



Bridging geopolitical divides: IPPNW revitalizes dialogue in Russia and China

Next month will mark the 40th anniversary of the 1986 Reykjavík Summit, the historic meeting where Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev came astonishingly close to completely abolishing the nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers. While the meeting concluded without an official accord due to US insistence on pursuing the Strategic Defense Initiative ("Star Wars"), it nevertheless laid the critical diplomatic foundation for future landmark nuclear disarmament treaties. It also proved that even bitter adversaries can sit at the negotiating table to tackle head-on the greatest immediate threat to human survival.

Tragically, these hard-fought gains have been lost to a steady breakdown in international diplomacy, a dangerous arms race in nuclear weapons and artificial intelligence, and a resort to threats and war to prosecute disputes. This has made the risk of catastrophic miscalculation higher than at any point since the Cold War.

As we did throughout the 1980s, IPPNW is bridging geopolitical divides by engaging our network of physicians and health partners around the world on the growing threat of nuclear war—especially with colleagues in Russia and China—not as an abstract political calculation, but as the final, untreatable global health epidemic.



Participants in the intergenerational Moscow meeting in 2021 included (from left): American co-founder Dr. James Muller, Ekaterina Schelkanovtseva, Olga Perekosova, IPPNW Co-President Dr. Olga Trushina, and Dr. Joe Hodgkin.

Monthly Russian-American exchanges

IPPNW is one of very few professional associations that has not abandoned dialogue with Russian colleagues. Since the summer of 2021, a new, energized cohort of Russian and American medical students and young doctors has hosted informal monthly Zoom calls to build relationships and trust.

The effort was the brainchild of Dr. Joe Hodgkin, an attending hospitalist at Massachusetts General Hospital, and Dr. Olga Trushina, a cardiologist at the Russian Cardiology Research and Production Complex (which was founded by her grandfather,

IPPNW co-founder Eugene Chazov). Dr. Hodgkin serves on the Board of IPPNW's US affiliate, Physicians for Social
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Don't let AI get the bomb

The world stands at an increasingly dire crossroads as unregulated artificial intelligence (AI) becomes integrated into nuclear weapons command and control systems. AI's speed and opacity threaten to compress the time available for human judgment in a nuclear crisis, while its use in cyberattacks and disinformation raises the odds of crises occurring in the first place. And these systems have not been trained to de-escalate situations.

Alarmingly, a study conducted at King's College London earlier this year tested AI models from Google, OpenAI, and Anthropic across 21 simulated international crisis scenarios. In 20 of the 21, the AI models escalated to the use of nuclear weapons. Researchers found the models tended to treat nuclear weapons as legitimate, useful tools of war rather than instruments of deterrence.

There are no guardrails in place to manage this fast-moving and largely unknown threat. France, the United Kingdom, and the United States have all declared that they would never allow AI to control decisions on nuclear weapons use, and the US and China have opened a dialogue on keeping human judgement central to nuclear weapons protocols. But no formal agreement exists among any of the nine nuclear powers to codify or verify these commitments. Even if a "human in the loop" is maintained, the fear of experts is that in a moment of crisis the humans will defer to the AI's split-second decision to launch nuclear weapons.

This danger took center stage at the Global Nobel Laureates Assembly on Artificial Intelligence and Nuclear War, held 14-16 July in Castel Gandolfo, the summer residence of Pope Leo XIV. The gathering was inspired by the Pope's

encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, on safeguarding humanity in the age of AI, which calls for the runaway technology to be reined in before it further destabilizes global security.

The Assembly builds on a long Catholic legacy of advancing a nuclear-weapons-free world. The Holy See was the first state to join the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

negotiations toward the verifiable and irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons within an agreed, time-bound framework.

As the impossibility of fully isolating nuclear command and control systems from AI becomes ever clearer, the urgency of abolishing nuclear weapons altogether only grows.

We recognize that there can be no right hands for these weapons, and that their elimination is the only true solution to this threat.



IPPNW Board Chair Dr. Ruth Mitchell (l) and Program Director Molly McGinty at the Global Nobel Laureates Assembly on Artificial Intelligence and Nuclear War in July. [Photo: Benedetta Guidantoni and C. Valletti]

Led by Dr. Jim Muller (see pg. 7), IPPNW co-organized the Assembly alongside the Nobel Laureates Assembly for the Prevention of Nuclear War, convening more than 200 Nobel laureates, former heads of state, scientists, religious leaders, and experts. IPPNW was represented by Drs. Jim Muller, Ruth Mitchell, Ira Helfand, John Pastore, and Kirill Zykov, along with Program Director Molly McGinty.

The meeting concluded with the signing of the Rome Declaration, warning that AI embedded in nuclear systems "leaves little time for, or even replaces, human judgement in a crisis," and calling for urgent, sustained, good-faith

The Global Nobel Laureates Assembly was a continuation of IPPNW's multi-year effort to confront this crisis of unchecked technology and nuclear weapons. Our AI Working Group will soon host a public online seminar with field experts and continue to share evidence-based information with the public.

"The danger of nuclear war has never been greater, and AI compounds and heightens that risk. The integration of AI and nuclear weapons systems is already well underway, and since that process cannot be reversed, we must eliminate nuclear weapons,"

—Dr. Ruth Mitchell



Bridging divides

(Continued from page 1)

Responsibility, and Dr. Trushina is a Co-President of IPPNW. Together, they have renewed and re-imagined IPPNW's founding mission, using modern technologies that are integral to their social and professional lives.

Participants in these discussions have gone on to publish relevant articles in medical literature, attend key nuclear disarmament meetings at the UN, and become active in local and national campaigns opposing the threat of nuclear war.

Russian non-proliferation conference

At the invitation of the Russian Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS), IPPNW's Chuck Johnson traveled to Moscow to participate in high-level discussions on nuclear weapons. CENESS is a think-tank that fosters dialogue and cooperation on nuclear policy, non-proliferation, and nuclear energy issues. Chuck previously served as the founding director of the IPPNW Geneva Liaison Office before shifting to his role as policy director.

The 2026 Moscow Nonproliferation Conference took place on 12-14 March, bringing together 289 diplomats, researchers, academics, and advocates from 49 countries. Roughly half the participants were Russian. The event also drew high-level officials from key UN agencies and international organizations, such as Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, and IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi.

During closed-door sessions, participants tackled the major global security challenges in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. A special "New Generation Experts Segment"



Tilman Ruff, Joe Hodgkin, and Chuck Johnson meet with Professor Cong Yali, Immediate Past President of the Chinese Medical Ethics Association (left), at the annual meeting of the Chinese Medical Association.

also gathered approximately 40 young professionals from 20 countries to explore the associated risks and opportunities.

This marked the first time IPPNW was invited to this flagship biennial event. The conference provided a rare, high-value opportunity for IPPNW to engage directly with top Russian and international officials and experts—both during the formal panels and in private meetings on the margins.

Renewed outreach to China

Chuck Johnson has also been at the leading edge of IPPNW's efforts to strengthen cooperation and dialogue with health professionals, professional associations and academics in China. His consistent outreach to Chinese colleagues during international health partner and UN disarmament meetings in Geneva led to an invitation to lecture at the China Foreign Affairs University in Beijing in the fall of 2025.

While in Beijing, Chuck also met with members of the Chinese Medical Association at their headquarters, securing a commitment from them to invite IPPNW doctors to present to medical professionals in China in the coming year. As a result, an IPPNW delegation attended the annual meeting of the Chinese

Medical Association's Medical Ethics Branch in July 2026. Chuck was joined by Dr. Joe Hodgkin (PSR-USA) and Dr. Tilman Ruff (MAPW-IPPNW Australia).

This visit was our most significant interaction with China since the 2004 IPPNW World Congress in Beijing. The delegation delivered three lectures at the national medical conference, highlighting the critical role of medical and public health professionals in addressing the growing threat of nuclear war.

Following the conference, the team held high-level meetings with dozens of senior academics, health officials, and organizational leaders in both Hefei and Beijing. These discussions were aided significantly by Dr. Hodgkin's fluency in Mandarin.

The delegation discussed several concrete follow-on activities, including planning additional meetings and co-authoring joint publications in prominent Chinese health and science journals focused on the prevention of nuclear war.

By reviving these critical channels of communication, IPPNW ensures that even in times of intense global friction, the medical community remains a vital bridge toward peace. The US, Russia, and China would do well to revive the "spirit of Reykjavik", returning to the negotiating table to complete what Reagan and Gorbachev came so close to achieving—saving humankind from the growing threat of nuclear war.

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IPPNW World Roundup

THE NETHERLANDS

Young health professionals embrace legacy of Hibakusha

On the 81st anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Dr. Dirk Hoogenkamp, a board member of the Dutch affiliate, NVMP-Doctors for Peace, spoke at the Hiroshima Monument in Groningen, The Netherlands. Dr. Hoogenkamp reflected on the Hibakusha—atomic bomb survivors—and Hibaku-Jumoku—the trees that survived the bombings—saying they can guide us toward a nuclear-weapons-free world. The young physician told the crowd, “Of the Hibakusha, fewer and fewer remain...it won’t be long before we can only ask the trees: you were there, what did you experience?” Dr. Hoogenkamp is part of a growing number of Gen Z and millennial health professionals committed to carrying the legacy of the Hibakusha, ensuring that we abolish these weapons before they are used again. He closed with a call for The Netherlands to accede to the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and remove US nuclear weapons from Volkel.



Dr. Dirk Hoogenkamp speaking at the Hiroshima Monument in Groningen, Netherlands

THE PHILIPPINES

Medical students aspire to “prevent what we cannot treat”



Reimon Villanueva speaking on the *ippnw_students* Instagram feed.

Medical students in the Philippines joined IPPNW Student’s Voices for Peace Campaign to share reflections on what it means to carry the legacy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and ensure nuclear weapons are never used again. Reimon Villanueva with UP Medical Students for Social Responsibility stated, “The Hiroshima and Nagasaki anniversaries serve as grim reminders to us, as aspiring health professionals, that we can only hope to prevent what we cannot treat. As wars of aggression and techno-colonialism ravage the world, we remain steadfast in our call for the total abolition of nuclear weapons and the alleviation of issues that disrupt our pursuit of equity, justice, and peace.”



Drs. Sally Ndung’u and Dennis Opondo, with Chuck Johnson at the World Congress on Public Health.

SOUTH AFRICA

IPPNW leaders link peace and health in Cape Town

In September, IPPNW leaders Dr. Sally Ndung’u, Dr. Dennis Opondo, and IPPNW-GLO Policy Director Chuck Johnson represented the federation at the 18th World Congress on Public Health in Cape Town, South Africa. Leading health professionals from around the world tackled urgent public health challenges, including recovering from and preventing violent conflict. Dr. Ndung’u focused on violence prevention as a tool for improving maternal and children’s health, while Dr. Opondo emphasized the importance of Medical Peace Work education for young health workers.

Read more about these events and stay on top of other IPPNW news at: peaceandhealthblog.com

GERMANY

Preventing both climate and nuclear catastrophe

Dr. Angelika Claussen and Patrick Schukalla of IPPNW Germany represented the federation at the 64th Subsidiary Body of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP), in June. Dr. Claussen told conference participants "The time has come to move beyond siloed thinking—security in one box, climate in another, health in a third. Protecting health in the 21st century means preventing both climate catastrophe and nuclear catastrophe."



Patrick Schukalla (r) joined other conference participants at a "Don't Nuke the Climate" camp in Bonn.



Maria Arvaniti-Sotiropoulou (c) was joined at the ceremony by former IPPNW landmines campaign coordinator Piji Protopsaltis (l) and Mohammed El Bata, who was an IPPNW medical student in the 1990s.

GREECE

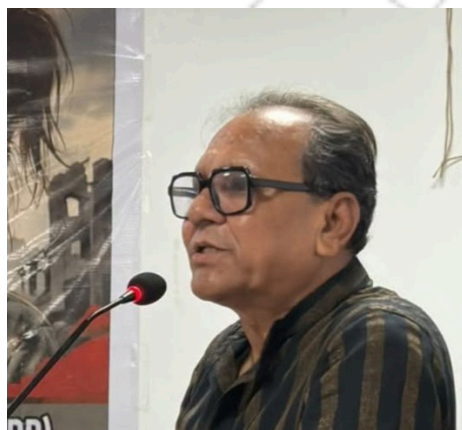
IPPNW activist honored

At a moving ceremony in Athens in September, Maria Arvaniti-Sotiropoulou, the President of IPPNW's Greek affiliate, was honored with the 2026 Nikos Nikiforidis Award, named for a peace activist who was executed by the Greek government in 1951. She was recognized for her lifelong activities in pursuit of peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons. Only a few days earlier, on international Peace Day, Maria had joined a delegation that met with the president of the Greek Parliament, Nikitas Kaklamanis, and presented him with an "Appeal for Peace and Climate Justice."

INDIA

The impact of war on children

On the 81st anniversary of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD), held a major seminar to raise its voice against wars and their devastating impact on children. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki killed an estimated 38,000 children. IDPD National Secretary Dr. Shakeel Ur Rahman reaffirmed the global call to never again use these indiscriminate weapons.



IDPD leader Dr. Shakeel ur Rahman.

IPPNW joins health leaders at World Health Assembly in Geneva

IPPNW's Geneva Liaison Office welcomed a 12-person IPPNW delegation to this year's 79th annual World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva.

An all-woman panel on "Climate Crisis, Peace and the Rights to Health and a Healthy Environment," organized by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Global Network for Academic Public Health, featured Stella Ziegler, IPPNW Executive Committee Vice-Chair, to promote the Medical Peace Work curriculum for health professionals. Dr. Andy Haines of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine spoke as part of an official side event in the WHO building, titled "Bridging Health and Peace: Accelerating the Global

Health and Peace Initiative (GHPI) in Turbulent Times," sponsored by the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), IPPNW, and several member states.

A dedicated side event, "Promoting Peace and Health: Public Health's Role," was organized by IPPNW-GLO and co-sponsored by Switzerland and WFPHA. Held just outside the UN gates at the Restaurant Vieux-Bois, the breakfast event closed the week with a packed audience of 100 engaged participants. Dr. Kati Juva, IPPNW's Co-President, expertly moderated the panel including Guillaume Simonian from the WHO's Global Health and Peace Initiative (GHPI), Bettina



Panelists at IPPNW's WHA side event (l-r): Dr. Heide Richter-Airijoki, Guillaume Simonian, Stella Ziegler, Dr. Andy Haines, Bettina Borisch, Dr. Kati Juva.

Borisch of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), Dr. Heide Richter-Airijoki, Member of Parliament of Saxony-Anhalt, Dr. Haines and Stella Ziegler.

Our most important work lies ahead

Every dollar you give goes directly toward the life-saving work of preventing nuclear war, the greatest public health threat of our time.

Nearly 75% of our funding comes from individuals like you.

Your support is what keeps physicians and medical students speaking out, educating, and demanding a world free of nuclear weapons.

Please make your gift today by mailing in your donation or by donating online at IPPNW.org/donate.



"What if AI that is involved in command and control of nuclear weapons makes a mistake?"

An interview with Dr. Jim Muller

Decades after first conceiving the idea of East-West medical cooperation to halt the Cold War arms race, IPPNW co-founder Dr. Jim Muller remains a driving force against the existential threat of nuclear war, working tirelessly to revitalize the track-two diplomacy that proved instrumental in avoiding nuclear conflict during the 1980s. He has twice addressed the Russian Academy of Sciences – in fluent Russian – forcefully reminding today's medical community of their solemn obligation to prevent nuclear escalation. His leadership was also central to organizing last July's Global Nobel Laureates Assembly on Artificial Intelligence and Nuclear War, hosted on the Vatican's Castel Gandolfo grounds (see article on page 2).



Dr. Muller signing the Rome Declaration on AI and nuclear war on behalf of IPPNW earlier this year [Photo: Benedetta Guidantoni and C. Valletti]

VS: What first drew you to nuclear disarmament work, and what made you decide to dedicate your time with IPPNW?

JM: My father was one of the first MDs into the Buchenwald concentration camp. At about age 12, I found his pictures and had an early exposure to the Holocaust. When I became the first American medical exchange student to the Soviet Union in 1967, the Holocaust victims fused with the victims who had suffered and died in the nuclear attacks [against Hiroshima and Nagasaki]. I decided in 1969, as a med student, that I would devote my professional work to preventing a nuclear war and, as a cardiologist, preventing heart attacks.

VS: Last December marked 40 years since IPPNW won the Nobel Peace Prize. Can you reflect on the significance of that moment?

JM: 1985 and the receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize was a great validation of the IPPNW principle that physicians could serve as a bridge between adversaries.

VS: You recently initiated the Global Nobel Laureates Assembly on Artificial Intelligence and

Nuclear War, hosted by the Vatican (see pg 2). Tell us why you are concerned about the integration of AI and nuclear weapons.

JM: I use AI in my medical research. It is wonderful, but it can make mistakes. What if AI that is involved in command and control of nuclear weapons makes a mistake? We are only as safe as the AI used in North Korean nuclear weapon systems. The public is quite concerned over AI risk, but in denial about the risk of nuclear war. Perhaps the combination of AI with nuclear weapons will be sufficient to



Jim and Kathleen Muller in the 1980s, when he made medical diplomacy between US and Russian doctors an IPPNW priority.

generate the mass movement against nuclear weapons that is needed for long-term survival.

VS: And what is the solution to this growing crisis?

JM: By growing crisis, I assume you are referring to the build-up of nuclear weapons, and the expiration of most arms control treaties. A part of the solution is the election of leaders in the US who respect international law, and refuse to become involved in wars. We are headed to a nuclear holocaust unless the weapons are destroyed.

VS: As you think about IPPNW's work ahead, what gives you hope?

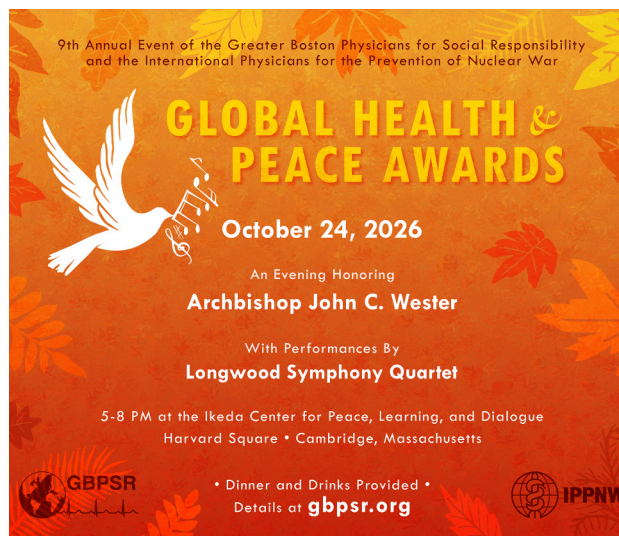
JM: I have hope because of the wonderful members of IPPNW. The organization is a ray of light in an otherwise dark night. It is marvelous to see the young from many countries unite to urge the leaders to abolish nuclear weapons.

Join us at the 9th Annual Global Health & Peace Awards

Recognizing the Catholic Church's unique and long-standing role in advancing the elimination of nuclear weapons (see pg 2), IPPNW and Greater Boston PSR are pleased to honor Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico in Harvard Square on Saturday, 24 October.

Archbishop Wester's archdiocese is home to two of the three major US nuclear weapons research facilities and the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons. He is a leading advocate for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which the Vatican was the first nation-state to sign and ratify.

Join us to celebrate his leadership with friends and colleagues.



Remembering Sid Alexander and Ron McCoy

IPPNW has lost two giants in medicine and in our global movement to abolish nuclear weapons. Both leave behind distinguished medical careers and a world made safer through their devotion to the cause of peace and nuclear disarmament.

Dr. Sidney Alexander

Sid dedicated his life to serving humankind both as a cardiologist and as a physician-advocate for the prevention of nuclear war. In 1961, he co-founded Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), IPPNW's US affiliate. As PSR president he led numerous physicians' exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union at a time when professional and citizen interaction between the

two countries was highly restricted. Just prior to his passing, Sid retired as Chairman Emeritus of the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine of the Lahey Clinic, where he served for 63 years. Sid passed away on 26 May at age 94.



*Dr. Sidney Alexander, 1931-2026
[Lahey Clinic photo]*

Dato Dr. Ronald McCoy

Ron McCoy was a visionary leader and revered member of the IPPNW family. Ron's dedication to working for a nuclear weapon-free world was inspired by his career as an obstetrician. He founded the Malaysian Physicians for Social

Responsibility in 1987, served as co-president of IPPNW for eight years, and proposed the creation of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in 2005, which led to the negotiation and adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017. He will be remembered for his boundless kindness and commitment and his legacy as the father of ICAN. Ron passed away on 1 September at age 96.



Dr. Ron McCoy celebrates the adoption of the TPNW with Hiroshima survivor Setsuko Thurlow shortly after the historic UN vote.

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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