



WILPF CALL FOR PEACE RESOURCE GUIDE # 2 (Feb 2024)

Two Treaties to Abolish Nuclear Weapons by Dianne Blais

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

The TPNW entered into force Jan. 22, 2021 for the first 50 countries that ratified it. Some countries/organizations (namely, the U.S.) have criticized the TPNW saying that it detracts/counteracts the NPT. This resource guide will show that this is definitely not the case - that the TPNW is a natural result of the NPT and that both treaties play important roles in achieving nuclear disarmament.

This short guide is broken up into 5 sections – each section centered and bolded. A bonus/necessity of the compactness of this guide is listing on-line sources for more complete information.

Origins and UN endorsement of the NPT and the TPNW

By 1960, nuclear weapons technology had the potential to become widespread although only three countries had them - the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union. A ban on the distribution of nuclear technology was first proposed by Ireland in a meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1961. In June 1968, the United Nations General Assembly (UN GA) endorsed the NPT with a vote of 95 to 4 with 21 abstentions. Basic info including text of the NPT: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/>. Under the treaty, all states-parties commit to pursue general and complete disarmament, and the non--nuclear weapon states (NNWS) agree to forgo developing or acquiring nuclear weapons. These are the first two “pillars” of the treaty. The third pillar ensures that states parties can access and develop nuclear technology for peaceful applications.

The TPNW is the product of fifty years of politics regarding the NPT – the dissatisfaction of the NNWS of the lack of disarmament of the nuclear-weapon states (NWS) and the reasonable fear that the NNWS will suffer due to the NWS. The **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)**, launched in 2007, seeks to shift the disarmament debate to focus on the humanitarian threat posed by nuclear weapons drawing attention to their unique destructive capacity, their catastrophic health and environmental consequences, their indiscriminate targeting, the debilitating impact of a detonation on medical infrastructure and relief measures, and the long-lasting effects of radiation on the surrounding area. The road to a world free of nuclear weapons (https://www.icanw.org/history_of_the_tpnw) has pictures and text of the history of the TPNW starting with the weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) that have been outlawed. The General Assembly decided to convene in 2017 a United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. The conference adopted the TPNW on 7/7/2017 with 122 states in favor. Basic info including text of the TPNW: <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>

Signatories and Entry Into Force (EIF) of the NPT and the TPNW

On July 1, 1968, the NPT opened for signature and was signed by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Article IX of the treaty established that entry into force would require the treaty’s ratification by those three countries (the treaty’s depositories) and 40 additional states. In **1970** the NPT entered into force (EIF) with 46 state parties.

The TPNW opened for signature in September 2017. In celebration of the International Day of the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, a global conference on generating intergenerational support for the TPNW and its EIF was held in September 2020: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7C3Gu3kq00&t=1s>. This conference had twelve guest speakers and discussed the inclusiveness of nations, genders and indigenous peoples in creating this treaty. The TPNW got the needed 50 countries ratifications on Oct. 24, 2020, so the EIF - 90 days later – was Jan. 22, 2021. WILPF's own Ray Acheson, director of *Reaching Critical Will*, the disarmament program of WILPF, wrote in the Oct. 27, 2020, *Nation Nuclear Weapons Have Always Been Immoral. Now They're Illegal* <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/tpnw-nuclear-ban/>.

Comparison of the NPT and TPNW

The first five articles in the NPT differentiate between the NWS and the NNWS. A good discussion of the NPT's first ten Articles is <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nptfact>.

The TPNW does not differentiate between NWS and NNWS - a sign of its inclusiveness but a reason that no NWS has signed it. The TPNW is about twice the length of the NPT as it lists a greater number of reasons for its being and has more specifications for those countries that ratify it. Article 1 prohibits each state party to develop, test, produce, manufacture, transfer, station, possess, or stockpile nuclear weapons – and also makes it illegal to assist, encourage, or induce anyone else to do any of those things.

Post-EIF of the NPT and TPNW

Regret about the lack of progress towards nuclear disarmament was expressed at all the NPT review conferences starting in 1975 even as more countries became parties to the Treaty: <https://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/disarmament-fora/npt/history-of-the-npt-1975-1995>. The NPT was indefinitely extended in 1995 and calls for a continuation with a review conference every five years. The latest conference was August, 2022 at the UN in New York City- six WILPFers from the US attended. The NPT now has the widest adherence of any arms control agreement, with 191 parties to the treaty - this alone makes the NPT an important tool in nuclear disarmament.

Seventy countries have ratified the TPNW as of February 2024. They have met twice at the UN to determine how to implement the TPNW. WILPF US sent a delegation of three WILPFUS members to the second meeting of states parties (2MSP) to the TPNW in November 2023 where they focused on divesting from nuclear weapons corporations, i.e. those manufacturing nuclear weapons or their delivery vehicles. Here is Reaching Critical Will's statement to the 2MSP on Gender and Intersectionality: https://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/nuclear-weapon-ban/2msp/statements/1Dec_WILPF.pdf.

ICAN has more than 650 partner organizations in over 110 countries. The then Executive Director of ICAN, Beatrice Fihn, was interviewed in the Dec. 7, 2020 Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists <https://thebulletin.org/premium/2020-12/beatrice-fihn-how-to-implement-the-nuclear-weapons-ban-treaty/>. Fihn described a possible future in which nuclear weapons countries are persuaded to decide that it is best to give up the most fearsome weapons ever created—in those countries' own interests.

Conclusion

The NPT, signed and ratified by most of the world's countries, has not lessened the threat of nuclear war as hoped as evidenced by the Doomsday Clock now closer to midnight than ever before. The TPNW strengthens and supports the NPT and is now perhaps our best hope to decrease the threat of nuclear catastrophe although the NPT is still an important tool in this effort.

Sources: <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Timeline-of-the-Treaty-on-the-Non-Proliferation-of-Nuclear-Weapons-NPT>

<https://www.amacad.org/publication/nuclear-disarmament-without-nuclear-weapon-states-nuclear-weapon-ban-treaty>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Campaign_to_Abolish_Nuclear_Weapons