



# PNND

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17 December 2014

Sebastian Kurz

Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs

Vienna, Austria

Dear Mr Kurz

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) commends the government of Austria, you personally and your team in the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs for hosting and organising the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons which took place on 8 and 9 December 2014 in the Hofburg Palace Vienna, Austria.

It is notable, and a testament to the leadership of Austria, that 158 governments participated - four from nuclear-armed countries. This included the US and UK who had not participated in the previous humanitarian consequences conferences.

The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons testing, production and use provides a compelling imperative for their abolition. Indeed the International Court of Justice affirmed in 1996 that *'the destructive power of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in time or space'* and, as a result, affirmed the general illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons and a universal obligation to achieve complete nuclear disarmament.

PNND has therefore welcomed the revived international attention to the humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons. Our members have promoted this in their parliaments, in public events and in regional and international parliamentary forums. We outlined some of this in our [statement delivered to the conference](#).

In particular, we have highlighted this third international conference amongst our global network of parliamentarians and our partners and cooperating organisations. We worked hard, within our very limited financial resources, to bring parliamentarians from around the world to the conference, the preceding

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civil society forum and to the parliamentary roundtable hosted by the Austrian Parliament.

PNND highly commends you and your team for a very well-run conference and an excellent program. The panelists provided very relevant information on the risks of nuclear weapons being used and the potential impact of such use. It was wise to place the information panels ahead of the government statements. This enabled constructive discussion on substance, and it ensured that government statements at the end of the conference reflected some of the key points arising from this discussion.

We were honoured that you invited one of our inaugural co-presidents, former Senator Abacca Anjain-Maddison to be one of these panelists. The sad experience of the Marshall Islands from nuclear tests was very influential in the ICJ's decision in 1996. The Marshall Islands has a follow-up case currently in the ICJ pressing the nuclear-armed States to implement their nuclear disarmament obligations, and this was one of the initiatives discussed in the roundtable in the Austrian parliament.

PNND commends you and your team, in particular, for the excellent summary and the innovative pledge delivered at the conclusion of the conference.

We were pleased that both the summary and pledge recognised the importance of the role of parliamentarians to work in cooperation with States, civil society organisations and the Red Cross/Red Crescent network in order to translate *'the widespread concerns about the risks and consequences associated with nuclear weapons into concerted steps to achieve a world without these armaments.'* PNND has been very active in building such cooperation, and we used the opportunity of the conference to meet with States, civil society organisations and the national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies to further this.

PNND welcomes the call made by Austria for States to *'identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons'* and the pledge by Austria *'to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal.'* PNND and the Middle Powers Initiative have organised a number of [Framework Forum](#) events where we bring governments, legislators, disarmament experts and civil society representatives together to explore and develop such measures. The [inaugural Framework Forum](#) event was held in Vienna supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs. We welcome the opportunity to enhance our cooperation in this endeavour with the government of Austria.

We also welcome the call in the summary for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, to *'take stock of all relevant developments, including the outcomes of the Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, and determine the next steps for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapon-free world,'* and the pledge of Austria to take your conclusions from the Vienna conference to the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

We believe that equivalent attention should also be given to advancing the humanitarian dimension and promoting disarmament steps in **United Nations forums** such as the UN General Assembly which is universal and non-discriminatory, the UN Security Council which is responsible for international peace and security, the International Court of Justice which can play a vital role in affirming the legal

norms for abolition, and the Human Rights Council which can highlight the human right to be free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Earlier this year PNND, along with other major civil society organisations, launched [UNFOLD ZERO](#), a new platform to highlight United Nations initiatives and forums for advancing nuclear abolition.

UNFOLD ZERO cooperated with parliamentarians, governments, the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs and civil society organisations for a very successful inaugural [International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#). We look forward to cooperating further with Austria and other States in advancing the humanitarian dimension through these forums.

Once again we commend you on a superb conference and on your leadership in the international endeavours to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Yours sincerely,

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