message. We develop new graphics, engage on social media and use our website to reach new people and share the stories of the Hibakusha.

We have powerful allies. Over 120 governments support the treaty, in addition to the United Nations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, religious leaders such as Pope Francis, Religions for Peace and the World Council of Churches, the trade union movement and the environmental movement, and of course hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people around the world that know we must eliminate nuclear weapons before they eliminate us.

When Pope Francis visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki in November 2019, he said “we must never grow weary of working to support the principal international legal instruments of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.” The Pope called the use, the possession and the threat to use nuclear weapons “immoral” and stated that “we will be judged on this”.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons constitutes the best chance we have to protect our world from nuclear war and achieve nuclear disarmament. With this legal tool the leadership of the hibakusha and our committed campaigners and partners around the world, we are unstoppable. We will eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all.