

Vital Signs

VOL 33 ISSUE 2 2023



International
Physicians
for the Prevention
of Nuclear War

Nobel Peace Laureate

The threat of nuclear war has never been greater

Time to take action

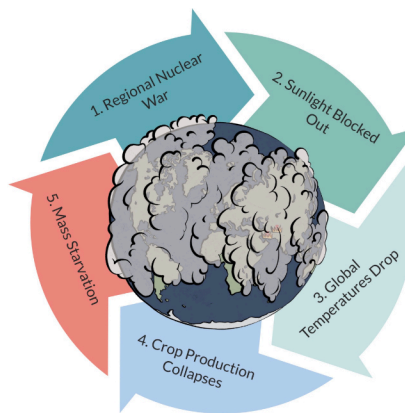
Russia's repeated threats to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine have brought home a stark reality: the danger of nuclear war did not disappear with the end of the Cold War. Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, experts like former Defense Secretary William Perry were warning us that we were closer to nuclear war than we have ever been. Indeed, the very real prospect that a tactical nuclear weapon is used in Ukraine, as an act of desperation or by accident, is growing.

These warnings come at a time when scientists are telling us that nuclear war will be even more catastrophic than previously thought. A study published in *Nature Food* last August showed that an all-out war between the US and Russia would trigger a nuclear winter and kill over five billion people. The study also showed that a much more limited war, involving just 250 of the 13,000 nuclear warheads in the world today, could trigger a global famine that would kill more than two billion people and destroy modern civilization.

This ultimate catastrophe is not the plot of a grade B disaster movie. It is the danger we live with every day as long as we allow these weapons to exist. But we are not helpless in this situation. Nuclear weapons are not a force of nature, such as an asteroid about to hit the Earth. These weapons are machines about the size of a desk chair. We have built them ourselves and we know how to take them apart. In fact, governments have already dismantled more than 50,000 warheads since the peak of the US-Soviet nuclear arms race of the 1980s.

In 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted at the United Nations, banning the possession of these

(continued on page 3)



Even a so-called limited, regional nuclear war would disrupt the global climate and cause a nuclear famine.

Medical journals issue urgent call for elimination of nuclear weapons

More than 150 medical journals, including *The Lancet*, the *British Medical Journal*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and *JAMA* have issued a joint call for urgent steps to decrease the growing danger of nuclear war and to move rapidly to the elimination of nuclear weapons. At a time of expanded fighting in Ukraine and increased tensions in Korea, leaders of the global health community underscore that any use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic for humanity.

The unprecedented call to action comes in the form of an editorial co-authored by the editors of 11 of the leading medical and health journals, the World Association of Medical Editors, and IPPNW leaders. The editorial was released in conjunction with the start of the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation

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Nuclear abolition news and updates

For more information, contact Chuck Johnson
(cjohnson@ippnw.org)

NPT parties must declare nuclear power plants off-limits as military targets

IPPNW releases wind data study

An attack on Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant could be catastrophic and cause a nuclear meltdown in up to six reactors and the associated spent nuclear fuel ponds.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has repeatedly warned of the dangers of military actions at the site. IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi told the UN Security Council in May that there should be no attack from or against the plant and that it should not be used as storage or a base for heavy weapons. His warnings, however, have gone unheeded.

IPPNW's European vice president, Angelika Claussen, called on NPT member states to endorse the IAEA recommendations in a presentation to the NPT Working Group on July 25.

On August 2, IPPNW released a study by Dr. Nikolaus Müllner, head of the Institute of Safety and Risk Studies at BOKU University in Vienna, showing the dispersion of possible radiological plumes after a meltdown of one or more of the reactors at Zaporizhzhia.

According to Dr. Müllner's preliminary findings, a serious nuclear accident at Zaporizhzhia would affect agriculture and the environment in Ukraine and neighboring countries and require an exclusion zone of 20 to 30 kilometers because of cesium contamination.

"We wonder why nations committed to nuclear energy development, and the nuclear energy industry itself, are not united in demanding clearer protective action," Dr. Claussen told the NPT Working Group.

2MSP scheduled for November

Following the successful First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in June 2022, the second meeting (2MSP) is taking place in November at the UN in New York. Juan Ramón de la Fuente, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN, will serve as the meeting's President. With the NPT in gridlock (see page 8), an effective 2MSP is our best opportunity to advance a nuclear-weapons-free world.

For updates on IPPNW's participation at the 2MSP, [sign up for our e-news](#).

Pacific ocean is not a radioactive waste dump

At its World Congress in Kenya, IPPNW called on the government of Japan to stop the plan to release radioactive waste water from the disabled Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific ocean. "The plan to use the Pacific ocean as a radioactive waste dump involves risks to oceanic and human health and is neither responsible nor sustainable" and "ignores the significant transboundary, trans-generational, and human rights issues involved in this planned radioactive dumping, projected to continue over the next 40 years."



More online at
peaceandhealthblog.com

"We need to re-motivate and reconnect people"

An interview with student reps Stella Ziegler and Walusungu Mtonga

Stella Ziegler of Germany and Walusungu Mtonga of Zambia were elected as IPPNW's new International Student Representatives (ISRs) at the 23rd World Congress in Mombasa, Kenya. Stella is a medical student at the faculty of Charité Berlin, and is active with the IPPNW-Germany student chapter. Walusungu is in his final year of clinical clerkship at the University of Zambia, pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Medicine and General Surgery. He is the son of former IPPNW co-president, the late Robert Mtonga.

VS: Congratulations on your recent election as ISRs! What are your core priorities for your term?

SZ: We want to engage more students and spread awareness about the dangers but also prevention possibilities of nuclear war and any kind of violence. What is special about our term is the post-covid situation, where we

need to re-motivate and reconnect people, and show them that activism needs to be present again.

WM: To ensure a more united medical student movement that plays a vital role in policy and decision making. To ensure growth of the student movement to countries where no student chapters exist.

VS: Walusungu, why does nuclear disarmament matter to you as a medical student in Zambia?

WM: I learned about IPPNW through my father, Dr. Bob Mtonga, who dedicated most of his life towards disarmament. In medical school, I began to understand the health consequences of radiation exposure that would occur if a nuclear weapon is used. I also realized that we need to invest more in preventative medicine due to our fragile health systems, especially here in Africa. First and foremost, conflict anywhere is conflict everywhere. A nuclear war would be devastating to all



people on Earth. A climate catastrophe would ensue if a nuclear war were to break out, affecting the entire globe including Zambia, where I come from.

VS: Stella, what motivates you to advocate for nuclear disarmament amid a number of emerging threats, ranging from emerging technologies to the escalating climate crisis?

SZ: Global crises only grow larger, and we want to give young people a platform and opportunity for putting their fire into action. As a young person, I feel the necessity to take action for things that will affect me in my life and my profession as a doctor in the future.

VS: What can our global federation of health professionals do to support medical student engagement?

SZ: Listen and take youth worries, ideas, and future problems seriously, since it is us who are building the future. We need people in power to represent those who are not (yet)

in a position to make these decisions. Furthermore, we need to be given the space and invitations to the places where decisions are made, that will affect us more than ever.

WM: By creating mentorship programs that nurture medical students in becoming global leaders and by supporting local student chapter activities, including financially, whenever possible.

VS: As young activists inheriting a world ripe with the threat of nuclear war and climate catastrophe, where do you find hope?

SZ: To be honest, there are days when I lose hope, and days when I find new hope, and I think everyone can relate to that. The IPPNW student movement surely gave me a lot of hope and motivation to keep fighting for what is important to me. Connecting with like-minded people, seeing international activism, and hearing inspiring stories keeps me going.

WM: The TPNW is a great tool that gives us hope. Countries around the world are experiencing the climate crisis and are slowly beginning to understand the consequences that would arise if a nuclear war were to break out. Universalization of the TPNW is a great source of hope!

[An extended interview with Stella and Walusungu is on the Peace and Health Blog](#)



Dr. Angelika Claussen, Dr. Nikolaus Müllner, and IPPNW policy director Chuck Johnson (from left) present interim findings about the impact of an attack or serious accident on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant during a press conference in Vienna.

After a long hiatus from physical meetings during the pandemic, IPPNW physician-activists and medical students from about 30 countries gathered in April in Mombasa, Kenya for the 23rd IPPNW World Congress.

Medical students kicked off events with a five-day pre-Congress bike tour, dubbed “A Journey from Darkness to Light.” From April 20-25, fifteen medical students from nine different countries rode more than 500 kilometers from Nairobi to Mombasa, through city and savannah, to raise awareness about the congress theme of “Disarmament, Climate Crisis and Health.”

The main Congress took place from April 27-29, with the medical students holding their own day-long meeting on April 26. IPPNW’s Board and International Council met twice to discuss policy and programs and to elect new global leadership.

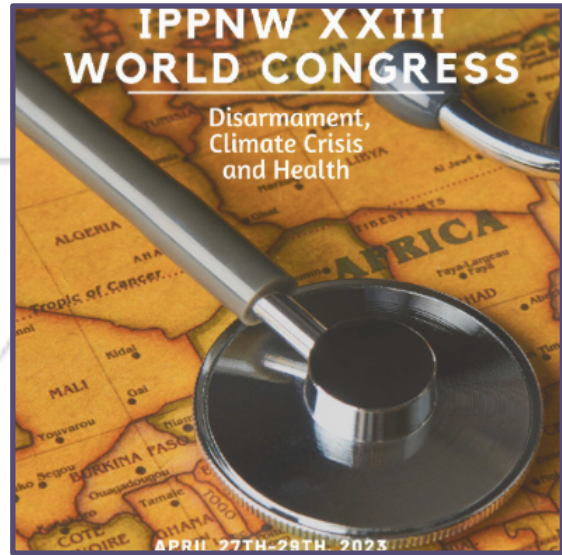
IPPNW’s first congress in Africa was, first and foremost, an opportunity to learn from our African colleagues about their perspectives on the issues, including the war in Ukraine, uranium mining, the threat of nuclear war, and the climate crisis.

It was also a unique and important opportunity to attract and involve new generations of health advocates, especially women, for peace and disarmament. This has been a top IPPNW priority for several years. In this regard, the Mombasa Congress exceeded our highest expectations. More than half of all Congress participants were young Africans in their 20s and 30s. Many were new to IPPNW. Encouragingly, women were equally represented both as speakers and as Congress delegates.

A highlight of the main program was a special youth panel that explored how young health professionals and other young people can become involved in advocating for climate justice, nuclear weapons abolition, and a more peaceful and sustainable world.

The Congress was a unique and important milestone that renewed individual and collective energies, solidarity, and planning in this critical moment in world affairs. A final “Mombasa Declaration” reaffirmed our responsibility to “prevent what we cannot cure” and rededicated IPPNW to “a habitable world free from the threat of nuclear extinction and climate catastrophe.”

[Read the Mombasa Declaration on the Peace and Health blog](#)



Panel discussions linked the themes of nuclear disarmament, armed conflict, climate, and health.

“We urgently need to change course if we are to avoid the catastrophic consequences of either a nuclear war or an environmental collapse. The diplomatic and political processes that produced the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons showed the world that a well-organized group of non-nuclear-armed nations, armed instead with scientific evidence and medical expertise about nuclear weapons and nuclear war, and supported by an informed and energized civil society, could effectively make the case that possession of nuclear weapons is illegitimate and that nuclear deterrence is not only foolhardy, but also immoral.”

— from the Mombasa Declaration



Physicians and medical students from about 30 countries came to Mombasa for the first IPPNW World Congress in Africa – and the first post-Covid-pandemic!



Bike tours to promote IPPNW’s goals have become a tradition before World Congresses, and the Mombasa Congress was no exception. Fifteen participants from nine different countries pedalled 500 km from Nairobi to Mombasa in five days, rallying young doctors and medical students to raise awareness and promote advocacy on disarmament, climate justice and health.



The issues of nuclear war and climate change converged at the 23rd Congress



[Read a day-by-day account of the bike tour and see more photos](#)



The new IPPNW board, elected in Mombasa, is the most diverse in federation history.



Nuclear abolition news and updates

For more information, contact Chuck Johnson
(cjohnson@ippnw.org)

New Geneva office helps build momentum for abolition

Repeated threats from the Russian Federation that it would consider using tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine have heightened concern about the risk of nuclear war to a level not seen in decades.

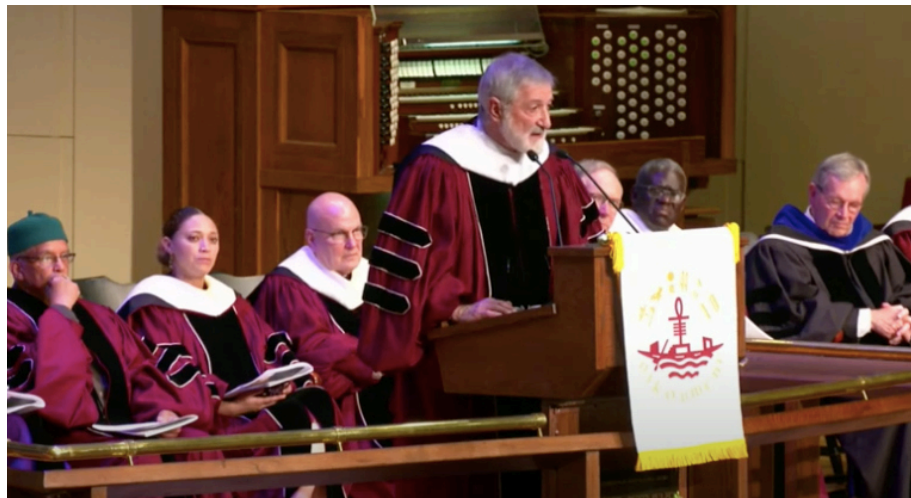
In the face of these dangers, IPPNW, with your help, is redoubling its efforts to prevent nuclear war. In March, we established a new office in Geneva that is a fifteen-minute walk from the United Nations. Policy Director Chuck Johnson is overseeing Geneva operations in order to ramp up our capacity to collaborate with other international health organizations.

Eliminating all nuclear weapons is an urgent medical, humanitarian, environmental, and public health imperative. Setting up a liaison office in Geneva has strengthened IPPNW's global network of 55 national affiliates and our partners in the health community worldwide.

A permanent presence in the "Peace Capital" of the world enables us to better use our NGO status at the UN and the World Health Organization, as we can now work side-by-side with diplomats and decision-makers in Geneva.

In Geneva, we can:

- Build on the momentum for nuclear weapons abolition created



On 13 April, former IPPNW co-president Ira Helfand was awarded the prestigious "Gandhi, King, Ikeda Community Builders' Prize" from Morehouse College, a historically Black college in Atlanta, Georgia. The award was given "to recognize and pay tribute to [his] passionate and nonviolent struggle to prevent humanity from falling victim to the horrors of nuclear disaster." Dr. Helfand said "those of us living today have been given the opportunity to save the world, and that is the best thing that any one of us can ever do with his or her life."



[Watch Dr. Helfand's acceptance speech](#)

by the passage of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by the UN and subsequent signing and ratification—95 nations have signed or ratified to date!

- Coordinate nuclear weapons abolition advocacy with our colleagues in the International Committee for the Red Cross, the World Medical Association, the World Federation of Public Health Associations, and the International Council of Nurses, whose international headquarters are all in Geneva.

- Urge the World Health Organization to update its 1987 report on the health effects of nuclear war and to reaffirm the duty of health professionals to help prevent the greatest immediate threat to the health and well being of humankind.

Medical journals urge nuclear abolition

(Continued from page 1)

Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee Meeting and the 78th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

"The danger is great and growing," the editorial warns. "The nuclear armed states must eliminate their nuclear arsenals before they eliminate us."

The editorial cites the special responsibility of professional health associations "to inform their members worldwide about the threat to human survival."



[Read the editorial *peaceandhealthblog.com*](#)

Threat of nuclear war

(Continued from page 1)

weapons. So far 95 nations have signed the Treaty and 68 have ratified it.

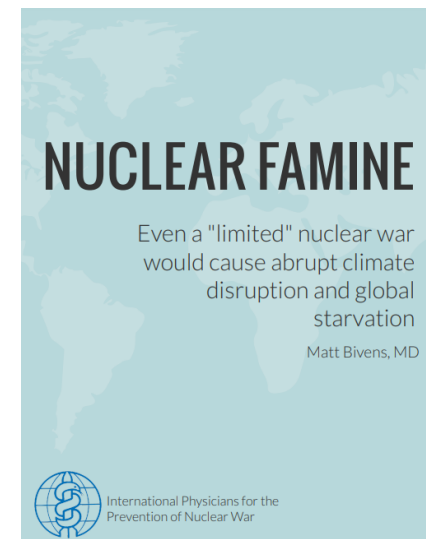
In the United States, the Back from the Brink campaign was formed, with leadership from IPPNW's US affiliate, Physicians for Social Responsibility, to build support for the Treaty. The campaign calls on the US to acknowledge the danger posed by nuclear weapons and to make the elimination of all nuclear weapons world-wide our highest security priority. It specifically calls on the United States to begin negotiations with the other eight nuclear states for a verifiable, enforceable, time-bound agreement to dismantle their nuclear weapons.

Even at this moment of great tension between the US and Russia, we can take hope from the rapid progress in arms control that followed after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 and the Euro Missile Crisis in 1983. While there is no guarantee of success, we must try. Because we know what will happen if these weapons are not eliminated. It is not a question of whether they will be used, only a question of when.

For years most of us have ignored the imminent danger of nuclear war, believing that somehow nuclear weapons were making us safer. We can no longer ignore the truth: nuclear weapons are the greatest immediate threat to our safety, the danger of nuclear war is great and growing, and we must move rapidly to eliminate these weapons before they eliminate us.



[Back From the Brink](#)



IPPNW's most recent report on nuclear famine, written by Dr. Matt Bivens, summarizes for non-scientists the latest scientific data showing that a so-called "limited" or "regional" nuclear war would be neither limited nor regional. On the contrary, it would be a planetary-scale event. In fact, it would be far more dangerous than we understood even a few years ago. A war that detonated fewer than 1/20th of the world's nuclear weapons would still crash the climate, deplete the global food supply, and disrupt all aspects of life on Earth. Famines and unrest would kill hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions. [Nuclear Famine is available at *ippnw.org*.](#)

The world is facing many other pressing threats and they all demand our attention. But if we do not eliminate the nuclear danger, we will not be here to deal with any of these other issues.

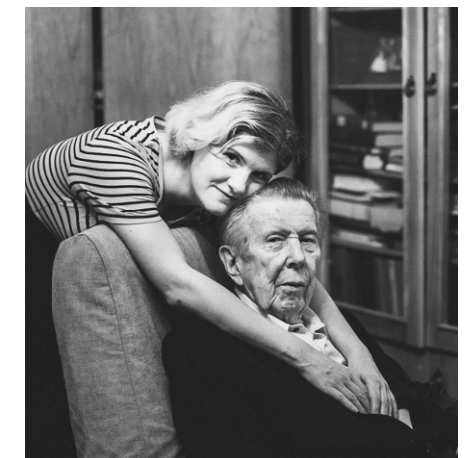
Nuclear disarmament can help us resolve these other issues. The process of creating a world free of nuclear weapons will require a new level of international cooperation. That process can serve as a model for how to deal with the climate crisis, the next pandemic, the scandal of continued poverty and racial injustice, and the other great problems that confront humanity.

Remembering Dr. Chazov in Baku

[The following article by Boston physician Joe Hodgkin is taken from a longer piece that can be read in its entirety on the [Peace and Health Blog](#).]

I met with my friend and colleague, Olga Mironova, cardiologist and co-president of IPPNW, in Baku, Azerbaijan, and we remembered the legacy of her grandfather, Yevgeniy Chazov.

Dr. Chazov was a celebrated cardiologist, widely recognized for his scientific and clinical accomplishments, rising all the way to the rank of Minister of Health of the USSR in 1987. At an international conference in the early 1980s, he was approached by American cardiologists with a proposal to create a joint advocacy organization to speak out about the public health threats posed by the growing arms race. Despite significant personal risk, he agreed. He joined with Dr. Bernard Lown and other American and Soviet colleagues, to found IPPNW. We are all fortunate for his work and legacy, and are compelled to carry his work forward.



Like her grandfather, Dr. Yevgeniy Chazov, before her, Dr. Olga Mironova is an IPPNW co-president, committed to fostering dialog across borders and working to prevent nuclear war.

NPT PrepCom ends in stalemate

States show “indifference” to nuclear risks

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meeting (PrepCom) held from 31 July–11 August in Vienna, collapsed after member states failed to agree on a summary of their work. On the final day of the two-week conference, several states blocked consensus even on including the Chair’s factual summary and recommendations in the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs record.

Co-president Dr. Carlos Umaña spoke for IPPNW during an NGO session at the PrepCom, calling on the states parties to acknowledge the vulnerability of nuclear power reactors, such as that in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, as pre-positioned radiological disasters-in-waiting, and to establish the principle of designating demilitarized zones around all nuclear power plants. “Indifference toward the risks

regarding nuclear weapons and energy threatens all three pillars of the NPT,” he said, and “puts the world at great risk of nuclear annihilation.”

The NGO Reaching Critical Will (RCW) has become the *de facto* archivist for these nuclear arms control “cornerstone” meetings. As Ray Acheson of RCW observed, “One might think that two consecutive failed [NPT] Review Conferences would inspire some flexibility and compromise among states parties to preserve the Treaty they claim to care so much about.”

With the NPT in gridlock, all eyes now turn to the second meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which will be held later this year at the UN in New York City.



IPPNW Urgently Needs Your Support

Our world is closer to nuclear disaster than it has ever been.

But there is hope. And you can make a difference.

Help IPPNW increase awareness, bring decision-makers to the table, and save our planet!

Your support is urgently needed to grow our movement for nuclear abolition.

Please give today!

www.ippnw.org/donate

or use the enclosed envelope to give by mail.

Thank you.

Keep up to date with IPPNW on social media and subscribe to the [Peace and Health Blog](http://PeaceandHealthBlog.com) (peaceandhealthblog.com)



IPPNW co-president Dr. Carlos Umaña tells NPT member states “We are not doomed to destroy ourselves in a nuclear war, nor to destroy the environment we all depend on. Nor are we doomed to live on in a world where the majority of our people are denied adequate food, housing, health care and education....But if we are to survive, and if our people are to enjoy the life to which they are entitled, we must change course.”

IPPNW is a non-partisan federation of national medical organizations in 55 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, 339 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148 USA Tel: +1 617 443 1733; email: ippnw@ippnw.org

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