

## NUCLEAR AGE PEACE FOUNDATION

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### Statement to the 2023 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee

August 2, 2023

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Endorsed by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, US

Honorable Chair and Distinguished Delegates,

Fifty-five years ago last month, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) opened for signatures, offering a comprehensive international response to the dangers and challenges of the nuclear age; today, the treaty is one of the largest international agreements amongst states. As we have heard and will undoubtedly continue to hear, the treaty has been successful as a means of thwarting the boundless proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting the so-called peaceful use of nuclear energy. But it is essential that we recognize where the NPT has also failed and to address this failure before it is too late – for the treaty itself, but more importantly for humanity and for all of life around the globe. We are speaking, of course, about the nuclear disarmament pillar of the NPT and the obligation, spelled out in Article 6, of the nuclear weapons states to engage in good faith in negotiations for nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament needs to happen now. The world can no longer afford to be at the mercy of states that put their own interests ahead of those of all of humanity. Ironically, any state that would engage in nuclear warfare to protect the aforementioned interests, would in fact be engaging in a suicide mission. This is so not only because such a state would make itself vulnerable to devastating attacks that could kill millions of its citizens, but because nuclear war would spell out the end of human civilization as we know it and affect everyone, no matter where they live on this beautiful planet.

Everything we know about humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons – past, present, and future, tells us that these weapons do not just represent the ultimate danger to humanity, but that they are unworthy of humanity. We know how much death and destruction they have caused in the past – from the devastating attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki – whose 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary we will commemorate in the coming week – to the legacy of nuclear testing around the world: from Algeria to Australia, from Kazakhstan to the Marshall Islands, from western China to Kiribati, from the American southwest to French Polynesia. And beyond.

Human beings were incinerated in Japan and sickened in Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands. Women around the world suffered miscarriages and gave birth to jellyfish and deformed babies. Millions of people were exposed to high levels of radiation in Kazakhstan, giving rise to countless cancers and suicides. Moreover, people continue to suffer to this day, not only from past radiation exposure, but also from radiation still present in their environments, which has either caused them

to abandon their homes or to live in unsafe conditions. Affected communities need our help. All of the countries that have or rely on nuclear weapons as a matter of policy should be coming forward to help assist victims and remediate contaminated environments. And we need to heed the calls of the global hibakusha for a world free of nuclear weapons. Their suffering must not be in vain.

As devastating as the continuing legacies of nuclear weapon use and testing are, what we know about the future in which nuclear weapons are used is worse still. For one, simulations tell us that using one nuclear warhead – whether it be by accident, miscalculation, or deliberately - would lead to a full-out nuclear war, with no apparent off-ramp. In the case of a nuclear war between the United States and Russia, in a scenario where the two countries use approximately 1/3 of their current arsenals, the number of direct victims from the attacks is estimated at 360 million people. Even more terrifying is what would happen in the weeks and months after the war is over: the soot from the fires blanketing the cities would rise up high into the stratosphere, blocking incoming sunlight for several years and resulting in large drops in temperature around the globe. This would in turn hinder the process of photosynthesis, thereby reducing agricultural output. Soon, food would become scarce and people would begin to starve. In less than two years, 5.5 billion people would starve to death. We call this nuclear famine caused by nuclear winter, a topic that scientists have studied for the last four decades, with recent work giving us the most precise models and estimates yet.

In the words of Daniel Ellsberg, a U.S. peace and anti-nuclear activist, who passed away in June, “What is missing – what is foregone – in the typical discussion and analysis of historical or current nuclear policies is the recognition that what is being discussed is dizzyingly insane and immoral: in its almost-incalculable and inconceivable destructiveness and deliberate murderousness, its disproportionality of risked and planned destructiveness to either declared or unacknowledged objectives... its criminality (to a degree that explodes ordinary visions of law, justice, and crime), its lack of wisdom or compassion, its sinfulness and evil.”

Ellsberg was also fond of quoting Nietzsche, who stated that “Madness in individuals is something rare; but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs, it is the rule.” The current policies of the nuclear weapons states are sheer madness and must not be allowed to continue. These countries must come together to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith, as is their obligation according to Article 6.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) provides a path forward for nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states alike. Rather than compete with the NPT, the TPNW provides a mechanism for NPT’s disarmament obligations to be achieved. We call on China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, and the United States to sign the TPNW to signal their seriousness in addressing this issue. Russia and the United States can first begin negotiations to reduce the size of their arsenals from thousands to hundreds of warheads, at which point, all nuclear weapon possessors would come together to chart a joint path for getting to nuclear zero. Obligations would commence only after each country has ratified the treaty, not earlier.

Additionally, we call on all other states that have not done so already to join the TPNW and to say with one clear voice that enough is enough. Our children and grandchildren deserve a future. A world free of nuclear weapons is the best gift we can bequeath to them.