

Statement of Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons Marking Two Important Milestones

January 23, 2024

Voices for a World Free of Nuclear Weapons, a Cooperation Circle of the United Religions Initiative, marks the coinciding events of Third Anniversary of Coming into Force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Announcement of the Doomsday Clock related to the proximity of nuclear annihilation. These two events illustrate, respectively, the power of hope for united efforts toward the elimination of nuclear weapons; and, the urgency of action to turn the tide on the acceptability of a nuclear arms race to oblivion. As people of faith and good will, we once again lift up the moral imperative to say, “NO!” to the principalities of death and planetary destruction, and “YES!” to the preservation of life through global solidarity for progressive nuclear disarmament.

We are not surprised by the announcement of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists of the Doomsday Clock remaining at 90 seconds to midnight, the closest to midnight it has ever been. The earth’s abundance is at risk by ongoing war and the preparations for nuclear war. The expansion, testing, modernization, and escalation of rhetoric and proximity of weapons to targets, all contribute to an atmosphere where the predicted “fallout” from use of weapons – namely, nuclear winter – becomes more possible than ever. The impulse for tactical use of nuclear weapons follows the motivations of profitability, authoritarian self-preservation, military industrial complexes, and reliance on artificial intelligence to lead to ever-closer releases of these weapons.

Underlying the nuclear states’ trust in nuclear weapons for their nations’ security is the false ideology of deterrence. The idea that deterrence provides for human security is a fallacy. Deterrence in practice does not forestall mutual assured destruction. Use of nuclear weaponry through error, miscalculation, and irrational decision-making are quite possible under policies of deterrence. Indeed, demonstrating the willingness to use nuclear weapons, a so-called credible threat, implies the readiness to use these weapons first, imperiling everyone, with no winners. These states need to return to the implementation of Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, toward negotiation to real disarmament.

Seek Peace and Pursue It

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons provides a model of international cooperation and dialogue. Seventy nations have ratified the TPNW and more are pending. The third anniversary for the TPNW coming into force is a reminder that the world wants no part in systems of ultimate mass destruction. The nuclear nations, in their obstinacy in refusing to sign the TPNW and to follow its commitments, do not speak in the name of civil society, including in their own nations.

We strengthen our resolve to seek peace and pursue it through holding leaders accountable for prioritizing the well-being of their citizens and those from other nations together, simultaneously. Through the TPNW and the reinstatement of treaties ignored or abrogated, nation-states and civil society alike can uphold the primacy of human security as the shared value which we pursue as the greatest good.

With disarmed hearts, we assert as a humanitarian outcry and part of organized, nonviolent action: the truth of the inherent dignity of every human being and all of life. All life, therefore, is sacred: we must use our power to preserve life for all.

Finally, we are challenged to PRAY-STUDY-ACT during 2024 in the irresistible hope that a new world relying on the ties that bind us together as a human species is coming into reality. We invite all people of faith and goodwill to make prayer, study, and action toward the elimination of nuclear weapons their commitment this year. We refuse to be bound by the fear, greed, and hate of war-making and nuclear war preparations. In humility, confident in the ground of Love that inspires and transforms, our peacemaking efforts are bending the arc of our planet toward the more just way of human security for all. Let us strengthen our relationships and networks in 2024 to turn back the Doomsday Clock, promote the action steps of the TPNW and affirm the beauty, sanctity, and resilience of the earth in our daily actions for peace.