# Making the NPT Work for Global Security

The war on Ukraine is a terrible reminder of how nuclear weapons add to human insecurity. Undeterred by NATO's three nuclear-armed members, Vladimir Putin decided to invade Ukraine. When Ukrainian resistance stopped him getting the quick success he wanted, Putin's mercenaries destroyed countless lives and towns and issued more overt nuclear threats. When those failed to impress, he got his ally's agreement to put Russian nuclear weapons into Belarus. NATO, meanwhile, is bent on deploying upgraded US B61-12 nuclear bombs with F35 and other equipped bombers in bases across Europe, including Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Türkiye, and also back to the UK's Lakenheath base. Meanwhile escalating military-industrial emissions have turned climate destruction into the biggest security threat for most of the world, even as US budgets earmark $756 billion for nuclear weapons over 2023-2032.

It's sad to reflect that the horrors inflicted on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the first two atomic bombs in 1945 made some nationalistic politicians see them as tools to project power and status. As toxic mushroom clouds spread radioactive pollution from hundreds of nuclear tests in the 1950s, nuclear advocates spawned 'nuclear deterrence' and 'atoms for peace'. Promoted mainly to neutralise international concerns and domestic opposition to nuclear weapons and their costs, these PR ploys became drivers of further proliferation.

Having witnessed Putin, Trump, Kim and other nuclear-armed leaders, it is now obvious to many that nuclear possession is not about war prevention, deterrence or security; nuclear weapons mainly serve weak leaders' delusional desires for status and 'freedom of action', most recently epitomised in the Bush-Blair invasion of Iraq in 2003 and Putin's posturing long before his appalling war in Ukraine. The possession of nuclear weapons also correlates with high national-military spending, big 'conventional' arsenals, high rates of domestic poverty, and disproportionately high greenhouse gas pollutants that destroy the world's climate systems.

To date, nine countries have nuclear arsenals, amounting to 12,500 nuclear weapons. Over 12,000 are possessed by the NPT's five 'recognised' nuclear-armed states (NPT5). Outside the NPT, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea have around 450 warheads. Russia and NATO governments still want applause for their post cold war reductions from over 50,000 warheads before Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987. Reductions are useful of course, but the humanitarian impacts tell the reality in security terms. One nuclear detonation is enough to destroy a major city. If the 40 warheads on a UK nuclear submarine were detonated on a dozen cities that would be enough to entomb our planet in a dark, freezing cold nuclear winter for years. In addition, nuclear weapons programmes are behind proliferating nuclear power ambitions and nuclear-fuelled submarines, while nuclear energy is pushed as a safe answer to the climate crisis.

This Acronym/AIDD briefing is timed for the preparatory committee meeting (PrepCom) of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in Vienna in July-August 2023. We focus on practical actions that could make a real difference for global security. AIDD has drawn on and contributed to ideas from the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), 'C7' Civil Society, Rethinking Security, XR Peace and various climate action networks. These steps are consistent with NPT obligations, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, International Humanitarian Law, and the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). They update agreements made by all **NPT Parties in 1995, 2000 and 2010. They need to be acted on and implemented now. This could be our last chance to pull back from nuclear war, end vertical and horizontal proliferation, and deal intelligently with the urgent security challenges and climate emergency we are all now facing.**

## End Proliferation, Implement Existing Agreements

Negotiated in the depth of the Cold War, the NPT did not explicitly prohibit the use, production and deployment of nuclear weapons, but its preamble makes clear the treaty's purpose: "the proliferation of nuclear weapons would seriously enhance the danger of nuclear war". Recognising "the devastation that would be visited upon all mankind by a nuclear war and the consequent need to make every effort to avert the danger of such a war and to take measures to safeguard the security of peoples," the NPT contained disarmament obligations and regulated access to nuclear technologies "for peaceful purposes".

Today NPT membership stands at 191, with only four states on the outside. Notably, China and France did not formally join this treaty until shortly before the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Yet, well before signing they had been pulled into complying with many of the NPT's requirements. Treaties work by being built on, collectively and cumulatively.

One of the few positive developments in recent years is the TPNW, which was launched at the NPT Review Conference in 2010. Now with 92 signatories and 68 states parties, the TPNW builds on the NPT with clear prohibitions on nuclear weapon use, threats, production, testing and deployment, along with obligations on eliminating nuclear arsenals and providing assistance to victims and environmental remediation. Notwithstanding Covid and the Ukraine war, the TPNW's first meeting of States Parties, held in Vienna in June 2022, was a success, with strong participation from observers and civil society. Over the past year, states and civil society experts have begun implementing the TPNW's practical Action Plan adopted in Vienna, including establishment of a Science Advisory Group and four intersessional working groups. These will report to the second meeting of states parties in New York from 27 November to 1 December 2023.

To move beyond its current stalemate, the NPT review process needs to face today's realities, including war-related nuclear dangers. The upsurge in the proliferation of nuclear technologies for power as well as weapons is especially worrying in Europe, the Middle East and Asia-Pacific regions, where national and political rivalries fuel insecurity and drive increases in military expenditures and armaments of many kinds.

The steps focussed on here do not deal with all proliferation concerns, but AIDD's work over four decades covers fissile materials, nuclear risks and military-nuclear connections in NPT5 countries, South Asia, the Middle East and North Korea, as well as disarmament and security treaties and verification.

## Prevent nuclear escalation and use leading to nuclear war

It is vital for all governments – not only nuclear-armed states – to act now to prevent nuclear use. As Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu told the UN Security Council in March: "All States must avoid taking any actions that could lead to escalation, mistake or miscalculation." Her statement followed the G20 leaders' November 2022 declaration that: "The use, or threat of the use, of nuclear weapons is inadmissible."



**To prevent nuclear use and war, urgent steps are needed:**

➔ Governments must affirm the inadmissibility of nuclear use and threats and urgently commit **not to use or threaten *or enable* nuclear weapons to be used under any circumstances.**

➔ **Nuclear sharing violates the NPT and must be ended.**

➔ **Relevant governments should publicly rule out the first use of nuclear weapons** and undertake steps to **'dealert'** and take all nuclear weapons off 'prompt' and hair trigger launch configurations.

➔ **NPT states should demand that all nuclear sharing policies and practices be stopped now.**
NATO's nuclear sharing practices in Europe have long been a problem for nuclear-free NPT members, as well as China, Russia, and many people in NATO states. Putin's latest threat is to ditch his objections and emulate NATO by stationing Russian nuclear weapons in Belarus. Described as 'tactical' or 'theatre' weapons, the US/NATO air-dropped B61 bombs and Russian missiles have already failed to deter or prevent this war in Europe. We hear increasing talk of a 'tactical use' as if firing these short range nukes in Europe would not be so bad and would not escalate into nuclear war. Wrong on both counts. These weapons are bigger than the Hiroshima bomb, and using them would escalate the Ukraine war into nuclear war, with even more appalling consequences and risks.

➔ **Dealert nuclear forces** (e.g. by installing physical and operational barriers between warheads and delivery vehicles). Such measures would greatly reduce the risks of these WMD being fired and detonated through miscalculations, electronic or human error. Dealerting could make it harder for murder-suicide or terrorist attacks to be committed, or for any rogue leader or militarists to launch nuclear weapons.

➔ **Establish communications and early warning systems for regional and international security**. Joint hotlines proved useful in the Cold War. As long as nuclear weapons exist, strong communications will be needed to avoid disastrous mistakes. For example, relevant leaders and militaries should receive pre-notification of military exercises that may involve nuclear-capable missiles and delivery systems. Further early warning systems for humanitarian responses as well as conflict and escalation prevention should also be put in place. Consideration should be given to enhancing bilateral and plurilateral communications among strategic or regional rivals (e.g. Washington, Moscow and Beijing, or Islamabad, New Delhi and Beijing). Such communications systems can help to build confidence also for early warning and conflict prevention in zones of conflict. In addition, legal and other security measures could help to prevent or control cyber, autonomous, and AI weapons threats that could destabilise security relations and increase nuclear threats further. In security terms these communications should be prioritised as vital.

## Eliminate nuclear weapons by 2045

In conjunction with the G7 meetings in Hiroshima in May 2023, many civil society NGOs participated in developing a joint 'C7 Communiqué'. This called for all the world's nuclear weapons to be eliminated no later than 2045, one hundred years after the first atomic bombs were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Technical analyses show that even the largest arsenals can be destroyed within ten years. Over fifty years since the NPT entered into force, it's past time to set this meaningful deadline to implement the disarmament obligations in both the NPT and TPNW.

Many of these steps have been advocated for decades by nuclear-free nations and civil society. Many were adopted by the NPT review conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010. We cannot let the nuclear-armed governments thwart international treaties and add to their nuclear arsenals till death stops them.

➔ **Immediately remove short and medium-range (aka 'tactical' and 'theatre') nuclear weapons from deployment.** This step could be strengthened with plurilateral agreements to prohibit intermediate-range nuclear forces being deployed in the wake of the Trump-Putin pull out from the INF Treaty in 2019.

➔ **The US and Russia need to take their nuclear arsenals down further and faster** with unilateral actions and further START agreements. Deeper cuts should involve China, and the warheads as well as delivery means should be safely and securely eliminated.



➔ **Outlaw attacks on nuclear facilities and power plants.** Until this sensible norm is legally implemented, governments should publicly declare that they will not attack nuclear power plants under any circumstances, and will do all within their power to prevent such attacks being carried out by others.

➔ **Halt nuclear weapons developments, testing and production,** end the production of weapon-usable fissile materials and bring the CTBT into legal force.

➔ **Develop effective technologies and systems for verifying nuclear disarmament** and ensure **irreversible compliance** with relevant treaties and UN decisions on nuclear safety and security.

## Declare nuclear weapon use a crime against humanity and war crime

The Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court, declared the use of biological, toxin, chemical and other inhumane weapons to be war crimes. In 1998, for political reasons, a minority of negotiators managed to prevent nuclear weapons being included in the ICC remit. That omission needs to be rectified now. In banning nuclear weapons, the most egregiously inhumane weapon of all, the TPNW provides the legal grounds for the ICC to hold leaders and enablers accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity if they use nuclear armaments. Even if the UN Security Council cannot agree (as is likely

given the permanent seats held by five of the nuclear armed states), the UN General Assembly and International Criminal Court could take this forward through resolutions, decisions and indictments.

## Promote humanitarian security, climate justice and peace

We are currently stuck in the military-nuclear 'age of stupid', foolishly marching down roads that lead to the extinction of humanity and most if not all life on Earth. We have been reminded by Chernobyl, Fukushima, and the current plight of Zaporizhzhia that human mistakes, rising sea levels, and wars can turn nuclear risks into humanitarian catastrophes. We need to recognise that militarism, climate destruction, warfighting and nuclear war are inextricably linked and must be tackled collectively. Our own security and survival require that we take urgent steps to abolish all the weapons of mass destruction and redirect resources into dealing with the looming climate emergency.  We have to take the necessary decisions to end nuclear and fossil fuel dependencies, and convince people everywhere about the terrible humanitarian, climate and environmental dangers of continuing to rely on these poisonous technologies.

**Governments and civil society need to work together on steps to enhance our common security:**

➔ End investments and subsidies for companies that develop, make and sell inhumane weaponry, from automatic firearms and bombs to nuclear missiles and other weapons of mass destruction.

➔ Reduce, measure and publish annual data on national-military greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

➔ Recognise the impact of armed conflicts, climate destruction and nuclear activities on women and girls, future generations, and diverse and minoritised communities. Research demonstrates that involving women and more diverse experiences and skills in diplomacy and decisionmaking will result in better outcomes for everyone.

➔ Listen to *hibakusha,* indigenous people, affected communities and downwinders.  Take responsibility to undo (as far as possible) the harm that military-industrial and nuclear activities have done to so many people's health, homes, environments, and our planet's biodiversity and climate systems.

➔ Promote peace, disarmament and environmental education at all levels of society to inform, inspire and empower young people – and everyone – to work for sustainable security solutions.

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