

Friends,

I am ostensibly on vacation, but I am en route home after a quick trip to New York City where I chaired a side event at the U.N. on the impacts of the Ban Treaty. That is to say how our movements can build on the treaty whose text will be completed Friday.

First advertised by its proponents as the way to completely overcome the nuclear weapons states refusal to fulfill their Article VI Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty obligation to engage in good faith negotiations for the complete elimination of their nuclear arsenals, the Treaty is now understood to be a “step” along that way and as a means to reinforce the norm forbidding use and threatened use of nuclear weapons. The Treaty will apply to states that sign and ratify it (negotiations have been boycotted by the nuclear powers and “umbrella” states – except for the Netherlands) and will prohibit them from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, and deploying; transferring or receiving nuclear weapons. It will prohibit the use and threatened use nuclear weapons; stationing or deployment of nuclear weapons in their countries and territories. It appears that a minimum of 50 states will need to sign and ratify the treaty before it goes into force.

Speakers in our International Peace Bureau panel shared perspectives of movements in non-nuclear weapons states, umbrella states, and nuclear weapons states. Following is a summary of their comments along with several of those of the 35 people who joined the session:

Linette Ngayu of Kenya and the African Council of Religious Leaders: Their focus will be on winning ratification of countries across Africa. They are very focused on learning the legislative process of each country, identifying the people (targets) needed to win ratification – including the public, building awareness and identifying champions to lead the ratification campaigns in the countries represented in the African Council. After listening to other speakers, Linette expressed her sympathy for those who will have harder uphill struggles to win signings and ratifications.

Susie Snyder of PAX in The Netherlands: Susie conveyed her excitement and that of many of the negotiators and civil society representatives involved in the negotiations. After the party celebrating the completion of Treaty negotiations this Friday, the focus will be on winning signings by September 19. Building on and from the Treaty will need to be tailored for specific countries. In the Netherlands, a NATO nation, they have to manage their expectations and will engage in an uphill struggle to get the government to sign the Treaty. If a couple of NATO states opted to sign the Treaty, it would have enormous impact. The nuclear weapons states will join when they will, but this should not be a priority. Instead, the priority will be working with parliamentarians, the press and the public. She stressed changing the narrative, focusing on humanitarian consequences rather than traditional security considerations. PAX will also use the Treaty to help build its “Don’t Bank on the Bomb” campaign of divestment from nuclear weapons producers.

Lucas Wirl of the German branch of International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms and IPB was not as hopeful as Susie and underlined the importance of managing our expectations.. That said, the Treaty will be a powerful resource, a “door opener,” for nuclear disarmament organizing in Germany, including the important work of getting the wider peace movement to take on campaigning for nuclear weapons abolition. He stressed that we need to engage our friends in related movements, as well as our foes. After pointing to the destabilization caused by nuclear weapons “modernization”, and NATO’s first-strike doctrine which increase the possibilities of nuclear weapons use, he pointed to the need for increased national and international movement cooperation and exchanges. IPB is currently considering organizing such a strategy

session in Geneva at the time of the next NPT PrepCom. He also suggested that on July 7, 2018, the anniversary of the completion of the Treaty negotiations as a time for international actions to support and build on the Treaty.

Kate Alexander of New York Peace Action reinforced the need to manage our expectations, especially in nuclear weapons states, given the \$1.2 trillion U.S. commitment to upgrade its nuclear arsenal and delivery systems and other nations' "modernization" programs. She hopes the Treaty will help to refocus concerns about nuclear weapons to the present, rather than the past of Cold War history. She stressed that the \$1.2 trillion could wipe out all U.S. student debt, meet U.S. Paris Climate commitments 400 times over, and more than 400 times the cost of addressing the global refugee crisis. She spoke of the importance of achieving a nuclear weapons free world while the Hibakusha are still with us.

Participant comments and panelists responses included:

- The need to engage Russia in nuclear disarmament: We need to more deeply engage East European and Russian civil society figures, to deal with NATO's aggressive policies – in part by a Helsinki II process
- Education, education, education
- Where to focus energies in the U.S.: The rising generation of Congressional representatives, senators and governors
- The only way forward is with grassroots education and organizing
- Coalition building: building collaborations with all sectors of society: religious, labor, environmental, etc.
- Nuclear weapons are a symptom of the belief that we can have what we want, and that we can get it through pressure. Our movements need to engage with those who support nuclear weapons by listening, empathy and understanding, and building from there via diplomacy.
- Learn from and emulate the successes of other movements, especially those engaged in divestment campaigns.

Among the points made by the chair were:

- The urgency of the moment, especially in light of the U.S.-DPRK confrontation, Trump's "all options on the table" response, and the need for diplomacy
- The importance of supporting Jeremy Corbyn and the British movement. Were Corbyn to become Prime Minister and then restate his refusal to push the button and block Trident replacement, a critical process could begin within NATO nations and thus impact the nuclear powers.
- The importance of will, experimentation, communication among our movements, coalition building beyond single issue silos, and actions across the wide spectrum of means.
- The importance of using the Abolition 2000 e-list to share news about our successes and how we are building on/working with the BAN Treaty so that we can reinforce one another's work.

Joseph Gerson