



## International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

26 September

### Background

Achieving global nuclear disarmament is one of the oldest goals of the United Nations. It was the subject of the General Assembly's first resolution in 1946, which established the Atomic Energy Commission with a mandate to make specific proposals for the control of nuclear energy and the elimination of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction. The United Nations has been at the forefront of many major diplomatic efforts since then. In 1959, the General Assembly endorsed the objective of general and complete disarmament. In 1978, the first Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament further recognized that nuclear disarmament should be a priority objective. Every United Nations Secretary-General has actively promoted this goal.

Yet, today more than 16,000 nuclear weapons remain. Countries possessing such weapons have well-funded, long-term plans to modernize their nuclear arsenals. More than half of the world's population still lives in countries that either have such weapons or are members of nuclear alliances. As of 2014, while the number of deployed nuclear weapons has appreciably declined since the height of the Cold War, not one nuclear weapon has been physically destroyed pursuant to a treaty. In addition, no nuclear disarmament negotiations are underway. Meanwhile, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence persists as an element in the security policies of all possessor states and many of their allies.

In recent years, there has been growing frustration amongst Member States regarding the slow pace of nuclear disarmament. This frustration has been put into sharper focus with growing concerns worldwide over the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of even a single nuclear weapon, let alone a regional or global nuclear war.

These facts provide the foundation for the General Assembly's designation of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. This Day provides an occasion for the world community to reaffirm its commitment to global nuclear disarmament as a high priority. It provides an opportunity to educate the public - and their leaders - about the real benefits of eliminating such weapons, and the social and economic costs of perpetuating them. Commemorating this Day at the United Nations is especially important, given its universal membership and its long experience in grappling with nuclear disarmament issues. It is the right place to address one of humanity's greatest challenges; achieving the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution A/RES/68/32, the purpose of the International Day is to further the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons through enhancing public awareness and education about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination. In so doing, it is hoped that these activities will help to



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mobilize new international efforts towards achieving the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. To review the progress made in this regard, the General Assembly decided to convene, no later than 2018, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament.