Statement from
Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) for the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons

Delivered by Alyn Ware, PNND Global Coordinator

Note: In the interests of time, the statement was not read out in its entirety

Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) is a global cross-party network of legislators in over 90 countries – both nuclear-armed and non-nuclear States.

PNND has been actively involved in the issue of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons since we were established in 2003. One of our five inaugural Co-Presidents – Abacca Anjain Maddison who addressed this conference yesterday – was a senator from Rongelap, an atoll in the Marshall Islands that was so irradiated by nuclear testing that the entire population had to be evacuated and are unable to return to their traditional homeland.

PNND members have highlighted the importance of the full ratification and entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and have held events in parliaments to commemorate the International Day Against Nuclear Tests.

PNND members have raised the humanitarian dimension in parliaments through questions, motions and events. Our members, including those in nuclear-armed States, have highlighted the humanitarian and security imperative to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, and encouraged participation from their governments in the three international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

PNND is also actively involved in the ATOM Project, an initiative led by Karipbek Kuyukov, a renowned Kazakh artist who was born without arms as a result of radiation exposure. The ATOM Project was launched at the 2012 PNND Assembly and International Conference in Kazakhstan, which was attended by over 4000 people including parliamentarians from 85 countries.

And this morning PNND, the Austrian Parliament and the Inter Parliamentary Union hosted a roundtable discussion in the parliament on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

Parliamentarians are elected or appointed to represent their constituencies, and serve as the bridges between civil society and government. PNND therefore works cooperatively with civil society networks, mayors – such as through Mayors for Peace – religious communities, academics and other constituencies. And we engage with governments
through the United Nations, through treaty bodies and through the Framework Forum events which we organise with the Global Security Institute and Middle Powers Initiative.

PNND does not adopt policy on what might be the best pathway to a nuclear-weapon-free world, nor the best option for each parliament to take. Indeed, some actions that parliamentarians in non-nuclear States can take might differ from some of the actions that could or should be taken in nuclear-armed States, or those States under nuclear deterrence relationships. Other actions might be able to be taken collectively.

PNND members have therefore taken a range of actions – some to prohibit nuclear weapons in their legislatures, others to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in their security relationships, others to cut funding for nuclear weapons programs, and others to support the establishment of a zone free of nuclear-weapons and other WMD in the Middle East, and for the establishment of NWFZs in other regions such as North-East Asia and the Arctic.

PNND cooperates with ICAN on a global parliamentary appeal to ban nuclear weapons. And we cooperate with the United Nations and UNFOLD ZERO to highlight UN initiatives such as the UN Secretary-General’s Five Point Plan, the Open Ended Working Group and the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. In all these, the humanitarian dimension provides an imperative to ensure success.

PNND also advances the humanitarian and security imperative for nuclear abolition through inter-parliamentary organisations such as the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the Parliamentary Assemblies for NATO, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Commonwealth of Independent States, Mediterranean and others.

Our cooperation with the IPU has resulted in a handbook distributed to all parliaments and very successful resolutions adopted by the IPU Assemblies in 2009 and 2014. The latter resolution supports the three international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, calls on parliaments to work with their governments to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, and supports negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements as proposed by the UN Secretary General.

Earlier I noted that parliamentarians are the representatives of civil society and a bridge between civil society and governments. Indeed, in an increasingly interconnected world where we face existential threats to humanity – such as climate change or the risk of nuclear weapons use – parliamentarians have a responsibility not only to their constituents, their political parties and their countries... but also to the global commons and to future generations. PNND is here to ensure parliamentarians meet this responsibility.

Thank you