



## Joint International Health Statement for the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of States Parties of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

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2 May 2022

Representing physicians, nurses, public health professionals, and medical students worldwide, we speak with a united voice on the urgent need to eliminate nuclear weapons as a matter of global health and survival. Updated evidence on the catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, the acute and growing danger of their use, and the impossibility of any effective humanitarian and health response following nuclear explosions on populations, should underpin the work of the upcoming 1st Meeting of States Parties (1MSP) of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The TPNW is based upon a body of indisputable evidence, documented by scientists, health professionals, and experts in crisis management and response, that the consequences of nuclear weapons use are catastrophic, global, and without remedy. The Treaty concludes— and we concur— that the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons is the only responsible course of action in the face of such consequences.

The detonation of nuclear weapons produces incinerating heat, powerful shock waves and overpressures, ionizing radiation, an intense electromagnetic pulse, and massive amounts of smoke and soot that can alter the Earth's climate. Unlike conventional weapons or other weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons instantaneously wipe out entire populations, level cities, and devastate the environment. They produce radioactive contamination that remains active for millennia, causing cancers and other illnesses that can persist across generations. Moreover, the environmental consequences of nuclear war, including severe climate disruption, can lead to global famine and, in the most extreme case, human extinction. No meaningful medical or disaster relief response to the detonation of nuclear weapons is possible.

Since the adoption of the Treaty, new data about climate effects has been published documenting the impacts from both limited and large-scale nuclear conflicts. IPPNW has submitted a briefing paper to the 1MSP that summarizes the blast, heat, and radiation effects of nuclear weapons, as well as the global impacts of nuclear war on climate, nutrition, and food security. This evidence should continue to drive the process of implementing the Treaty, its prohibitions, and its positive obligations.

The world has not been this close to nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. If the conflict in Ukraine were to escalate to the use of nuclear weapons, the consequences would almost certainly be global and catastrophic. Diplomacy is urgently needed to remove the danger of nuclear escalation

in the current crisis, and needs to progress to negotiations among all nuclear-armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals under strict verification and timelines.

As the World Health Organisation has stated, nuclear weapons pose the greatest immediate threat to human health and welfare. The elimination of nuclear weapons is the only way to put an end to this preventable and intolerable threat.

As member and observer states prepare to meet in Vienna for the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of States Parties, we call for prompt and universal ratification and implementation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

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### **Our organizations:**

- **International Council of Nurses (ICN)** is the international federation of nursing organizations representing national nurses' associations in 130 countries.
- **International Federation of Medical Student Associations (IFMSA)** envisions a world in which medical students unite for global health and are equipped with the knowledge, skills and values to take on health leadership roles locally and globally. Founded in 1951, it is one of the world's oldest and largest student-run organizations. It represents, connects and engages a network of 1.3 million medical students from 145 national member organizations in 134 countries.
- **International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)** is a federation of health professional organizations in 55 countries dedicated to the eradication of nuclear weapons IPPNW received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985, and founded the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017.
- **World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA)** is an international federation of 130 national and regional public health associations, representing 5 million public health professionals worldwide. WFPHA is the only worldwide professional society representing and serving the broad field of public health internationally.
- **World Medical Association (WMA)** is an international organization representing physicians, with 115 national member organizations and thousands of associate members worldwide.