

Vital Signs

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International
Physicians
for the Prevention
of Nuclear War

Nobel Peace Laureate

24th World Congress honors Hibakusha, calls for end of wars and elimination of nuclear weapons

by Matt Bivens, MD

Terumi Tanaka was 13 years old, at home, reading a book, when the second atomic bomb ever dropped on a city exploded less than two miles away.

The flash of bright light startled him, and he threw himself on the ground and covered his ears, just before a shock wave struck. He woke unharmed under debris, self-extricated, and entered the waking nightmare of a wrecked Nagasaki.

Over the next few days, he saw hundreds of people “suffering in agony, unable to receive any kind of medical attention.” Five of his family members were among the dead. They included a beloved aunt whom Tanaka, at age 13, had to cremate by himself in a field.

Today, aged 93, Tanaka is a retired physicist. He was one of many moving and engaging speakers at the 24th IPPNW World Congress, held in Nagasaki from 4-6 October. He also accepted the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots organization of survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The three-day World Congress was attended by more than 350 physicians, about 50 medical students, and many other citizens concerned by the

“As medical practitioners [and students], you will be familiar with the phrase: first, do no harm. Upholding this principle means supporting a world without nuclear weapons”

*— Izumi Nakamitsu,
Under-Secretary-General
and High Representative
for Disarmament Affairs,
United Nations*

existential threat of nuclear weapons. It opened with speeches from the governor of Nagasaki province, the heads of Japanese medical societies, and the UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. These were followed by a series of addresses from leaders of four organizations who have received Nobel Peace Prizes for work on nuclear abolition: IPPNW, (1985); the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs (1995); the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (2017); and Nihon Hidanyko.

Congress attendees heard sobering accounts of how the possibility of a nuclear war has grown more likely than ever— with more than 12,000 nuclear weapons held by nine states around the world, aggressive

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Representatives of four Nobel Peace Laureate organizations met in Nagasaki for IPPNW's World Congress: (from left) Dr. Tatsujiro Suzuki (Pugwash), Hon. Melissa Parke (ICAN), Terumi Tanaka (Nihon Hidankyo), Dr. Carlos Umaña (IPPNW), Walusungu Mtonga (IPPNW)

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There cannot be health without peace or peace without health

IPPNW addressed the topic “Conflict, Militarism, and Health—An Agenda for Action” at the 2025 World Health Summit (WHS). The special session was co-hosted by IPPNW, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), and the WHS Academic Alliance. The WHS, one of the most prominent global health forums, meets annually in Berlin.

Against the backdrop of increasing militarism and conflicts, the session explored:

- The links among militarism, climate change and health, including: climate change as a driver of conflict; the impact of conflict on climate change; direct and indirect effects of war and climate change on health;
- The enormous cost of war and how the diversion of resources impoverishes our ability to address significant health problems;
- The need for a global conflict-health index to monitor progress;
- The increasing and urgent need for the prevention of



IPPNW's Carlos Umaña at the 2025 World Health Summit. “Nuclear weapons have emboldened aggression, poisoned relationships between countries, and undermined security.”

conflict in general and nuclear war in particular.

The session was moderated by Sir Andrew Haines, Professor of Environmental Change and Public Health at LSHTM. Speakers included Elsara Badri, Co-Executive Director of the Global Alliance on War, Conflict and Health; former IPPNW co-president Carlos Umaña; Prof. Neta Crawford from the University of St. Andrews; and Dr. Neil Arya, president of the Pegasus Institute.

“Ending nuclear weapons before they end us”

On 13 May, the *British Medical Journal* published a joint journal editorial supporting passage of the WHO resolution entitled, “Ending nuclear weapons, before they end us,” with endorsements from 132 medical journals worldwide, including *The Lancet* and the *Journal of Public Health Policy*. The editorial was organized by IPPNW senior advisor Chris Zielinski, president of the World Association of Medical Editors, and co-written by Drs. Tilman Ruff, Andy Haines, and Richard Horton, editor-in-chief of *The Lancet*, and signed by a distinguished group of editors and IPPNW leaders.

[Read the editorial](#)



IPPNW working with UN and WHO to update studies on consequences of nuclear war

A multi-year effort by IPPNW to persuade the World Health Organization (WHO) to produce a 21st century report on the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war and nuclear testing was met with success in May when WHO Member States approved a resolution to undertake a new scientific study.

The new WHO study and a complementary UN study, “Nuclear War Effects and Scientific Research,” mandated by the General Assembly last year, were the subject of a special planning session at IPPNW’s 24th World Congress in Nagasaki.

Long-time IPPNW leaders Dr. Masao Tomonaga, Director Emeritus of the Japanese Red Cross Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Hospital, himself an atomic bomb survivor, and Sir Andy Haines were chosen to serve on the UNGA’s 21-member expert study panel, with Prof. Haines as Vice Chair. The panel will conduct the first comprehensive study of its kind since 1989, examining the impacts of nuclear war on the global climate, public health, agriculture, and the global economy. It will report its findings to the UN Secretary General in 2027.

IPPNW board member Tilman Ruff, who helped lead our advocacy for the renewed WHO study, reported that he and Prof. Haines, along with newly elected co-president Kati Juva and IPPNW senior advisor Chris Zielinski are advising WHO staff as they develop the study, which should feature research on the devastating effects of nuclear testing, a topic not covered in previous WHO studies.

World Congress

(Continued from page 1)

plans to expand arsenals in many key nations, destabilizing factors like artificial intelligence and hypersonic missiles, and numerous flash points for conflict, from the Kashmir region to the war-wracked territory of Ukraine. Congress attendees also reviewed the evidence that even a regional or “limited” nuclear war could crash the world’s climate and agriculture, leading to hundreds of millions of deaths in lands far from a war zone.

“Alas, the world is nearer a nuclear war than it has ever been,” said Dr. Kati Juva of Finland, a co-president of IPPNW, in her address to the huge hall of listeners at Nagasaki’s Dejima Messe convention center. “The Doomsday Clock stands at 89 seconds to midnight, and international diplomacy seems to be failing us.”

Attendees heard extensive testimony about the humanitarian consequences of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 80 years ago, including direct testimony from some of the Hibakusha, or atomic bombing survivors. A census earlier this year found 99,130 surviving

Hibakusha, with an average age today of 86.

“I urge everyone to listen to the voices of those who can still speak today,” said Tanaka, who addressed the 50 medical students in the hall directly, charging them to continue to work for nuclear abolition.

It was repeatedly noted that all of the Hibakusha were children when the atomic bombs were dropped – which means that, in essence, the only eyewitness testimony we have of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is the testimony of children. (The bombings killed 38,000 children outright, and countless more were injured.)

“They were just boys when the United States dropped a single nuclear bomb on this city,” said Melissa Parke, ICAN’s Executive Director, of some of the dignified older men who had addressed the hall earlier.

Parke recounted working for the UN Relief Agency more than 20 years ago and watching one August evening in Gaza as a commemoration ceremony was held for the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. “Hundreds of Palestinian children lit candles on Gaza Harbor,” she said. “They were remembering children in

another time and place who had been bombed.”

These days, she continued, the elderly Hibakusha, shaped by their own childhood experiences, are often found leading vigils in Japan to honor the children of Gaza. And of course, by sharing their childhood memories, the Hibakusha have been instrumental in convincing the majority of the world’s nations to sign on to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

“The abolition of nuclear weapons will be a moral frontier as significant as the abolition of slavery,” Parke said. “Of all our challenges, this is the least complex. All that’s required is political will and leadership.”

[Matt Bivens, an emergency physician, authored the 3rd edition of IPPNW’s Nuclear Famine report.]

In 2024, the nine nuclear armed states spent \$100 billion on their nuclear arsenals, with the United States spending more than all of the other states combined.

IPPNW’s annual budget is equivalent to less than two minutes of global nuclear weapons spending.

How much are you willing to invest in a world without nuclear weapons? Support IPPNW’s life-saving work with a donation today.



IPPNW medical students shared ideas about safeguarding the future from the threats of climate change and nuclear war during the Student Congress in Nagasaki.



Paying tribute to victims and survivors

IPPNW members gathered at the Nagasaki Peace Park to remember the victims and survivors of the devastation inflicted upon their city 80 years ago. The Peace Statue stands as a powerful symbol of hope and determination that nuclear weapons will never be used again.



Highlights from the 24th World Congress



 [Learn more: www.ippnw.org/ai](http://www.ippnw.org/ai)

US-Russia dialogue: the past, present, and future of scientific diplomacy

Over the past several years, new young physician leaders in IPPNW's US and Russian affiliates have rekindled the personal and professional bonds that were fundamental to the pioneering role IPPNW's founders played in bridging the Cold War divide in order to address the acute threat of nuclear war. That work took a giant step forward at our Nagasaki Congress when US and Russian colleagues met to discuss the past, present, and future of "track two" diplomacy, including next steps in building and maintaining a foundation of trust, friendship, and scientific cooperation, despite political divisions between their two countries.



Leaders of the effort to renew US-Russian physician dialogue include Dr. Olga Trushina, co-president of IPPNW from Russia, and Dr. Joe Hodgkin, co-chair of Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility.

AI and nuclear weapons

A panel on artificial intelligence and nuclear weapons underscored the dangers of delegating nuclear decision-making to AI. Speakers stressed that machine learning-based AI is error-prone and fundamentally unverifiable. As hypersonic weapons compress decision times, militaries may be tempted to rely on AI for early warning, targeting, and autonomous response, leaving humans with little room to intervene. War games already show AI models favor escalation, likely increasing the risk of a catastrophic use of nuclear weapons. The conclusion was clear: the weaponization of AI amplifies the unpredictability and speed of escalation, and only human political action can meaningfully reduce and eliminate the risk of nuclear war. IPPNW has formed an international working group to continue engaging with this problem, and will offer a second public webinar in 2025 with experts on AI and nuclear weapons.

Breaking the spell of nuclear deterrence

At the workshop “Breaking the Spell of Nuclear Deterrence,” coordinated by IPPNW’s German, Dutch, Swedish, and Norwegian affiliates, participants explored the role physicians and healthcare workers can play in challenging nuclear deterrence. Recognizing that nuclear deterrence relies on the credible threat to use nuclear weapons, the discussion focused on how to confront this logic. Experts including Kjølsv Egeland, Tom Sauer, and David Victorin reframed the debate around the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the need to mobilize the public for prevention.



Participants in the deterrence workshop learned that credible threats to use nuclear weapons cannot provide security and only increase the likelihood of nuclear war.

Asia-Pacific activists confront risks of nuclear weapons

The Medical Association for Prevention of War (MAPW – IPPNW-Australia) and IPPNW-Philippines organized an interactive workshop to share regional concerns, areas of opportunity, and challenges to progress. Participants examined how regional conflicts affect perspectives on the utility of nuclear deterrence and how the legacy of nuclear weapons testing and uranium mining continues to damage public health and the environment. The workshop concluded that awareness, youth involvement, and regional collaboration can aid the Asia-Pacific’s progress to a nuclear weapons-free world.



Climate panelists (from left) Dennis Opondo (Kenya), Angelika Claussen (Germany), Bob Gould (US), and Bimal Khadka (Nepal).

Climate and nukes

Noting the acute and existential threat of the climate crisis and its links to nuclear weapons risks, IPPNW formed a Climate Working Group at the 2023 Mombasa Congress. The Working Group organized a panel in Nagasaki to explore the urgent connections among climate change, militarism, and health. Panelists challenged false solutions such as nuclear energy, highlighted the health impacts of both nuclear weapons and climate-induced conflict, and emphasized prevention as the only viable path forward. The discussion also underscored the importance of intersectionality, youth engagement, and IPPNW’s active presence at UN climate conferences (COPs) in building global momentum for change.



Congress panelists (from left) Sue Wareham (Australia), Youngah Lee (South Korea), Akira Kawasaki (Japan), and Kimiaki Kawai (Japan)

 [Learn more](#)

 [Read the Nagasaki Declaration](#)

A shared vision for peace: medical student leadership at the World Congress

IPPNW medical students are at the forefront of our movement for a nuclear weapons-free world. Not surprisingly, they played a vital and visible role in the success of the 24th World Congress in Nagasaki. More than 50 medical students and junior doctors from around the world represented a diverse range of countries, cultures, and experiences. What united them was a shared vision for a safer, more secure world.

Before most Congress participants had even packed their bags, more than 20 young leaders from nine countries began an eight-day, 500-kilometer bike tour from Hiroshima to Nagasaki. Along the way, the cyclists visited historical sites, engaged in dialogue with local communities, and reflected on the humanitarian consequences of war. Traveling between the only two cities that have been destroyed by nuclear weapons in wartime, their journey was a testament to the commitment of IPPNW students to peace and nuclear justice.

On 1 October, students hosted a full-day Student Congress featuring expert presentations, interactive sessions, and action-oriented, peer-led discussions on the threats to our collective future. Sessions such as the World Café created dynamic spaces for students to share regional experiences, compare challenges, and strengthen their advocacy skills.

A key moment during the Student Congress was the election of the next International Student Representatives (ISRs), who will serve on IPPNW's Board of Directors. We're thrilled to welcome Anna Khouri from Germany and Namkhai Bayasgalan from Mongolia to this important leadership role. In the months and years to come, they will play

a crucial role in bringing the student perspective to our global leadership, representing IPPNW at international fora, and strengthening our external partnerships.

The panel, "Learning from the past and looking towards the future," gave past ISRs Drs. Jans Fromow, Alex Rosen, and Kelvin Kibet the opportunity to share insights from their tenures, offer career advice, and learn from current students, who observed that the intergenerational and collaborative nature of IPPNW encourages them to stay involved.

Notably, a quarter of our incoming Board—Dr. Ruth Mitchell (Chair, Australia), Dr. Bimal Khadka (At-Large, UK/Nepal), Stella Ziegler (Deputy Chair, Germany), Dr. Jans Fromow (Speaker of the International Council, Mexico), and Dr. Victor Chelashow (Deputy Speaker of the International Council, Kenya)—previously served as ISRs. A number of other board members got engaged as



IPPNW cyclists gather at the A-bomb memorial in Hiroshima for the start of the 2025 bike tour to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. [More photos and a day-by-day narrative.](#)

students and junior doctors. This investment in the incoming generation will strengthen our federation for the years and decades to follow.

Our medical students were fortunate to hear the last remaining Hibakusha tell their stories first-hand in the very cities where the bombs were dropped. It is now their duty to heed the call of these survivors to eliminate every last nuclear weapon.



[Learn more about our medical student movement](#)



Anna Khouri (Germany) and Namkhai Bayasgalan (Mongolia) congratulate each other upon their election as International Student Representatives.



IPPNW students have played a key role in the UN's Youth 4 Disarmament initiative.

IPPNW elects women leaders to top posts

Congratulations to Kati Juva, Inga Blum, and Olga Mironova Trushina

At the Nagasaki World Congress in October, three of IPPNW's most vibrant affiliate leaders were elected co-presidents by the International Council. For the first time in the federation's history, the 20-member board of directors will be led by three outstanding women.



Drs. Kati Juva (Finland), Inga Blum (Germany) and Olga Mironova Trushina (Russia) made history when they were elected the federation's co-presidents by the International Council this October in Nagasaki.

Dr. Inga Blum is a neurologist from Hamburg, Germany specializing in family medicine. She joined IPPNW as a medical student with an interest in global health and justice and got involved in ICAN at its founding at the IPPNW World Congress in Helsinki in 2006. In her view, the abolition of nuclear weapons is not only an urgent necessity because of the acute danger nuclear weapons pose for global survival but also a great chance to shift international security policies from being based on the threat of mutual annihilation to a human security system based on cooperation.

Having witnessed the failure of disarmament conferences as a member of IPPNW delegations, she initiated a study on attitudes towards nuclear weapons among

political decision-makers at the University of Hamburg. Inga served on the board of the German affiliate from 2013 to 2021. She actively promotes the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Germany, and started the annual IPPNW Summer Camp to protest against the stationing of NATO nuclear weapons in Büchel.

Dr. Kati Juva is a retired neurologist and auxiliary professor. Her clinical work has concentrated on memory disorders and neuropsychiatry. She has also been a city councillor in Helsinki. Kati has been involved in IPPNW since she was a medical student, and was one of the "founding mothers" of IPPNW Finland in 1982. She was deputy speaker and then speaker of the International Council for more

than a decade and now starts a second term as co-president.

Kati helped organize two IPPNW world conferences in Helsinki (1984 and 2006) and is also one of the two coordinators of ICAN Finland—a coalition of six Finnish peace organizations. She has recently published a book in Finnish titled "Nuclear weapons endanger your health," and is a regular contributor to IPPNW's Peace and Health blog.

Dr. Olga Mironova Trushina is a cardiologist based in Moscow. Her major research interests are myocardial infarction, intensive care, and a multidisciplinary approach to the treatment of patients with inflammatory bowel diseases, psoriasis and several other conditions. She has been professor and chair of Faculty Therapy #1 at Sechenov University since 2022, and is a member of the council of mentors of young scientists of the Department of Medical Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Olga's grandfather, Eugene Chazov, was a principal founder of IPPNW, and she has embraced his commitment to both medicine and the cause of peace. Fluent in English, French, Spanish, and Russian, she has a unique capacity to foster friendly and open dialog between countries, especially showing students and young doctors how they can promote peace, healthy lifestyles, well-being, gender equality, and effective partnerships.

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Dr. Leaning to be honored at 8th annual Global Health and Peace event

IPPNW and Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility will honor Dr. Jennifer Leaning with our Global Health and Peace Award at a special ceremony in Cambridge, Massachusetts in December in recognition of her life-long commitment to protecting and promoting health and human rights and to raising global awareness about the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war.

Dr. Leaning's expertise on issues of public health and international law in war, disaster, and other aspects of human security has been acquired through decades of first-hand investigation into human rights and humanitarian law violations—often at great personal risk—during conflicts in Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Kosovo, the Middle East, Pakistan, Somalia, the Chad-Darfur border, the African Great Lakes region, and elsewhere.

A former board member of both PSR and Physicians for Human Rights, as well as other humanitarian and health organizations, Dr. Leaning is a senior fellow at the Harvard FXB Center and Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Her many publications have included *The Counterfeit Ark* (1984), which debunked the myth of civil defense following a nuclear war, and *Humanitarian Crises: The Medical and Public Health Response* (1999). She was editor-in-chief of the journal *Medicine & Global Survival* from 1994-2001.



Dr. Jennifer Leaning

This year's Youth Leadership Award will be presented to Dr. Arthur Hale, a resident physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital, in recognition of his exceptional commitment and contribution to educating health care professionals and the public on the grave threat posed by nuclear weapons.

The Ikeda Center in Harvard Square will host our special event from 5:00-8:00 pm on Saturday, December 6th. Please join us for some beautiful music, food and drink, and socializing with friends and colleagues who share our concern about the twin existential threats of nuclear war and climate change.



Dr. Arthur Hale

Our most important work lies ahead

IPPNW has marked its 45th anniversary year—our 40th as a Nobel Peace Laureate—with a message that is as compelling today as it was when our movement was founded during the Cold War.

The rise of authoritarianism and the erosion of democracy, the war in Ukraine, the military strikes by nuclear-armed Israel and the US on Iran's nuclear facilities, the weaponization of artificial intelligence, and the unprecedented rise in global military spending, including a record \$100 billion on nuclear weapons, are escalating the risk that nuclear weapons will be used by design, accident, or miscalculation.

That means your moral and financial support of our work is more important than ever.

In recognition of IPPNW's 45-year commitment to ending the threat of nuclear war, please consider making a special one-time or monthly donation of \$45, \$450, or even \$4,500 if that is something you can afford.

Thank you for being a vital member of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

Please make your gift today by mailing back your donation card or by donating online at www.ippnw.org/donate.

IPPNW is a non-partisan federation of national medical organizations in 56 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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