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IPPNW, *International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War*, is a federation of national medical groups in over 60 countries. It was founded in 1980 by then Soviet and American physicians with the aim of educating health professionals, political leaders, and the public about the medical and environmental consequences of nuclear warfare. This effort united physicians and communities across the Cold War divide, and for it, IPPNW was awarded the UNESCO Peace Education Prize in 1984 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985.

In 2006, IPPNW founded ICAN, the *International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*, which is now a coalition of over 600 organizations in more than one hundred countries. ICAN was awarded the Nobel prize in 2017 in recognition of our work, “to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons” and to our “ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons”.

This is humanitarian disarmament, and it is a process that places the people at the center of discussions regarding nuclear weapons. It is by raising awareness, through evidence, on their effects on people, that substantial change is taking place.

Humanity faces two existential threats: climate change and nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are the most destructive and inhumane machines ever created.

As we know from the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and from the 2057 nuclear tests, the devastation they cause is great and long-lasting. Cities become inaccessible and uninhabitable for long periods of time, and the atrocious effects of radiation not only affect survivors throughout their lives, but also their following generations. No first response would be possible after a nuclear detonation. The survivors of these attacks would be left unattended to suffer horribly and die alone.

Even a limited nuclear exchange would have dire, global climate effects that would threaten the lives of billions of people, and a full-scale nuclear war would cause a drastic environmental devastation and a dramatic global climate change that would drive many species into extinction, perhaps even our own.

Furthermore, many experts agree that the risk of a nuclear war occurring is, today, higher than ever.

A nuclear war is a terminal disease that we cannot cure, and we must prevent what we cannot cure. Let me be clear: there is no recovery from a nuclear war. The only solution is to prevent it.

That is why on July 7<sup>th</sup> of 2017, 122 countries, a clear majority in the international community, voted in favor of adopting, in the UN, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the TPNW or ban treaty, which entered into force on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January of this year.

This landmark treaty is a triumph of international diplomacy. It is the result of the collective empowerment of non-nuclear weapon states and of them assuming an active role in nuclear disarmament, and coming together to challenge the world's largest economic and military powers. This groundbreaking initiative is borne out of the evidence-based understanding that the nuclear problem is global, that its consequences are global, and therefore, all countries are stakeholders in the nuclear issue, whether they possess nuclear weapons or not.

This inclusive way of conducting international politics promotes cooperation and strengthens the multilateral regime, essential ingredients to face humanity's other existential threat: climate change.

The TPNW works by stigmatizing nuclear weapons through their prohibition, a strategy that has history has proven to be effective, and the process whereby all other weapons of mass destruction -that is, chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster munitions- have been abolished. Today, it would be unthinkable for anyone to boast about being a chemical or biological weapons power. This is because a strong international norm and a global climate of moral condemnation have made such claims taboo. And this normative change, this shift in international behavior, is precisely how the TPNW is already starting to take effect.

We must challenge the idea that nuclear weapons are about security. They are not. And they are certainly not about evidence or about protecting people. They have done nothing to protect people during the pandemic; quite the contrary, the billions of dollars spent in the maintenance and modernization of these weapons, of this existential threat, could have saved many of the millions of lives that have been lost to the pandemic. Nuclear weapons are about projecting power, and this irrational pursuit of the nuclear last name has been very detrimental to humanity and could very well lead to our own demise.

A nuclear war is not a natural catastrophe. It is something we can and must prevent, but we can only accomplish this if we come together, if we spread awareness on the nuclear reality, and move all countries to support the ban. We must continue to demand that our political leaders make decisions based on evidence and reason. Nowhere is this more urgent and relevant than in nuclear disarmament. When faced with the overwhelming evidence, when we understand the plight of the hibakusha, we can see past the idea that nuclear weapons somehow provide peace, and we understand that the only hope for peace is justice and equality; for value to be placed not on the ability to rule on impositions and threats, but on the ability to create dialogue, build bridges and come to agreements.

We must never forget the unspeakable suffering caused by the inhumane atomic bombings of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The lesson from this, one of the darkest chapters in human history, must be that unless we act to prevent it, it will happen again, only this time at a much larger scale. Our very existence depends on our actions, on us getting our governments to stand with humanity and reason, and it is our collective duty to demand that they do so. Nuclear disarmament is in our hands. Let's make it happen.

Thank you.