
United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination

31 March 2017

English only

New York, 27-31 March 2017 and 15 June-7 July 2017

Youth and Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations: A Voice to be Heard

Submitted by Nuclear Age Peace Foundation¹

1. There are a record 1.8 billion young people in the world today. We make up 25% of the global population and that figure is growing.
2. Today's youth have never lived in a nuclear weapons-free world. We have inherited the burden of a heavily armed world where security is defined narrowly to the security of the state and not the security of humanity. The world spends resources to build, renew and maintain nuclear weapons that could be utilized to strengthen education, economic development, and social institutions towards the 2030 Agenda. Investing in the modernization of inhumane, indiscriminate and cruel weapons instead of in services to citizens limits opportunities for young people. In short, the maintenance and modernization of nuclear arsenals has a long-term impact on youth by diverting funding from activities that could make our future better to one that poses a real and concrete threat to humanity.
3. Amplify, a global network of young people working for nuclear abolition, believes that the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination offers an opportunity for the world to say finally that nuclear weapons are unacceptable. These weapons do not belong in our society now and they have no place in our future.
4. This working paper will, based on input from members of our youth network, discuss necessity of involving youth in the negotiations and provide suggestions of elements to be included in a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

Youth Involvement in the Negotiations

5. It is often said that youth are the future but it is easy to find youth who are currently leading in governments, international organizations and civil society if one looks. Youth not only have the right to be informed of this multilateral process, but also we are stakeholders who should play an active role in these critical negotiations. Above all, our future is at stake when nuclear disarmament negotiations stall. These negotiations will benefit from including the voices of youth from around the world. Youth are

¹ By Nuclear Age Peace Foundation (a founding member of Amplify), on behalf of Amplify.

innovators. We have the ability to envision what a world without nuclear weapons, and the threat of nuclear detonations by design or accident, will be like. The negotiations and the processes that lead us here are underpinned by concerns that current approaches to nuclear disarmament are at a standstill; therefore, it is important to bring in fresh ideas, new voices and innovative approaches.

6. Including youth in the negotiations should not be viewed as tokenism or a photo opportunity; young people have valuable expertise that can contribute to achieving our shared goal of the abolition of nuclear weapons. Youth should not be confused with inexperience or lack of expertise. Youth already involved in nuclear disarmament are often passionate and highly informed on the topic.

7. Furthermore, as digital natives, youth are not only up to date with the changing world, we are the ones building it. Young people are designing how we all interact and how information is shared through technology. In this rapidly changing and increasingly connected world, governments are working to become more open and to engage their citizens directly. Openness and direct engagement are two things that we expect from our leaders but so far has not been very evident in discussions on nuclear disarmament. Now that we have reached the negotiations stage, it is crucially important that openness and direct engagement are made into priorities. A treaty with real world consequences to the security of all humanity should not be negotiated quietly behind closed doors. Openness will lead to wider adherence as demonstrated by other humanitarian disarmament treaties.

8. Beyond the valuable contributions youth can make to the negotiations, there are a number of UN documents that encourage or call for youth engagement in disarmament, peace and security. The negotiations offer member states and the United Nations an opportunity to put these words into action.

9. In 2002, the United Nations Secretary-General released the “United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education”. Its findings highlight the importance of empowering young individuals to contribute to achieving disarmament and non-proliferation measures and, ultimately, complete disarmament under effective international control. The report states that the need for more youth involvement in disarmament and non-proliferation discussions has never been greater, as “changing concepts and perceptions of security and threat magnify the urgency for new thinking to pursue disarmament and non-proliferation goals.”²

10. In December 2015, the Security Council adopted a historic resolution on youth, peace and security,³ which “for the first time in its history focuses entirely on the role of young men and women in peacebuilding and countering violent extremism.”⁴ The resolution urges Member States to provide youth with ways to express a greater voice in decision-making on peacemaking processes at the local, national, regional and

² “United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education” (A/57/124, 30 August 2002), see:

<http://www.un.org/disarmament/HomePage/ODAPublications/DisarmamentStudySeries/PDF/SS-30.pdf>

³ For the full text of the resolution, see:

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2250\(2015\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2250(2015))).

⁴ Office of the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth, “UN Security Council Adopts Historic Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security,” <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2015/12/un-security-council-adopts-historic-resolution-on-youth-peace-and-security>.

international levels. It further calls on all relevant actors, to take into account the participation and views of youth in occasions such as negotiating and implementing peace agreements.

11. The resolution's operational paragraphs on Prevention highlights "the importance of creating policies for youth that would positively contribute to peacebuilding efforts" and calls on youth involvement in peace-related negotiations. The elimination of nuclear weapons is a global peacebuilding effort and for that reason, youth should be involved in all negotiations and international discussions on the issue. Youth involvement in peace and security does not mean youth involvement when others deem it is appropriate but instead youth involvement in peace and security issues that affect them and that matter to them. Nuclear disarmament fits into both categories.

12. Most recently, the report of the Open Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations, which is the foundation of the resolution establishing these negotiations, notes that participating states "stressed the importance of engaging young people"⁵. The language in that paragraph of the report suggests that engaging young people could include youth ambassadors and communicators who would share messages with the next generation but it does not exclude substantive youth engagement in all measures taking forward nuclear disarmament.

13. Youth engagement is crucial to reaching our shared goal of nuclear disarmament but even when that decades-old goal is reached, the human knowledge of how to make such inhumane weapons cannot be erased. The results of these negotiations will only be successful and sustainable if we engage youth, who are now or will one day be decision makers and government leaders. It is necessary that youth are involved, so that the world would never repeat the mistake of producing or using nuclear weapons.

14. As part of our work to ensure that youth are involved meaningfully in the negotiations, the remainder of this working paper will be focused on suggested elements for inclusion in a ban treaty from a youth perspective.

Suggested Elements in a Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons

15. As a network of young people from every region of the globe, Amplify has collected a number of recommendations of elements for inclusion in the treaty text. These suggestions have been separated into those for the preamble and those for the operational paragraphs.

The Preamble

16. Amplify encourages participating states to ensure that the humanitarian basis of the treaty is strongly reflected in the Preamble. Including language around the long term and widespread humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons and about the international community's inability to respond effectively in the event of a nuclear detonation will focus the treaty. It is important that the preamble frames the treaty and its future interpretation with a humanitarian lens.

⁵ OEWG report
https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/371&referer=https://www.un.org/disarmament/ptnw/&Lang=E

17. The Preamble should also recall the existing treaty regimes pertaining to nuclear weapons including but not limited to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and the various nuclear weapons free zone treaties, as well as relevant international legal decisions. Amplify believes a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons builds on the work done under the NPT and other treaties and therefore supports the inclusion of these legal instruments in the Preamble of the new treaty.

18. Additionally, Amplify supports the inclusion of references to UN Security Council resolution 2250, discussed above, in the Preamble as well as Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Building on a reference to UNSC 1325, recognition of the differing impacts of nuclear weapons on women, men, girls and boys would strengthen the humanitarian basis of the Preamble and highlight the gendered nature of nuclear weapons.

19. Since indigenous communities have been disproportionately impacted by past nuclear weapon tests, Amplify encourages states to recognize the importance of indigenous rights in the Preamble to set a standard for the implementation of the treaty.

20. Finally, Amplify recognizes the important role that civil society has played in the process that led to these negotiations. We call on states to ensure that the Preamble of the treaty highlights the crucial role that civil society, including the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the survivors of nuclear detonations, have played.

Operational Paragraphs

21. Many civil society organizations have submitted working papers and published briefing documents on the elements of a nuclear weapons ban treaty. For the most part, Amplify echoes those suggestions however, there are a few items that we would like to highlight as particularly important to our youth members.

22. Amplify believes that this treaty should prohibit the use, possession, stockpiling, production and trade of nuclear weapons while also prohibiting assistance with any of those prohibited acts. These provisions would be the core of a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

23. Amplify encourages states to recognize that prohibiting assistance means also prohibiting investment. The inclusion of financing in the text will reinforce the scope and effect of the treaty, as it not only effectively prohibits these weapons but also extends the logic of outlawing nuclear weapons to the financial sector. It will also reinforce the impact of efforts to reduce humanitarian harm through strengthened application of global norms and international law. It stands to reason that if assistance with the production of nuclear weapons is prohibited then so too should the investment in production.

24. In addition to the prohibitions, the treaty should contain operational paragraphs with positive obligations. As a youth network, Amplify places a high importance on disarmament education and risk education. All states parties to the future treaty should have an obligation to support disarmament education globally and to support any risk education that may be needed to ensure that persons living in and near areas made

dangerous by nuclear weapons or nuclear detonations have the tools they need to stay safe. Should the final treaty text include these obligations, Amplify pledges to work with states parties implementing these provisions.

25. Amplify recognizes that victims of nuclear weapons continue to face barriers to the full realization of their human rights due to their exposure to war-time detonations or testing detonations. For that reason, we call on states to include rights-based, age- and gender-sensitive victim assistance provisions in the operational paragraphs of the treaty. Ensuring that nuclear weapons victims have full enjoyment of their human rights is in line with the humanitarian basis of this treaty and will help to alleviate some of the suffering caused by past detonations. Victim assistance provisions in the treaty will strengthen the existing norms surround the need to provide assistance to victims of indiscriminate weapons.

26. Finally, Amplify encourages states to include an obligation for states parties to draft national legislation and other measures for implementation. National implementation legislation will not only strengthen the treaty but it may also increase youth engagement in nuclear disarmament. Youth are active on the national level and will have more opportunity to participate in the process of passing national implementation legislation. Such legislation will also increase the implementation of the treaty's positive obligations and create clarity around how individual states interpret the treaty's provisions.

Conclusion

27. In August 2015, youth campaigners who formed Amplify released a Youth Pledge following an International Youth Summit in Hiroshima, Japan. That pledge read in part:

We, youth seek human security and sustainability, which are impossible to achieve fully in the presence of nuclear weapons. Youth see the potential for a world without nuclear weapons – we see the potential for security not to be based on fear and more militarism, but on diplomacy, cooperation and trust. Abolishing nuclear weapons is our responsibility; it is our right and we will no longer sit by while the opportunity of nuclear abolition is squandered.

28. These negotiations bring the opportunity of nuclear abolition closer than it has been in our lifetimes and true to our word, youth will no longer sit by while a definition of security based on fear is used to limit the potential for nuclear disarmament. Youth have the right and the responsibility to engage with the negotiation process. The inclusion of youth in the negotiations is necessary to achieve a strong treaty. The negotiations and all subsequent actions towards the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons need to hear from youth as well as from survivors and victims, women, indigenous persons and persons with disabilities. Nuclear weapons threaten us all so it is only through including all voices can we begin to eliminate these inhumane and indiscriminate weapons.