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Reaching Critical Will is a programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

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The views in this publication are not necessarily those of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom or the Reaching Critical Will programme.

Cover image: "Against all odds"

Reaching Critical Will is the disarmament programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the oldest women's peace organization in the world. Reaching Critical Will works on issues related to disarmament and arms control of many different weapon systems; militarism and military spending; and gendered aspects of the impact of weapons and of disarmament processes.

Reaching Critical Will is your primary source for information, documents, and analysis about the United Nations General Assembly First Committee and other multilateral disarmament conferences and processes.

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- A calendar of events for this First Committee;
- All editions of the *First Committee Monitor*;
- Statements, documents, and analysis from meetings of the First Committee, Conference on Disarmament, nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Arms Trade Treaty, Programme of Action on small arms, and more;
- Research and analysis of critical issues related to disarmament and arms control; and
- News and information about civil society engagement on disarmament and arms control.

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Reaching Critical Will

EDITORIAL: AGAINST ALL ODDS

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

"It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins.... The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle." – Hannah Arendt

In October in New York, you can feel the seasons changing. Outside of the UN building, the leaves are changing colour, the air is getting cooler, and there is a fresh briskness in the wind.

This year, we'll also be able to feel changes inside the conference room. But rather than being based on the tilt of the Earth's axis of rotation relative to its orbital plane, these changes are coming from a revolution in the international community's approach to nuclear weapons.

71 years after the creation of the most destructive weapon ever and 46 years after the entry into force of the Non-Proliferation Treaty's obligations for nuclear disarmament, the majority of states are finally throwing off the shackles of nuclear injustice and violence. After decades of demanding, pleading, and cajoling the self-described "nuclear powers" to abide by their legal obligations to eliminate their arsenals, committed states are now poised to take action.

It has been less than two years since Austria introduced the Humanitarian Pledge, which 127 states have endorsed, committing themselves to efforts to stigmatise, prohibit, and eliminate nuclear weapons. For the majority of these states, "filling the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons" means commencing negotiations in 2017 for a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

This is a sea change. It is transformative. It is long-fought and hard-won and it is certainly not over. It is a piece of the path of a long road of activism, sacrifice, and courage from people the world over for decades. It is an important piece, a critical node, and it will require more courage—from governments as much as from activists—to carry forward successfully.

This rejection of injustice, and of a shocking capacity and willingness of massive violence, should set the tone for all First Committee and our work beyond these corridors.

As we gather to meet in New York, Yemini and Syrians continue to die from airstrikes in populated areas, with bombs hitting hospitals and homes. Corporations in the UK and the US, amongst others, continue to rake in profits from the bombing of Yemen, with the UK even being bumped up to the position of second largest arms dealer in the world.¹ The gathering of Arms Trade Treaty states parties in August proved totally inadequate to address these challenges.²

But this is not the end of the story. In addition to the overwhelming support for the start of negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons, other positive developments are underway. Civil society and parliamentarians are challenging arms transfers from the UK and the US to Saudi Arabia.³ States are coming together to talk about how to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. There is mounting opposition to US military bases from Okinawa⁴ to Alice Springs⁵ to Diego Garcia.⁶ Colombia and the FARC reached a peace and disarmament agreement.⁷

These are movements forward we must embrace. Peace and justice will grow from the ashes of violence if we continue to oppose militarism, patriarchy, racism, and economic injustice and develop alternatives that put people first. First Committee, in bringing together states, international organisations, and civil society to talk about a fairly comprehensive range of disarmament and international security issues, is an opportunity to discuss and advance those alternatives.

Last month, the antinuclear movement lost one of its greatest champions. Dr. Bill Williams, Chair of ICAN in Australia, passed away in his sleep one night, leaving a loving family and a legacy of activism, love, and passion. He once wrote, "After the energetically anti-nuke eighties and the end of the Cold War, nuclear holocaust—always unthinkable—became almost unmentionable. A mass self-censorship, a mental no-fly zone, a cone of silence descended. Little wonder: no sane person wants to contaminate their dreams with this ultimate horror. But to finish this journey of survival—to abolition—we need to penetrate the fog of fear and denial, informing ourselves and our neighbours without inducing psychological paralysis."⁸

In a tribute to Bill in the Australian parliament, Senator Scott Ludlam proclaimed that this—the overcoming of fear and denial—is happening: "From Torquay to the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, to the Western Australian Goldfields, somehow, it is happening."⁹

The world is watching. For those that think what happens in the walls of this conference room doesn't matter or isn't known, think again. Expectations are high. Every person here has the chance to be on the right side of history and help set a course for a safer, more peaceful, and more just future for us all. •

Notes

1. Jon Stone, "Britain is now the second biggest arms dealer in the world," *Independent*, 5 September 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-is-now-the-second-biggest-arms-dealer-in-the-world-a7225351.html>.
2. Ray Acheson, "Struggling for the soul of the ATT," *ATT Monitor*, Vol. 9, No. 6, 26 August 2016, <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/att/csp2/att-monitor/11136-att-monitor-vol-9-no-6>.

3. See for example <https://www.caat.org.uk/campaigns/stop-arming-saudi>.
4. Eric Johnston, "26 Okinawan mayors demand U.S. base reductions amid increased tensions," *The Japan Times*, 7 September 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/09/07/national/26-okinawa-mayors-demand-u-s-base-reductions-amid-increased-tensions>.
5. See www.closepinegap.org.
6. "Decolonise and demilitarise the Chagos islands!" Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 22 September 2016, <http://wilpf.org/decolonise-and-demilitarise-the-chagos-islands>.
9. Sibylla Brodzinsky, "Farc peace deal: rebels and Colombian government sign accord to end war," *The Guardian*, 25 August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/24/colombia-government-farc-rebels-peace-deal-52-year-war>.
8. See <https://billwilliamsbleed.com/read-more/nukes>.
9. See <http://scott-ludlam.greensmps.org.au/content/speeches-parliament/remembering-dr-bill-williams>.

FIRST COMMITTEE BRIEFING BOOK: EXTRACTS

To provide inspiration to delegates at First Committee, Reaching Critical Will has published a briefing book with background information and recommendations on some of this year's most pressing topics. The following are abbreviated recommendations from each chapter. The full briefing book can be downloaded from www.reachingcriticalwill.org.

Nuclear weapons

- Call for the General Assembly to start a negotiating process for a new legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons;
- Vote in favour of a resolution that establishes such negotiations; and
- Ensure that such negotiations are open to all states, blockable by none, and inclusive of civil society.

Armed drones

- Recognise the ethical, legal, and humanitarian concerns raised by military drones, including the patterns of harm and unacceptable practices in their current use in and outside of armed conflict, and shortcomings in transparency, accountability, and redress;
- Support the comprehensive recording of casualties of attacks using military drones, to uphold the dignity of victims and so that current use may be better understood, and also recognise the need to ensure that the rights of victims are upheld by all states; and
- Support the objective of developing an international standard to prevent and mitigate harm from military drones, articulating the principles this could address.

Fully autonomous weapons

- Acknowledge the concerns raised over fully autonomous weapons and express support for the draft recommendation to establish an open-ended Group of Governmental Experts at the Review Conference in December; and
- Articulate their national policy on fully autonomous weapons, including their position on the calls for a ban.

First Committee briefing book



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Explosive weapons in populated areas

- Endorse the UN Secretary-General's recommendation that states should refrain from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas; and
- Indicate support for the development of an international political instrument to reduce harm from the use of explosive weapons, including stopping the use in populated areas of explosive weapons with wide-area effects.

Landmines

- Report on measures taken in 2016 to implement the Maputo Action Plan or to otherwise put an end to the suffering caused by landmines;
- Pledge financial support for the implementation of Treaty obligations, including land clearance and assistance to survivors, their families, communities;
- Reiterate that any use of landmines by any actor is unacceptable;
- Report on progress towards joining the Mine Ban Treaty (MBT);
- Engage bilaterally in discussions on the universalization or implementation of the MBT; and
- Vote in favour of the resolution on the Mine Ban Treaty and encourage others, such as regional group members, to do so as well.

Cluster munitions

- Report on measures taken to implement the Dubrovnik Action Plan, including "discouraging, in every way possible" the use of cluster munitions;
- Condemn recent instances of use of cluster munitions;
- Vote in favour of the resolution on cluster munitions and encourage others, such as regional group members, to do so as well;
- Report on steps taken to join the Convention; and
- Engage bilaterally in discussions on the universalization or implementation of the Convention.

Incendiary weapons

- Call for a review of Protocol III and amendments to address the negative humanitarian impact of incendiary weapons; and
- Publicly condemn incendiary weapons use in Syria and urge the Syrian government to accede to the Convention on Conventional Weapons and its Protocol III.

Depleted uranium

- Vote in favour of the resolution on "Effects of Arms and Ammunitions Containing Depleted Uranium"; and
- Raise concerns over the use of DU weapons in their national and regional statements.

Small arms and light weapons

- Highlight synergies between the UNPoA and the ATT;
- Put forward proposals to address transfers of ammunition within the UNPoA; and
- Focus discussions on establishing a far-reaching agenda for the 2018 UNPoA Review Conference.

Arms Trade Treaty

- Highlight and challenge arms transfers that appear to be in violation of the ATT;
- Encourage continued universalisation of the ATT;
- Participate in and contribute to the substantive discussions taking place in side events and elsewhere in order to share expertise and strengthen capacity for the robust implementation of the ATT; and
- Support an ATT resolution that calls for strong and effective Treaty implementation.

Outer space

- Pledge not to use any space- or ground-based capabilities, whether exclusively military or multi-use in nature, to deliberately damage or destroy space assets;
- Highlight the importance of preventing the weaponisation of outer space to preserve international peace and security and benefit all humankind;
- Acknowledge the fact that the year 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of the Outer Space Treaty (OST) and call for the convening of the first-ever OST conference of states parties to mark this anniversary;
- Condemn any anti-satellite tests and the development of weapons to be placed in orbit or any system to be used to target space-based assets; and
- Indicate support for the negotiation of a treaty preventing an arms race in outer space and for interim transparency and confidence-building measures toward that end.

Cyber

- Express concern about the risk of cyber attacks and the militarisation of cyberspace and promote a vision of the Internet as a shared public space that should not be the target of or medium for attacks;
- Promote a fact-based discussion, avoiding language that over-inflates the threat and tacitly promotes militarisation;
- Advocate for common understandings within the international community around key terms, in order to facilitate common approaches; and
- Indicate support for the current GGE to develop concrete recommendations on preventing the development, deployment, and use of cyber weapons, cyber attacks or other intrusions of interference.

continued on next page

Gender and disarmament

- Welcome the inclusion of the provision on gender-based violence in the ATT and highlight the need for implementation of this criterion;
- Highlight the need to ensure gender diversity in disarmament discussions and negotiations and gender and sexual diversity in their delegations;
- Share experiences with ensuring gender perspectives in disarmament policies and initiatives; and
- Submit reports to the Secretary-General on their implementation of the UNGA resolution on women and disarmament.

Disarmament and development

- Recognise the contribution that disarmament, the restriction of certain weapons, and reduction of military spending can make to development, or to removing barriers to development; and
- In recognition of this, as well as of the greater negative impact of armed violence on developing countries, recognise the need to address the issue of the underrepresentation of lower-income countries and certain regions in multilateral disarmament forums, and suggest practical measures. The integration of gender and humanitarian perspectives, and ensuring gender diversity and the meaningful participation of those who have been most affected by the issues under consideration, should also be recognised as crucial.

Protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict

- Make reference to the environmental and derived humanitarian impact of weapons during state-ments; and
- Encourage the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs to undertake a review of the environmental

impact of weapons throughout their lifecycle, state practice in minimising and mitigating harm, and current policy and knowledge gaps that should be addressed.

Disarmament education

- Welcome the Secretary-General's 2016 report in their interventions and express the ongoing relevance of the 2002 Study, as well as the contributions of civil society and educational institutions in providing disarmament and non-proliferation education;
- Report in their interventions on their government's disarmament and non-proliferation education initiatives and call on states, international organisations, civil society, and educational institutions to make submissions to UNODA for the 2018 report;
- Vote in favour of a resolution calling for ongoing implementation of the 2002 study's recommendations;
- Seek language in the resolution calling on states, international organisations, civil society, and educational institutions to increase funding and institutional support for disarmament education; and
- Seek language in the resolution that requests the Secretary-General to report on: the contribution of disarmament and non-proliferation education to the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goal 4 on education and Goal 16 on peace and justice) and vice versa; the contribution of disarmament and non-proliferation education to implementation of UNSCR 2250 and vice versa; and efforts to overcome differential access to disarmament and non-proliferation education and its relationship to inequality. •

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@trwnetwork #toxicremnants



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THE NATO / UN CONVERGENCE: THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM?

Susi Snyder | PAX

Every state has the right to determine its needs when it comes to maintaining peace and security. In accordance with the UN Charter Article 52, many states have embraced regional collective security opportunities. Some of these collective organisations contribute actively and in good faith to global efforts to maintain international peace and security. Most engage with international peace and security decision-making by participating as observers at the UN General Assembly. One is conspicuously absent, yet its members routinely cite their participation in this alliance as a justification for (in)action.

NATO is the always present, never named, elephant in the General Assembly hall.

Just as an elephant is the largest land animal on earth, NATO amasses the largest military force in the world. Just as elephants cry and panic before earthquakes, NATO members raise alarms at the possibility of ground-breaking changes to the status quo. And elephants, like NATO members, often move in a group.

Recently, more attention is being paid to the elephant in the room in regard to NATO nuclear weapon policies. Since the adoption of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), there have been the nuclear “haves”, the nuclear “have-nots”, and those outside the Treaty. A new category, which has always existed but went unrecognised for decades, is the nuclear “others”. Finally, there is a recognition that some states, party to the NPT, that do not possess their own nuclear weapons but have a vested interest in maintaining nuclear weapons as a vanguard of their “security”. Not unlike the stationing of nuclear weapons in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey, this public secret has long gone unmentioned. However, the report of the open-ended working group on taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations puts this small group of states into their own category, calling them “other relevant States”. The majority of these “nuclear umbrella” states are NATO members, though it also includes a handful of other states.¹ It seems the elephant is no longer invisible.

NATO members have historically moved together, advocating for a step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament in which the nuclear-armed countries (especially the Russian Federation and the United States) are the ones that need to take the first step. Since the end of the cold war, the group has slowly shifted to making some of its own changes on nuclear

weapon policy, but recently NATO actions and policies are providing the enabling environment necessary for the nuclear-armed to not only keep, but also modernise, their nuclear arsenals. NATO is complicit in contributing to the maintenance of the threat of nuclear weapons forever.

Recent agreements by NATO heads of state say:

NATO’s nuclear deterrence posture also relies, in part, on United States’ nuclear weapons forward-deployed in Europe and on capabilities and infrastructure provided by Allies concerned. These Allies will ensure that all components of NATO’s nuclear deterrent remain safe, secure, and effective.

By agreeing to this language, NATO heads of state and government have acknowledged that they are not acting in good faith towards a nuclear weapon free world, but instead will invest significantly in keeping these weapons of mass destruction usable.

While everyone has proclaimed an interest in at least creating conditions for a nuclear weapons free world, those conditions include reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, and NATO members have just done the opposite. The elephants are stampeding towards unleashing catastrophe.

At the same time, the democratic will of the populations in this alliance of democracies is calling for something else. Surveys, opinion polls, parliamentary motions, and more continue to indicate that citizens want their governments to end the scourge of the nuclear weapons age.

Elephants are not easy to move, but when they do, they all move together. Because of public and parliamentary pressures some NATO members are already repositioning the herd towards a codified stigma against nuclear weapons. In an alliance of democracies, the rest can only follow. •

Notes

1. Australia, Armenia, Belarus, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Korea, and Tajikistan are also considered “nuclear umbrella” states.

DEVELOPING A DECLARATION TO PREVENT HARM FROM THE USE OF EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

Laura Boillot | International Network on Explosive Weapons

The use of explosive weapons in populated areas is a significant cause of harm to civilians in conflicts around the world. Explosive weapons with wide-area effects are particularly destructive, and consistently cause high levels of civilian death and injury, and psychological distress. Their use damages essential infrastructure including schools, hospitals, housing, as well as water and sanitation systems which impact an even larger population. Explosive weapon use is also a key driver of displacement.

Too often, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas is considered the inevitable result of conflict, yet experience shows that at an operational level, militaries can, and have, curbed or halted the use of certain weapons, and in doing so can strengthen civilian protection.

The International Network on Explosive Weapons (INEW) is calling for immediate action to prevent this humanitarian harm, including stronger international standards to curb or restrict the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

Led by states, discussions are now starting towards developing a political instrument to address this humanitarian problem, and to set a political and operational direction against the use in populated areas of those explosive weapons that expose civilians to the gravest risks. Such a declaration must promote actions that will reduce humanitarian harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and increase the protection of civilians living through conflict.

Whilst not a legally-binding commitment, a political declaration should seek to influence the behaviour of states by promoting a clear international standard of practice. Building that stronger political standard should also facilitate the further stigmatization of harmful practices, with endorsing states and others committed to speak up when wide-area explosive weapons are used in cities, towns and villages.

A political commitment would build on the basis provided by existing international law, including human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL). The rules of IHL represent the minimum standards of behaviour for parties to armed conflict and must be applied even in the most desperate circumstances. It is clear that there is substantial scope for parties to adopt policies and practices that enhance the protec-

tion of civilians and that accord with approaches many states already take to assess and reduce likely civilian harm. In conflicts around the world today, some states claim that their practices or those of their allies are consistent with IHL, while civilians are being killed and injured in their homes, schools, and markets, and while hospitals are being destroyed and in some cases deliberately targeted.

An international policy commitment on explosive weapons would need to be translated into national policy, including at the operational level relevant to a country's military. Specifically, this would include operationalizing a commitment against the use in populated areas of explosive weapons with wide area effects into military procedures and rules of engagement. Showing that such a commitment can be translated into workable operational procedures will be important to engaging a wide community of states to join the political declaration.

A political declaration signed by a group of states must be seen not as a stand-alone document, but as a tool that promotes operational policy and practice better to protect civilians, and as a framework for states to work together to achieve that purpose.

INEW is encouraging all states to recognize the humanitarian harm resulting from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and to support to develop an international declaration to prevent such harm. •

ARMS TRANSFERS AND EXPLOSIVE VIOLENCE: A DEADLY NEXUS OF WAR AND PROFIT

Ray Acheson | Reaching Critical Will of WILPF

Yemenis and Syrians have been dying for years from airstrikes in populated areas, with bombs hitting hospitals, homes, schools, and markets. In Yemen, so many MSF hospitals have been hit that the humanitarian organisation has had to close its remaining facilities in northern Yemen. In Syria, the bombing was so bad at one point in Aleppo that doctors wrote a letter claiming that one medical facility is attacked every 17 hours.

In a review of data it collected from 2011 to 2015, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) found that when explosive weapons are used in populated areas, 91% of those report killed are civilians. Civilians make up 77% of all casualties in their data. AOAV recorded 110 countries as affected by explosive violence between 2011 and the end of 2015, and a total of 188,325 deaths and injuries from 12,566 incidents of explosive weapons use.

As the deaths and destruction rages on, arms manufacturers in several countries, especially the United Kingdom and United States, are raking in the profits. The UK government has sold so many weapons to Saudi Arabia for its war in Yemen that it has been bumped up to the position of second largest arms dealer in the world.

In the midst of this rampant arms profiteering, the gathering of Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) states parties in August proved totally inadequate to address these challenges.

At the second Conference of States Parties (CSP2) of the ATT, states failed to address violations of the Treaty. Most civil society groups participating in the meeting, including WILPF, focused on the case of arms transfers from 17 states parties and two signatories to Saudi Arabia, despite its repeated breaches of international humanitarian law and human rights law in Yemen. But states parties refused to address this issue. They did adopt parameters for a Voluntary Trust Fund, as well as working groups on universality, reporting, and implementation. They endorsed and recommended the use of reporting templates (though did not resolve to make them public by obligation). They appointed a permanent head of the Secretariat, adopted the budget for 2017, decided on the dates for CSP3 (11–15 September 2017), and endorsed Finland as president for CSP3 and Australia, Bulgaria, Guatemala, and Sierra Leone as vice-presidents. These are important decisions that will help facilitate the work of the ATT. But amidst these administrative mat-

ters, there was not a single statement from governments regarding current practice and policy in terms of implementing the Treaty.

Civilians in Yemen ... continue to suffer, absent any form of accountability and justice, while those responsible for the violations and abuses against them enjoy impunity," said the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in the middle of CSP2. "Such a manifestly, protractedly unjust situation must no longer be tolerated by the international community."

It must not. And yet, it is not only tolerated by the international community, but is actively facilitated by those that sell arms to those engaged in the bombing and bombardment in populated areas in Yemen. The same can be said of Syria.

When states and civil society and international organisations came together in 2006 to initiate a negotiation process for what would become the ATT, the key motivation for many was to disrupt the relentless flows of weapons that perpetuate cycles of armed violence and armed conflict around the world. In part, this meant challenging those that facilitate war for economic gain, interrupting their seemingly unappeasable profiteering from the scourge of violent death and destruction. Ten years later, some of us find ourselves asking, did it make a difference? Will it ever? How do we use this tool to effect real change?

Asking this does not amount to lamenting wasted time or failed opportunities. It is also not meant to betray a sense of defeat—for no defeat is felt. Rather it is a signifier of continued determination and defiance—defiance of the belligerence with which the arms industry has continued to prosper at the expense of the misery of so many people in so many contexts. Defiance of those states that carry on as if nothing has changed, claiming commitment to an instrument that should have made some of their actions impossible while they treat the Treaty as something to provide a cloak of legitimacy for their illegal and morally reprehensible actions.

Alternatives are possible. The pursuit of a commitment to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, coupled with concerted action against the arms trade, are critical to the development of an alternative future where violence and war are not the norm but are seen as the failures of imagination and credibility that they are. •

AN HISTORIC MOMENT

Beatrice Fihn | International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

After several years of building momentum for launching negotiations of a new treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, the world is facing a significant moment in the seven-decade-long global struggle to rid the world of the worst weapons of mass destruction. This General Assembly session could see the formal start of negotiations of a new legally binding instrument that bans nuclear weapons.

Throughout the last few years, governments from around the world, international organisations, and civil society have rallied around the idea of prohibiting nuclear weapons based on the humanitarian impact these weapons would cause.

Three years ago, the Oslo conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons demonstrated, beyond doubt, that these weapons are indiscriminate and inhumane. A year later, the Nayarit conference concluded that the risk of a nuclear detonation today is unacceptably high—higher, perhaps, than it has ever been. Then the Vienna conference showed that a “legal gap” exists in the regime governing nuclear weapons, and must urgently be filled.

At the 2016 UN open-ended working group (OEWG) in Geneva, most states agreed that a treaty banning nuclear weapons is the most viable pathway forward—the best hope of advancing a goal endorsed by all nations, that of a nuclear weapon free world. The OEWG concluded its work in August by recommending that the General Assembly convene a conference in 2017, open to all states and with the participation and contribution of international organisations and civil society, to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons.

At the UN General Assembly opening debate, Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz announced that his country would join other UN member states in tabling a resolution next month to convene such negotiations on a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons in 2017.

At the working group’s final session in Geneva this August, all nations in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Southeast Asia, together with several from the Pacific and Europe, expressed support for negotiations of a prohibition treaty to start in 2017.

However, resistance from a few countries dependent on nuclear weapons still remains strong and nuclear-armed states and their nuclear weapons allies are fighting hard to protect their possession of and reli-

ance on nuclear weapons. With demarches, hostile statements, and counter-proposals aimed at watering down the resolution or diverging attention and resources from the ban treaty, these governments are trying to stop nuclear weapons from being prohibited.

Some argue that nuclear-armed states must participate, or that a prohibition is not enough.

There is no doubt that the participation of nuclear-armed states and a comprehensive treaty for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons would be very welcomed. Unfortunately, such proposals are not viable at this time. If nuclear-armed states were ready to negotiate the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, the world would have already been on its way towards a nuclear weapons free world. But they are not. In fact, nuclear-armed states are busy detonating nuclear weapons tests, carrying out aggressive exercises, modernising their nuclear arsenals, and working towards a new Cold War hostility.

The nuclear-armed states and their nuclear weapon allies have not only refused to support any progress on nuclear disarmament, but are also going out of their way to try and protect the deadlocked status quo that has prevailed for the last 20 years.

A ban on nuclear weapons, with or without the participation of nuclear-armed states, will change the way the global community understands and sees nuclear weapons, revealing them for the inhumane, unacceptable weapons that they are. A ban will draw the line between states that understand the risk and danger of nuclear weapons and consider them unacceptable, and states that refuse to accept that nuclear weapons don’t provide meaningful security.

Prohibiting nuclear weapons is not the same as eliminating them, but a ban is a necessary starting point for disarmament. While complete disarmament may be a long process, it does start with a clear rejection of nuclear weapons and a global framework for their elimination, which a ban will provide. As the Austrian Foreign Minister, “experience shows that the first step to eliminate weapons of mass destruction is to prohibit them through legally binding norms.”

The world is now faced with a unique opportunity to achieve historic progress on nuclear weapons. All governments that are serious about reducing the threat of nuclear weapons must vote yes and participate in negotiations to prohibit the most destructive and inhumane weapon of them all. •

#MOVETHEMONEY FROM MILITARISM TO FEMINIST PEACE

Abigail Ruane | PeaceWomen programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

In 2015, there was a global military spend of \$1.6 trillion (SIPRI). Meanwhile, gender equality and peace remain drastically under-funded: As the 2015 Global Study on UNSCR 1325 (Global Study) found, there is a "consistent, striking disparity between policy commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment, and the financial allocations to achieve them."

Women's rights are human rights; progressively realising those rights using maximum available resources is a state obligation. Investing in women also brings significant benefits. Despite this, women's contribution to conflict prevention and peace remains undervalued and under-resourced. It is time to recognise that you get what you pay for: trillions on war and pennies for peace will only lead to violence. If the international community wants peace and security, it cannot keep investing in a political economy of war and divesting a political economy of gender justice and peace. It is time to invest in gender equality and social justice policies and movements for peace.

At the latest forum of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) in September 2016, the PeaceWomen programme of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) launched a #MoveTheMoney toolkit to boost action on women, peace and security (WPS) financing.

The toolkit, available at www.peacewomen.org/wps-financing, includes a motion graphics explainer video available in five languages, case studies, fact sheets, social media graphics, and media guides. It is intended to push governments to shift their funding focus from war to gender justice and peace.

All members of the international community must be part of the work to #MoveTheMoney from war to peace and gender justice. UN Security Council members are obligated for implementing the WPS agenda as member states and also have particular responsibility given their position as leaders at the UN on peace and security issues. However, the permanent five (United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China) are also some of the top military spenders in the world. Since arms proliferation and associated violent masculinities directly contribute to sexual and gender-based violence and conflict, taking action on demilitarisation and disarmament is critical to addressing a major gap on conflict prevention in the WPS agenda.

Member states are also responsible for implementing the WPS agenda at a national level. National Action

Plans (NAPs) and Regional Action Plans (RAPs) on UN Security Council resolution 1325 are one key mechanism for implementation. Although the 2015 Global Study on UNSCR 1325 affirmed that NAPs should include an allocated budget, most fail to do so, which weakens accountability and impact. Member states should also integrate gender into national budgets, and reduce military budgets so as to free up resources for gender equitable social development.

International financial institutions (IFIs) have their own part to play in implementing the WPS agenda. Efforts to mainstream a gender and conflict lens, such as the World Bank's 2016-2013 Gender Strategy are key to taking action. However, a holistic gender and conflict lens that recognises gender equality considerations in human rights, good governance, and capacity-building agendas is still largely lacking. To move forward, IFIs must support structurally transformative action such as advocated for by the Addis Ababa Action Plan on Transformative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which strengthen and finance domestic, international, and enabling environment policy actions and resources for gender equality and women's rights with particular emphasis for conflict affected states. For situations such as Bosnia, investing in gender equitable reparations and institutions supporting women's social and economic rights are critical.

Civil society has been the prime driver behind the original WPS agenda, which is the product of over 100 years of international women's peace activism. Civil society organisations continue to push for the full and effective implementation of the WPS agenda, using the Global Study as a powerful advocacy tool. However, the international community has failed to allocate sufficient funds and resources to this implementation. All too often, women's organisations dedicated to conflict resolution and peacebuilding receive funding for specific short-term projects rather than core funding, and are forced to spend a disproportionate amount of time focusing on activities to raise funds. Several Women, Peace and Security UN Security Council Resolutions including UNSCR 2242 (2015) recognise the key role civil society plays in implementation of the WPS agenda, and call on member states to increase their funding for civil society which work for the implementation of the agenda. Funding civil society – inclusive UN Funds such as the newly launched Global Acceleration instrument are one first step. Urgent action must be taken to address this critical gap. •

FIRST COMMITTEE MONITOR

The *First Committee Monitor* is a collaborative NGO effort undertaken to make the work of the First Committee more transparent and accessible. The *Monitor* is compiled, edited, and coordinated by **Reaching Critical Will** of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

Contributing organisations and campaigns to this edition:

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons
International Network on Explosive Weapons
PAX
PeaceWomen of WILPF
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