

# VITAL SIGNS

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

## Ban Treaty implementation urgently needed to help roll back new nuclear arms race

The nuclear-weapon states all continue to rebuild their arsenals and prepare for nuclear war, while the two nuclear super-powers have cynically walked away from even the modest limits imposed by nuclear arms control treaties.

On February 1, the Trump administration confirmed that the United States will withdraw from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. Russia followed suit the next day, amid mutual recriminations and allegations of treaty violations. The historic INF treaty, which was signed in 1988 by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, is regarded by many as the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

This latest retreat from decades of commitment to diplomacy follows last year's decision by the US to leave the Iran nuclear agreement and the impasse in talks between the US and North Korea during the February summit in Hanoi.

Even the future of the New Start treaty, which needs to be extended by the US and Russia by January 2021, has been cast into doubt as both countries have doubled down on their plans to rebuild their nuclear forces. New "low-yield" battlefield nuclear weapons—which many fear are more likely to be used—are beginning to come off the assembly line in the US, while President Putin has boasted of new Russian hypersonic nuclear missiles.

In announcing that the iconic "Doomsday Clock" would remain at two minutes to



*The new US W76-2 warhead will be deployed on sea-launched ballistic missiles (left); Russia plans to counter with a new "hypersonic" missile (right).*

midnight for the second year in a row, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* called the current situation "the new abnormal." The *Bulletin* lamented "grave steps towards a complete dismantlement of the global arms control process," condemned "programs of 'nuclear modernization' that are all but indistinguishable from a worldwide arms race," and singled out the military doctrines of Russia and the United States that "have increasingly eroded the longheld taboo against the use of nuclear weapons."

"A renewed, unrestrained nuclear arms race is in the offing," said director of nuclear programs Chuck Johnson.

The antidote to this toxic situation is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). As of mid-April, 71 states had signed and 23 of them had ratified the treaty out of the 50 needed for entry into force. These states—and the others who will join the treaty in the months ahead—have recognized that banning and eliminating nuclear weapons is the only way to prevent the medical and humanitarian consequences of nuclear war.

The nuclear-armed states and their allies, however, have tried to stall the ratification process.

"The vitriol against the Treaty has been quite remarkable," according to Austrian diplomat Alexander Kmentt, one of the leaders of the ban treaty negotiations. "Nuclear-weapon states have embarked on a sustained campaign of discouraging, if not to say intimidating, states from ratifying the Ban Treaty." He added that they are avoiding "a harder conversation on the validity of the nuclear deterrence concept, particularly when set against today's knowledge of the humanitarian consequences and nuclear risks."

In addition to working with ICAN colleagues throughout the world to get countries that voted for the treaty at the UN in 2017 to sign and ratify it through their national parliamentary processes, IPPNW affiliates are promoting the TPNW through the ICAN Cities Appeal in countries that have not been supporting the treaty, thus far. Washington, DC has  
(continued on page 3)

### HIGHLIGHTS

Nuclear dialogue in Nepal	2
Fukushima 8 years later	3
IPPNW world roundup	4-5
Aiming for Prevention	6
Campaigning in Greece	7
23rd World Congress	8



# NUCLEAR ABOLITION NEWS AND UPDATES

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## Nepal assures South Asian doctors TPNW will be ratified soon

IPPNW's South Asia affiliates have urged government officials in Kathmandu, Nepal, to take additional steps towards nuclear disarmament, reduction of small arms, and resolution of issues through dialogue. The IPPNW delegation met on March 31 with Foreign Minister Shri Pradeep Gyawali, Speaker of Parliament Shri Krishna Bahadur Mahara, and Advisor to the Prime Minister Shri Rajan Bhattarai.

The delegation discussed with them the seriousness of the ongoing conflicts in the world in general and South Asia in particular. The most recent conflict between India and Pakistan, the doctors said, could have taken a very serious turn if the situation had not been defused on time. Both countries not only possess huge arsenals, but are also nuclear-weapon states. Escalation of the conflict could have led to the use of nuclear weapons. The delegation apprised the ministers about the scientific evidence that in the event of a nuclear exchange between

India and Pakistan, more than two billion people globally would be at risk of famine from nuclear-war induced climate disruption.

Nepal signed the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which has declared the possession, development, testing, use, and threatened use of nuclear weapons illegal, on September 20, 2017. The ban treaty awaits ratification by parliament. IPPNW co-president Arun Mitra said "we pointed out the opportunity created by the treaty, and the ministers assured the group that action to ratify will be taken soon."

"We also called on Nepal to use its unique position in the South Asia region to foster understanding among countries, including China, since India bases its rationale for possessing nuclear weapons mainly on deterrence against China," Dr. Mitra added. Nepal, the delegation pointed out, can effectively use diplomacy to promote peace and make the region safer. "In col-

laboration with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Nepal can help impress upon India, Pakistan, and China that they have an obligation to make Asia and the world nuclear-weapons free, and that joining the TPNW would be an important step toward that goal."

The South Asian affiliates hope to continue these dialogues with decision makers in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan. **VS**

"IPPNW urged Nepal, with its consistent record of peace diplomacy and a popularly elected two-thirds majority government, to play its role to foster peace in the region."

"The task of realising a nuclear-free region and continent is undoubtedly colossal. But there are examples that such dreams can strike a chord in the hearts of the people and the government and generate a force that can achieve seemingly impossible tasks."

—Dr. Mahesh Maskey, former IPPNW regional vice president and former Nepali ambassador to China, in *The Kathmandu Post*.



Doctors from IPPNW's South Asian affiliates met with government leaders in Kathmandu on March 31. From left, Akmal Sultan, Talat Sultan, Surinder Singh Soodan, Tipu Sultan, Kamrul Hasan Khan, Arun Mitra, Foreign Minister Pradeep Gyawali, Sharad Onta, Bansidhar Mishra, Mahesh Maskey, Satyajit Kumar Singh, Ganesh Gurung, Arun Dixit.



## Ban treaty implementation

(continued from page 1)

joined the growing group of cities in nuclear-weapons states and their allies.

"The failure of the nuclear-weapon states to negotiate nuclear abolition has given rise to a powerful movement to stigmatize the possessors of nuclear weapons, rather than submit to them," Chuck Johnson said.

vs



Nuclear program director Chuck Johnson (7th from right) joined antinuclear activists and representatives of UK's Office of Nuclear Regulation in Manchester in March and April as part of a tour of Medact and ICAN campaigners in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Bristol, and London, to build support for the TPNW and the Cities Appeal.



## The Fukushima nuclear disaster: 8 years on

*On March 11, 2011, an earthquake and tsunami caused explosions and reactor core meltdowns at the Fukushima nuclear reactor complex. The health and environmental consequences have persisted to this day. IPPNW co-president Tilman Ruff assessed the ongoing Fukushima disaster, now in its eighth year, in an article on the IPPNW Peace and Health Blog, from which the following excerpts are taken.*

Eight years after the world's most complex nuclear disaster, the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plants and spent fuel ponds are still leaking and dangerous, vast amounts of contaminated water continue to accumulate, 8,000 odd clean-up workers labour daily and will need to for many decades, the needs of people exposed to radioactivity are still neglected, no one is in prison for a disaster fundamentally caused by the negligence of the operator and the government, and most of the lessons of Fukushima have yet to be heeded.

The Japanese government seems determined to present the Fukushima disaster as a past prob-

lem with things essentially back to normal and under control in the lead-up to the 2020 Olympics in Japan. The start of the Olympic torch relay, softball and baseball games are scheduled to take place in Fukushima. Grossly misleading claims by Prime Minister Abe in 2013 underpinned Japan's bid for the Olympics. He stated that "the situation in Fukushima is under control...there have never been any health problems nor will there be."

It is important that the international public health and medical communities monitor continuing health needs related to the disaster and advocate for the policies, resources and other measures to address them, and support the efforts of those in Japan working for public and environmental health. We should utilise the 2020 Olympics in Japan to shine a light on the lessons of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the impacts and needs from the disaster, and ensure that they are not swept under the carpet.

vs



Read the entire article  
at [peaceandhealthblog.com](http://peaceandhealthblog.com)

## TPNW Ratification Update

As of mid April, 71 states had signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; **23 states** had submitted their ratification instruments. The Treaty will enter into force once 50 states have ratified it.

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, **Austria**, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, **Cook Islands**, **Costa Rica**, Cote d'Ivoire, **Cuba**, Dominican Republic, DRC (Congo), Ecuador, **El Salvador**, Fiji, **Gambia**, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, **Guyana**, **Holy See**, Honduras, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Laos, Libya, Liechtenstein, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, **Mexico**, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, **New Zealand**, **Nicaragua**, Nigeria, **Palau**, **Palestine**, **Panama**, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, **St. Lucia**, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, **Samoa**, **San Marino**, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, **South Africa**, **Thailand**, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tuvalu, **Uruguay**, **Vanuatu**, **Venezuela**, **Vietnam**



ONLINE: [www.icanw.org/status-of-the-treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/](http://www.icanw.org/status-of-the-treaty-on-the-prohibition-of-nuclear-weapons/)

IPPNW and ICAN campaigners are applying pressure to national governments with the ICAN Cities Appeal, urging city governments to declare support for the TPNW. In March, the city of Washington, DC endorsed the Cities Appeal, making it the first capital from a nuclear-armed state to join.



When the UN convenes to discuss nuclear weapons, ICAN and IPPNW are there to encourage support for the TPNW. In October, IPPNW board member Dr. Carlos Umaña (Costa Rica) represented ICAN during a civil society comment period. A dozen IPPNW reps will be in New York in April/May for the Preparatory Committee meeting of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.



In November 2018, IPPNW from Nigeria organized a successful Global Health Training for medical students at the Advanced Medical Research Center at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital in Kano, Nigeria. Students learned about medical peace work and the role of IPPNW in the Global Health for Prevention program.



International Student Representative Franca Brügggen (center) addressed 1,000 medical students at the 68th General Assembly of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) in Slovenia. Franca's facilitated sessions further strengthened IPPNW students' partnership with IFMSA, reflected in a joint statement in November in support of the nuclear ban treaty.



When South Asia affiliates gathered in Kathmandu to urge the Nepali government to ratify the TPNW (see page 2), students held a side meeting organized by Dr. Bimal Khadka, where they discussed the importance of Nepal's leadership in bringing peace at a time of escalating nuclear threat.



IPPNW students are highly successful in lobbying for Nigerian ratification of the Treaty at the Centre for Research & Training in Health Sciences Hospital in Lagos. They learned about IPPNW's Aiming



In March, IPPNW affiliates joined other anti-nuclear organizations in Germany, Switzerland, France, and Japan to launch an international information campaign called "Tokyo 2020—The Radioactive Olympics." The campaign will spread awareness about the health hazards of ongoing radioactive contamination in Fukushima City and advocate for renewable energy generation.



Cities and towns throughout Australia are joining ICAN's Cities Appeal, building widespread public support for the Australian government to sign and ratify the treaty. These municipal endorsements have elicited pledges from the Labor Party and a majority of its parliamentarians to join the TPNW, should they win the elections this spring. ICAN campaigners held a Nobel Peace Ride outside Parliament House on the anniversary of the treaty opening for signature.





Shannon Gearhart (second from left) tells conference participants that “the human face of gun violence can be lost.”

## Gun violence and women's health at the UN

How does gun violence affect women's health?

New York public health physician Dr. Shannon Gearhart addressed this issue at a United Nations Commission on the Status of Women side event, “Working to Diminish Women's Exposure to Risks of Gun Violence in Latin America & Caribbean,” held at the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN.

“Gunshot victims have an increased risk of mental illness, including depression, PTSD, suicide and substance abuse disorders. The risk of developing or worsening chronic illnesses such as heart disease increases due to the stress of recovery. Victims of intimate partner violence have been found to have higher rates of at-risk pregnancies and sexually-transmitted diseases,” said Dr. Gearhart. “Intimate partner violence, coupled with guns, poses an even more significant risk to the health and well-being of women” she added.

“During policy debates, legal discussions and negotiations, the human face of gun violence can be lost. As a physician, I can

tell you, I never forget,” she emphasized.

Other speakers included representatives from UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, the UN Missions of Mexico and Costa Rica, and the New York City Youth Poet Laureate for 2019. The forum was organized by the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA).

## IPPNW Nigeria inspires new activists at student forum

The Society of Nigerian Doctors for the Welfare of Mankind (SNDWM, IPPNW Nigeria) sparked a new cadre of IPPNW student activists at a recent meeting on global health.



IPPNW Nigeria has been at the forefront of conducting innovative research and public education activities in Africa, such as the radio series “Bringing peace to the people” and seminal hospital based research on firearm injuries. Many of these activities were led by medical students. Now doctors, SNDWM leaders recently conducted a Global Health Training at the Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital in Kano to inspire and recruit a new cadre of students.


More than 20 students from medical schools throughout Nigeria participated in workshops designed to educate them about the concepts and practical aspects of peace through health as well as

IPPNW's global priorities. The meeting was organized by Drs. Mansur Ramalan (President, SNDWM), Abdullahi Umar (Secretary-General, SNDWM), and Everytne Achieng (RSR, Africa) with financial support from PSR Finland and financial contributions from Nigerian doctors. Many follow-up activities are planned.

## Medical Peace Work

Medical Peace Work (MPW) is an emerging field of expertise in health work, violence prevention, and peace-building. IPPNW leaders from Norway, Germany, and Kenya have been meeting with AFP's director, Maria Valenti, to discuss how to engage MPW course-takers in follow-up field projects that incorporate knowledge learned in the real world, including IPPNW-related projects.

Thousands have taken the popular course over the past eight years. Evaluations have been uniformly very positive, with 99% of recent course takers saying they've learned new knowledge and skills. One student from Nigeria, after taking the course, said he had shared the information with his peers and that “we are ready to be medical peace workers, anytime, anywhere.”

“Global health, conflict and violence” and “Addressing violence in patient care” are new cases open for enrollment. 



ONLINE: [www.medical-peacework.org/home.html](http://www.medical-peacework.org/home.html)

## “WE CONTINUE TO HOPE FOR A CHANGE IN THE WIND”

An interview with Dr. Maria Sotiropoulou of IPPNW Greece



*Maria Sotiropoulou is the president of IPPNW's affiliate the Greek Medical Association for the Protection of the Environment and Against Nuclear and Biochemical Threat. She talked with us about the challenges working for peace and nuclear abolition in a country closely allied with a nuclear superpower.*

**VS:** Why did you first get involved in IPPNW?

**MS:** I felt that nuclear abolition was my medical duty according to the Hippocratic Oath, which tells us “it is better to prevent than to cure.” I was one of the founding members of the Greek IPPNW in 1993. In those days, medical doctors were trusted by the people. I was also a writer and columnist in the Greek press and I used both skills to spread our message. Today MDs are less interested in the nuclear issue than they should be.

**VS:** You organize regular meetings with Greek government officials. Do you feel this work has helped influence policies in your country?

**MS:** Unfortunately, the policy in Greece has always had two faces. All governments and political parties declare that they want a nuclear-free world, but when they vote in the UN we can see that they show a crazy behavior. A diplomat explained to me “off the record” that there is a bargain among countries, and when

we need support for our national interest, we have to vote differently. These are difficult times for Greece, not only because we still have the economic crisis, but also because of the continued Turkish aggression. As Greece struggles for survival, it is difficult to go against the interest of strong allies, such as the USA.

**VS:** You have worked closely with Peace Boat. How has this collaboration helped with awareness about the need for nuclear abolition?

**MS:** Peace Boat comes to Greece twice each year. Since 1992, we have organized events around every visit. This is an opportunity to bring Hibakusha to schools, municipalities, parliament, and government in order to spread our message. We also use the publicity to push the government in the correct direction.

**VS:** Greece is a non-nuclear-weapon state party to the NPT. How has the Greek government responded to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?

**MS:** There has always been some hypocrisy in all politicians. Our government used to deny the existence of US nuclear weapons in Greece during the Cold War. Today they don't believe that nuclear disarmament is an urgent issue, and that there are other priorities. When we tried to collect signatures in order to press the government to vote for the TPNW, people seemed not to believe—as they used to during the Cold War—that nuclear weapons are a real danger. We try to persuade them. We should not be

optimistic that Greece or Cyprus will sign the TPNW any time soon. Nevertheless, the Cyprus minister of foreign affairs told ICAN in Munich last month that they will sign the treaty, and we are in regular contact with the ministry and parliamentarians to remind them of that promise.

**VS:** Can you tell us about some of the recent activities of the Greek affiliate?

**MS:** In addition to our struggle against nuclear weapons, we also campaign against nuclear power plants and against biochemical and depleted uranium (DU) weapons. We work closely with peace and ecological NGOs in Greece. Though the times are difficult,

we continue to hope for a change in the wind. We use every opportunity, memory day, or anniversary to remind



*Maria introduces Hibakusha to local school children during a Peace Boat visit, and addresses Parliament (below).*



officials and the people about our cause. In recent years we have participated in IPPNW Germany's student exchange program. We shall use the European and municipal elections in May to underline the nuclear danger, especially after the end of the INF Treaty. As usual this year, we shall also use the anniversaries of Hiroshima, Chernobyl, and Fukushima to promote our message.

VS

## Roland Oldham

### Champion of Pacific testing victims



Roland Oldham, a leader in the struggle to recognize and compensate victims of French nuclear testing in the Pacific, died of cancer this March in Tahiti. Roland was the president of Moruroa e Tatou, the association of former workers from the Moruroa and Fangataufa nuclear test sites, which he co-founded

in 2001. IPPNW's Australian affiliate, MAPW, sponsored Roland and other indigenous activists during the negotiations for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017. He spoke eloquently to the treaty negotiators about the debilitating health effects suffered by former workers at the French nuclear test sites, putting human faces on the concept of humanitarian disarmament. IPPNW co-president Tilman Ruff called Roland "a true champion of Moruroa workers."

VS



Join IPPNW, Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Longwood Symphony Orchestra for a special evening in honor of Setsuko Thurlow.

A survivor of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Setsuko has dedicated her life to the abolition of nuclear weapons. Her testimony left an indelible mark on the Ban Treaty negotiations. Help us celebrate the life of this remarkable campaigner. More information at [gbpsr.org](http://gbpsr.org).

**October 5**  
**8:00 pm**

**New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall**

IPPNW is a non-partisan federation of national medical organizations in 62 countries dedicated to safeguarding health by working to ban nuclear weapons and to address the impact of militarism and war on human health.

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