



APPROVED

STATEMENT ON TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND ON 2017 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE AWARDED TO THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Isaiah 2:4

Nuclear weapons must never be used again, under any circumstances.

Almost 70 years ago, the World Council of Churches' First Assembly in 1948 referred to warfare with nuclear weapons as a sin against God and a degradation of humankind, marking the beginning of the WCC's long engagement in advocacy and action for nuclear disarmament.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Amman, Jordan, therefore celebrates the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as the first legally-binding international agreement for the comprehensive prohibition of the most indiscriminate and destructive type of weapon ever devised by human beings, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination. We welcome the fact that since being opened for signature on 20 September 2017, TPNW has been signed by 53 states, of which 3 have already ratified it - a swift start on the path to the threshold of 50 ratifications for the treaty to enter into force.

This treaty is an appropriate though overdue response and recognition of the unconscionable humanitarian and environmental impact of **ANY** use of nuclear weapons. It also responds to the longstanding pleas of the *hibakushi*, survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of the victims of the effects of subsequent nuclear weapon tests in the Pacific and elsewhere. Moreover, it fills a gap in international law, since all other types of weapon of mass destruction are already prohibited by treaties.

The WCC welcomes the award of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), of which WCC is a member alongside many other civil society and faith-based organizations. The executive committee congratulates ICAN for this important award which recognizes the role of civil society in long and sustained work to achieve this treaty, together with many partners among the member states of the United Nations.

We acknowledge, however, that the adoption of this treaty does not automatically or necessarily lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Broad, sustained and concerted efforts will be required for ratification of the treaty by UN member states, and for its implementation. Nevertheless, TPNW finally establishes a clear normative principle, which is

also a moral principle, against nuclear weapons. It insists, as the ecumenical movement has always done, that the criteria by which such weapons must be judged are not limited to military and political considerations, but must encompass the impacts on people, communities and the planet.

As the WCC central committee observed in its 2014 statement “Towards a Nuclear-Free World”, nuclear weapons cannot be reconciled with real peace, and that as long as such weapons exist, they pose a threat to humanity and to creation.

Though at a time of increased global tensions and anxiety, in which governments and societies cleave more closely again to the idea of ‘nuclear deterrence’ as a source of security and protection, we affirm that nuclear weapons are not a source of security and protection but a source of permanent insecurity.

Support for the maintenance of nuclear arsenals entails willingness to countenance the possible use of such weapons to destroy whole cities, entire populations and the living environment itself. The WCC, on behalf of the global fellowship of churches it represents and on the basis of fundamental Christian faith principles, refuses to countenance such atrocities.

The executive committee, meeting in Amman, Jordan, 17-23 November 2017, therefore:

- Urges all states to sign, ratify and implement the TPNW.
- Requests member churches and ecumenical partners around the world to engage with their governments in support of this appeal, encouraging and supporting governments that have engaged positively in this process despite pressure and threats, and entering into constructive dialogue with governments that reject and refuse to consider the treaty.
- Highlights the obligations contained in the TPNW for environmental remediation and for assistance to victims of nuclear weapon use and testing, referring especially to the continued struggle of those suffering the health impacts of such use and testing programmes for recognition and for accountability of the states responsible.
- Invites churches to engage in biblical, theological and ethical reflection on the possession, use and impact of nuclear weapons, and on the doctrine of ‘nuclear deterrence’, in the current global context.
- Reaffirms the commitment of the WCC to continue to work for the realization of the ecumenical vision of a world free from nuclear weapons.