

# VITAL SIGNS

NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS FOR THE PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR (IPPNW)

## Ban treaty negotiations could start next year

The world is one step closer to a treaty banning nuclear weapons and setting clear terms for their elimination.

In September, Mexico, Austria, Ireland, Brazil, Nigeria, and South Africa tabled a resolution in the UN First Committee calling for a negotiating conference, commencing in 2107, on a new treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons because of their unacceptable humanitarian consequences. The resolution is on track to pass by a large majority of UN Member States in November. If all goes well, an initial organizing meeting for the conference could take place before the end of the year.

The resolution emerged from a special UN working group (OEWG), which met throughout the year in Geneva and was charged with recommending effective new steps to close the legal gap in nuclear disarmament. ICAN executive director Beatrice Fihn called the resolution “a significant moment in the seven-decade-long global struggle to rid the world of the worst weapons of mass destruction.”

IPPNW co-president Tilman Ruff urged the General Assembly “to seize this historic opportunity...to comprehensively prohibit and provide for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Securing global health demands nothing less.”

The breakthrough came quickly, after several months of meetings




“The first step to eliminate weapons of mass destruction is to prohibit them through legally binding norms. [We] will table a draft resolution to convene negotiations on a legally binding comprehensive instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons in 2017.”

~ Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz

REUTERS

during which OEWG participants considered the medical, environmental and humanitarian evidence about the consequences of nuclear weapons presented by a wide range of experts and civil society organizations, including IPPNW.

The OEWG was boycotted by the nuclear-armed states, and the proposal for a ban treaty was vocally opposed by participating nuclear-dependent states. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority rejected the stale arguments that the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons had to be “balanced” with the strategic security concerns of the states that continue to possess them. Banning and eliminating nuclear weapons, they countered, is essential to the security of all. 

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# NUCLEAR ABOLITION NEWS AND UPDATES

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or follow on [twitter.com/JohnAtIPPNW](https://twitter.com/JohnAtIPPNW)

## Leading health federations join call for ban treaty


The World Medical Association, the International Council of Nurses, and the World Federation of Public Health Associations, joined IPPNW in submitting a joint working paper to the UN Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament in May.

The four federations told OEWG participants that they have “a unique opportunity and a shared responsibility to take leadership on nuclear disarmament by reframing the goal as a humanitarian-based process for banning and eliminating nuclear weapons.” They urged the OEWG to “assert the need for a new treaty that explicitly...prohibit[s]...nuclear weapons, based on their unacceptable consequences.”

Breaking news: As this issue of *Vital Signs* was being readied for the press, the presidents of the WMA, the ICN, the WFPHA and IPPNW came together again to co-author an



op-ed published in *The Guardian* on September 28. “The dangers posed by these weapons are utterly unacceptable,” wrote the federation leaders, “and the only sure way to pre-

vent an unthinkable catastrophe is to eliminate them completely. That’s not only possible, it’s essential and long overdue.” 

**ONLINE:** Joint working paper on nuclear weapons  
[ippnw.org/pdf/2016-oewg-collective-health-appeal.pdf](http://ippnw.org/pdf/2016-oewg-collective-health-appeal.pdf)

**ONLINE:** OpEd in the Guardian  
[bit.ly/2dHCAzU](http://bit.ly/2dHCAzU)



“The fact that our four federations are now coming together to demand action on disarmament raises a loud alarm about the unacceptable danger a handful of states are imposing on the entire world.”

~ Tilman Ruff, IPPNW Co-President

## What the Ban Treaty would do

- Explicitly prohibit and delegitimize nuclear weapons based on their unacceptable consequences;
- Prohibit acquisition, possession, production, testing, stockpiling, transfer, deployment, threat of use, or use of nuclear weapons; in other words, everything having to do with nuclear weapons would be illegal;
- Close loopholes that have enabled some states to avoid nuclear disarmament obligations while investing in new weapons and delivery systems and engaging in other nuclear weapon activities;
- Reaffirm the rights of people who have been victimized by the detonation of nuclear weapons, including decades of nuclear testing;
- Provide the impetus and obligation for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and a framework to achieve it.

Adapted from ICAN's "Principles of a treaty banning nuclear weapons"  
**ONLINE:** [bit.ly/2dxM79u](http://bit.ly/2dxM79u)



**BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS BANNED 1972**



**CHEMICAL WEAPONS BANNED 1993**



**LAND MINES BANNED 1997**



**CLUSTER BOMBS BANNED 2008**



**NUCLEAR WEAPONS BANNED \_\_\_\_?**




## How the negotiating process should work

- Be open to all states and inclusive of civil society and international organizations;
- Be initiated, conducted, concluded, and adopted by governments who share the objective of banning and eliminating nuclear weapons, even without the participation of the nuclear-armed states;
- Be flexible about the forum, as long as it serves the objectives of developing and adopting an effective ban treaty;
- Not rely on rules of consensus (blockable by none).

## Medical appeals for abolition

Earlier this year, IPPNW's Dutch affiliate organized a Medical Appeal to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons signed by prominent Dutch physicians. The Medical Appeal and an accompanying article were published by the BMJ, inspiring other affiliates to mount similar campaigns. In August, the Norwegian affiliate

collected hundreds of signatures on a similar appeal, including the president of the Norwegian Medical Association and the deans of all four medical schools in Norway. The appeals are being sent to national parliaments to promote debates about nuclear weapons and the urgent need for a ban treaty. 



# AIMING FOR PREVENTION UPDATES

Contact Maria Valenti (mvalenti@ippnw.org) or follow on Twitter.com/mariaippnw



**Geneva, Switzerland**  
Stop the secret arms trades say NGOs

[Online: controlarms.org](#)



Dr. Bill Durston with Karin Olofsson from PFSALW.

## New York City, USA

Doctors and parliamentarians connect the dots between health, development at UN

[Online: bit.ly/2dpM4QP](http://bit.ly/2dpM4QP)

The theme connecting the dots between health, human security and sustainable development resonated throughout the IPPNW side event to the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms co-organized by the Parliamentary Forum on Small Arms and Light Weapons and hosted by the Swedish Mission to the UN.

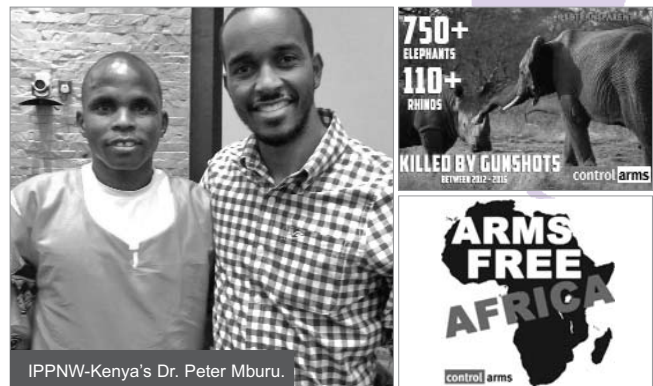


Dr. Hlahane with Dr. Alex Butchart of WHO.

## Cape Town, South Africa

Violence Prevention Alliance

Dr. Mathabo Hlahane, a founder of IPPNW South Africa, highlighted IPPNW's leadership on disarmament issues at the WHO Violence Prevention Alliance meeting.



IPPNW-Kenya's Dr. Peter Mburu.

## Nairobi, Kenya

Arms-Free-Africa

[Online: bit.ly/2dv5yiH](http://bit.ly/2dv5yiH)

Dr. Peter Mburu (right) strategized with Control Arms coalition colleagues at a workshop on how to optimize the Arms Free Africa campaign.

AIMING FOR PREVENTION





**Switzerland**  
 Campaign on arms  
 trade  
[www.ippnw.org/en/csp](http://www.ippnw.org/en/csp)

IPPNW Zambia's Dr. Bob Mtonga joined with Control Arms colleagues in calling for an era of transparency regarding States' arms trades at the ATT 2nd Conference of States Parties in Geneva.

WORKING FOR PREVENTION  
 WORKING GLOBALLY  
 FOR A HEALTHIER  
 AND SAFER WORLD

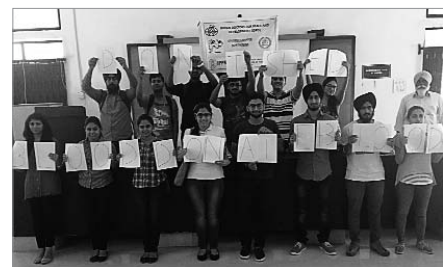


IPPNW Nigeria's Drs. Ngozi and Emeka Okolo.

**Tampere, Finland**  
 IPPNW highlights  
 humanitarian disarmament

IPPNW featured armed violence prevention at the Safety 2016 conference co-hosted by the WHO.

[Online: bit.ly/1J0i7wp](http://bit.ly/1J0i7wp)



**Throughout India**  
 "Don't shed blood, donate blood"

[Online: bit.ly/2cRhZNi](http://bit.ly/2cRhZNi)

Indian Doctors for Peace and Development launched "Health through Peace," a year-long series of creative educational and advocacy activities.



PHOTO: ROHAN THOMSON

**Canberra, Australia**  
 Time to ban weapons' advertising  
 at Australian airports

[Online: bit.ly/2dtAHDQ](http://bit.ly/2dtAHDQ)

IPPNW's Australian affiliate the Medical Association for Prevention of War has been leading a successful campaign to ban weapons' advertising at Canberra airport. It's not over yet.

# BILL WILLIAMS REMEMBERED

More on this passionate advocate for nuclear abolition

**ONLINE:** [bit.ly/2dqAZw7](http://bit.ly/2dqAZw7)

Dr. Bill Williams, a former co-president of IPPNW's Australian affiliate, a founder of ICAN, and one of the campaign's most inspirational leaders in its formative years, died in his sleep of an apparent heart attack on September 11. He was 58 years old.

Tributes to Bill, who was passionately committed to the abolition of nuclear weapons and to providing health care to Australia's neglected indigenous populations, poured in from around the world. IPPNW co-president Tilman Ruff spoke fondly of his close friend and colleague:

"He was the best communicator in the land for MAPW and ICAN. He has spoken medical truth to power around the country, and especially met and talked with indigenous communities facing the onslaught of nuclear test legacy, mining of uranium, and proposed imposition of radioactive waste.

"Bill was equally at home in a clinic, a UN meeting in Geneva, parliamentary offices, before a medical student Global Health Conference, [or] on a wave on the Surfcoast...



PHOTO: ADAM DEMPSEY

"Our most fitting tribute to Bill will be to re-double our efforts to ban and eradicate the scourge of nuclear weapons from the face of our good Earth."

Australian Senator Scott Ludlam eulogized Bill on the Senate floor:

"Bill was not content to confine his passion for health care within clinical practice; he was a determined and frequently flamboyant advocate for public health in the widest sense. Not content with only applying his expertise to harms already committed, Bill set out to challenge the ulti-

mate preventable health catastrophe and dedicated decades of his life to the prevention of war and the abolition of nuclear weapons."

## Bill Williams in his own words:

*"We did not inherit the earth from our ancestors. We borrow it from our descendants."*

*"The bad news is that our ingenuity has generated an abundance of unwanted toxic consequences. The good news is that together, informed and inspired, we can rescue our habitat from our excesses."*

*"We need a determined worldwide movement to outlaw and abolish nukes. To get there in this generation, we need to build the wave of public opinion into a mighty crescendo: a massive, surging, irresistible force which carries us all the way to absolutely zero nukes."*


*In the world of pragmatism, where deals must finally be cut, a treaty to ban nuclear weapons once and for all is urgently required. Not just negotiated, signed and ratified by the worlds parliaments, but implemented all the way to zero." *



PHOTO: MAPW / ICAN AUSTRALIA

ICAN Melbourne's Bike Against the Bomb ride to collect support for a ban on nuclear weapons. IPPNW Co-President Tilman Ruff, Bill Williams, and MAPW President Marg Beavis.



PHOTO: ADAM DEMPSEY

As the ICAN-garoo "hopping mad for nukes", he acknowledged that "the velcro on this roo suit offers more security than nuclear weapons".



# AMPLIFYING IPPNW'S CORE MESSAGE

IPPNW affiliates continue to lead the way toward a safer and more peaceful world.

**ONLINE:** [peaceandhealthblog.com](http://peaceandhealthblog.com)

## South Asia regional conference in Dhaka focuses on role of physicians



Organized by the IPPNW affiliate in Bangladesh, delegates from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan focused on the “Emerging health and social crisis of South Asia” during the two-day conference.




## Good Thinking

“Good Thinking,” a new documentary film about nuclear weapons by Anthony Donovan, contrasts past



and present rationales for maintaining nuclear arsenals (which haven’t changed much over the years) with the arguments of leaders in the decades-long struggle to abolish them. The film features extensive interviews with Manhattan Project scientist and antinuclear campaigner Freeman Dyson, Union of Concerned Scientists co-founder Kurt Gottfried, and IPPNW co-presi-

dent Ira Helfand. “The purpose of this work,” Donovan said, “is to encourage us forward, to encourage us not to believe that human beings can only learn through great tragedy and need such horror before they can wake up.” 

**ONLINE**  
[GoodThinkingTheDocumentary.net](http://GoodThinkingTheDocumentary.net)

## ICAN Youth Academy

October 20-23, 2016 || Paris, France

Online: [youth.icanfrance.fr/academy](http://youth.icanfrance.fr/academy)

## IPPNW Board of Directors Meeting

November 5-6, 2016 || Havana, Cuba

## IPPNW North South Meeting

November 6-7, 2016 || Havana, Cuba

## Forum 2016: Healthy Planet, Better World

December 9-10, 2016 || London, UK

Online: [medact.org](http://medact.org)

## Joint MEDACT Forum and IPPNW World Congress

September 3-7, 2017 || York, UK

Online: [medact.org/calendar/medact-ippnw-2017](http://medact.org/calendar/medact-ippnw-2017)



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**ONLINE:** [ippnw.org/donate.html](http://ippnw.org/donate.html)

## ICRC continues to speak out on nuclear war

The International Committee of the Red Cross released a definitive review of the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons. The 468 page special edition of *International Review of the Red Cross* includes moving Hibakusha testimony from

IPPNW vice president Masao Tomonaga of Japan, and a contribution from IPPNW co-president Tilman Ruff of Australia on the health and environmental impacts and needs from nuclear testing in the Pacific.

**ONLINE:** Special edition [icrc.org/en/international-review](http://icrc.org/en/international-review)

**ONLINE:** ICRC calls on States to seize "unprecedented opportunity to advance nuclear disarmament" [bit.ly/2cvP9Z3](http://bit.ly/2cvP9Z3)

## Worth watching

UN video (8-min.) on the power of international peace movements, including segments with Drs. Klaus Renoldner (left) and Michael Schober (right) of IPPNW Austria, speaking about IPPNW's leadership in nuclear weapons abolition and armed violence prevention.



**ONLINE:** [youtu.be/BIm5MSQX42s](http://youtu.be/BIm5MSQX42s)

IPPNW is a non - partisan federation of national medical organizations in 64 countries dedicated to safeguarding health by working to ban nuclear weapons and to address the impact of militarism and war on human health.

All gifts to IPPNW are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. IPPNW is a non - profit organization registered under Section 501(c)(3) of the US Internal Revenue Code. Tax ID# 04-2702110



**Vital Signs** is published twice a year by IPPNW.  
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