Choose Life—A Joint Interfaith Statement to the First Review Conference of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

December 2026

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We join our voices as diverse faith and spiritual traditions, united by two shared convictions: every human being possesses inherent dignity; and our common future cannot be secured by weapons capable of destroying all life and the natural environment on an unprecedented scale.

As the international community gathers for the historic First Review Conference of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), we call on States Parties to place human dignity, justice, responsibility to future generations, protection of human rights, and the pursuit of peace at the center of the Treaty's next phase of implementation.

Since the adoption of the Treaty in 2017 and its entry into force in 2021, our world has become more dangerous. The Doomsday Clock now stands at 85 seconds to midnight, the closest to midnight in its history. Emblematic of this, ongoing conflicts around the world, emergence of destabilizing technologies, climate crisis, and erosion of multilateralism and democracy cast a dark shadow over our future.

Precisely because we face such challenging times, the TPNW's mission to guide the world's nations in creating a safe future for everyone becomes all the more important. Our mission, as guardians and stakeholders of the Treaty, remains crucial.

The TPNW emerged from the recognition that nuclear weapons are not merely instruments of power politics or military strategy, as pursued by states which possess these weapons. Repeated nuclear close calls and accidents already expose the fundamental insecurity of deterrence and the folly of relying on highly complex systems that must never fail. Their actual use—intentional, accidental or through miscalculation—would unleash consequences no government could control and no border could contain. True security must protect human life, communities, the environment and generations to come—not depend on fallible technologies and the permanent threat of catastrophic destruction.

The nuclear age has left a legacy of suffering extending from Hiroshima and Nagasaki to communities affected by nuclear testing, uranium mining, production, contamination and displacement. Survivors of the atomic blasts in Japan and worldwide transformed that suffering into action, mobilizing millions worldwide and helping drive the adoption of the TPNW. We call

on States Parties to ensure that survivors, their descendants, affected communities, Indigenous Peoples, young people and others directly affected by nuclear weapons are not simply represented, but meaningfully involved in shaping policies that affect their lives. Their experiences, perspectives and wisdom are essential and must be central to implementing the Treaty and preventing nuclear war.

The TPNW does more than ban nuclear weapons. It forbids threatening to use them, and it obligates states to help victims and heal poisoned land. We call on the Review Conference to turn these obligations into action, including an effective, fully funded, and transparent mechanism to repair the harm nuclear weapons have already done.

A world free of nuclear weapons also demands a new vision of security and the collective will to achieve it. States Parties must make peace and disarmament education central to Treaty implementation, ensuring that young people are not merely left to inherit the nuclear legacy, but are informed and empowered to shape a future beyond it.

We therefore call upon States Parties at the First Review Conference to:

1. Ensure that affected communities are at the heart of implementation efforts.
Institutionalize meaningful participation of affected communities, Indigenous Peoples, youth and civil society in the implementation of the Treaty, particularly Articles 6 and 7, and in the development and governance of mechanisms for victim assistance and environmental remediation, including an international trust fund.

2. Make disarmament education an ongoing component of Treaty implementation and universalization.
Develop an international framework for disarmament and nuclear-risk education, including curriculum development, educator training, multilingual resources, youth exchanges and opportunities for experiential and community-based learning. Make the findings of the Treaty's Scientific Advisory Group widely available.

3. Make youth participation substantive and intergenerational.
Create sustained mechanisms for young people's participation in the TPNW's intersessional work, including youth advisory structures, opportunities to participate in delegations and working groups, mentorship between generations, and support for youth-led initiatives.

4. Strengthen the Culture of Peace as part of the Treaty's long-term implementation.

Ensure that the next phase of the TPNW implementation recognizes that nuclear disarmament is connected to broader efforts to build trust, dialogue, nonviolence, human security and multilateralism, and to meet the real needs of the people.

5. Reject nuclear deterrence and call for accountability.
Challenge nuclear-weapon and nuclear-dependent States on their failure to comply with their obligations to pursue nuclear disarmament, and remind them that they are endangering the rest of the world as well as their own populations.

6. **Redouble efforts toward universalization through advancing human security.**
The TPNW offers a framework for advancing human security, empowering people in every nation—including nuclear-armed and umbrella states—to challenge the narrative of deterrence and build a world in which the security and well-being of all people are the central concern. Advancing the framework of human security is key toward promoting universalization. No opportunity should be missed for dialogue between signatories and potential future Signatories and States Parties to the TPNW.

Faith communities recognize that we have a responsibility not only to speak about the world we hope to see, but to help build it.

We commit to educating our communities, amplifying the voices of those affected by nuclear weapons, creating spaces for intergenerational dialogue, supporting young leaders, engaging policymakers, and cultivating the Culture of Peace, in which peace is understood not as passive absence of conflict but as an active engagement to uplift human dignity and the common good.

For those in this room who have worked for so many years for an end to the nuclear threat, the world owes you its deepest thanks. Even knowing all the work that remains to be done, we are still better because of your efforts.

Slavery, apartheid, and the Berlin Wall all seemed permanent, until someone imagined their end clearly enough to work for it. Martin Luther King, Jr. lifted the soul of a nation when he stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington and said: “I have a dream today.” The end of nuclear weapons needs the same imagining—not just the image of a threatening mushroom cloud, but a vivid and compelling picture of a world beyond nuclear weapons—and the conviction that each step we take in this work is a small but real step in turning that picture into a reality.

Imagine for a moment.

It's Aug 6, 2126, a hundred years in the future, the anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945. This is the day, Aug 6, 2126, that the very last nuclear weapon in the world is being dismantled at White Sands National Park in New Mexico.

The descendants of Japanese hibakusha hold sledgehammers alongside the descendants of the Tularosa Downwinders and descendants of Marshall Islanders and the descendants of Stanislav Petrov, who prevented US-Russia nuclear war from breaking out in the 1980's. A massive outdoor sculpture sways in the background, millions of paper cranes folded by people around the world and sent to these stark desert lands, the place where the first bomb exploded and Oppenheimer murmured "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds".

Tens of thousands of people have gathered for this historic event. Tears are flowing down from people's eyes. Prayers are being murmured in dozens of languages. Dignitaries from around the world are in attendance, many of whom have spanned a century of steadfast, persistent organizing. Some are representatives of the international movements in the former nuclear-armed nations, movements that campaigned relentlessly for each step of disarmament.

In front of them are young children from every nation in the world who will be the first to grow up in a world unshaped, unshadowed, by nuclear weapons.

The Tewa, whose lands were stolen and contaminated by Los Alamos, join indigenous leaders from nuclear-impacted tribes around the world in opening the ceremony. A descendant of Oppenheimer gives a speech about the reparations project they initiated among other descendants of people whose families built nuclear weapons - the funds will go to the longer term work of clean-up and prevention of future nukes. The nine nuclear nations each contribute to this global fund. Next, there are a few words from the Nobel Prize Winner who disproved, once and for all, the theory of nuclear deterrence. There are short remarks from political leaders—US president, Russia's, China's—a few people yawn.

Then the moment arrives: a Ploughshares activist steps forward and lifts their symbolic hammer. The other descendants of nuclear survivors stand alongside this person, hammers raised. The sun glints on the metal, once, twice, like a quick wink from a heart-glad universe.

Then, as one, the hammers fall … and with them an era falls, a 181-year delusion falls, a nightmare falls, once and for all. Hammer hits metal … and the sound of true freedom rings.

Someone whispers: "Now I am become Life, the creator of worlds."[1]

[1] We thank author and activist Rivera Sun for giving us permission to use her writing "The Last Nuclear Weapon" as part of this statement.