

CONGRESS STATEMENT: DELHI DECLARATION

IPPNW 18th WORLD CONGRESS

DELHI, INDIA

MARCH 9 – MARCH 11, 2008

As we convene in Delhi for the 18th World Congress of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, we have never been more hopeful that a world without nuclear weapons is within reach. Across the political spectrum, even within the nuclear weapon states themselves, nuclear abolition is being openly discussed as desirable, practical, and absolutely necessary if humanity is to survive the 21st century. While we know that those with a vested interest in keeping nuclear weapons will continue to mount intense resistance to negotiating their elimination, such resistance is increasingly outdated, irrational, and hypocritical.

IPPNW launched the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons — ICAN — following our 17th World Congress in Helsinki. The focal point of the campaign — a Nuclear Weapons Convention — is the means by which abolition will be achieved and enforced under international law. We urge the nuclear weapon states, particularly the United States, whose leadership is essential, to commence negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention without further delay. The candidates for US President should pledge now that they will make the global elimination of nuclear weapons a top priority of their administration.

India has a pivotal role in achieving a world without nuclear weapons. We regret India's decision in 1998 to test nuclear weapons and to declare itself a nuclear weapon state — actions immediately duplicated by Pakistan. A nuclear war that would devastate all of South Asia, killing tens of millions of people and leaving much of the subcontinent uninhabitable for decades, is now a constant danger. Moreover, new research suggests that a regional nuclear war using the arsenals currently available to India and Pakistan would have profound impacts on the Earth's climate, which could lead to the collapse of agricultural production and famine on a global scale.

Over the course of the nuclear age, India has championed no first-use, non-use, and de-alerting policies; it has called for the prohibition of fissile materials production and has long supported timebound negotiations for the universal elimination of nuclear weapons. Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's 1988 Action Plan for a nuclear-weapons-free world resonates with today's call for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. In 1995, India told the International Court of Justice that possession, production, or use of nuclear weapons was illegal, under any circumstances, under international law—a bold and principled position irreconcilable with its subsequent acquisition of nuclear weapons. During the most recent session of the UN General Assembly, India voted with a majority of nations in favor of disarmament resolutions that, if implemented, would move us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. We urge India to assert its global leadership for nuclear disarmament from now until that goal is achieved.

If the political leadership of the United States is indispensable to the achievement of a nuclear-weapons-free world, India's moral leadership will be no less indispensable. As one of the world's emerging economic powers, with a rich tradition of non-violence marred by decades of armed conflict, India's struggle to forge a more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable social order is the world's struggle. Every one of our greatest challenges—global warming, poverty, resource depletion, population growth, economic development, human rights, food security, ensuring health for all—touches India and requires India's full participation in its solution.

Ending the scourge of war is one of the most important of those challenges. Preventing the worst of all conceivable forms of war—nuclear war—by ridding the world of nuclear weapons remains our most urgent goal and our highest priority as doctors and as responsible human beings. We recommit ourselves to that goal in the nation of Gandhi.