



**Statement by Ambassador Lucy Duncan
Ambassador and Permanent Representative to
the United Nations and other international
agencies in Geneva**

**Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
Second Meeting of States Parties**

28 November 2023

E ngā mana, e ngā reo

Tēnā koutou katoa

On behalf of New Zealand, I take this opportunity to thank you, President de la Fuente, for your efforts as we have prepared for this Second Meeting of States Parties.

Mr President,

The Scientific Advisory Group's report issued in advance of this meeting made for sobering reading. Nuclear-armed States are adding new nuclear weapons and related capabilities to their arsenals. And all are, to the tune of billions of dollars, modernizing their existing nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

As that report makes clear, we are witnessing a troubling resurgence in the perceived salience of nuclear weapons. Nuclear-weapon States, and States under extended nuclear security guarantees, are seeking to maintain or even increase the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines, and in some cases have pursued the stationing of weapons on the territory of non-nuclear-weapon States.

The nuclear dimension of current international tensions, including within the context of the conflict in Ukraine, is deeply concerning. We are disturbed by the signs that suggest a new nuclear arms race is underway. This something that the world can ill afford. The risk in continuing down this path is immense, and it is increasing.

Compounding this risk, we have seen the deterioration and even reversal of arms control agreements, and a shocking return to explicit nuclear threats as part of conflict and tensions. This is a stark reminder of the very real dangers we face from nuclear weapons and the urgent need to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Meanwhile, evidence continues to grow about the catastrophic humanitarian impact and risks of nuclear weapon use and testing. This is something countries from our region, the Pacific, already know all too well.

Adding to our concern, while we witness these distressing trends, there has been negligible progress on nuclear disarmament outside of the TPNW. Despite our best efforts, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is faltering, in large part because the Nuclear-Weapon States have failed to meaningfully implement their disarmament obligation and related commitments.

The TPNW is one of the few bright spots in the effort towards nuclear disarmament. States Parties to the TPNW – and a majority of the international community – set about achieving a landmark Treaty that would collectively start to turn back the tide that has run against nuclear disarmament efforts. The TPNW strengthens the norm against the use of nuclear weapons, and it complements the existing nuclear disarmament architecture, including the NPT. In comprehensively banning nuclear

weapons for its State Parties, the TPNW represents a necessary step on the pathway towards abolition. It is essential that we and other States Parties use the opportunity of this Meeting to reaffirm our support for the Treaty, and work together to enhance the Treaty's operation.

Mr President,

Testament to the broad appeal of the TPNW's objectives is that we are joined this week by representatives from all corners of the globe. This of course includes new States Parties that have joined the TPNW since we last met. We welcome them.

I also want to acknowledge and welcome those joining us from the ICRC, ICAN and other Civil Society Organisations – we commend the partnership of States, international organisations and civil society that has been a hallmark of the success of our Treaty.

And, finally, I acknowledge the Observer States participating this week. Your constructive engagement on our shared mission to totally eliminate nuclear weapons is welcome and appreciated.

Mr President,

We are pleased at the strong progress that TPNW States Parties have made since our historic first meeting in Vienna last year. The systems needed to consolidate the Treaty have been stood up, and work to implement it has begun.

This meeting is an important opportunity for States Parties to take stock and continue to build on the Action Plan agreed last year in Vienna. Since then, New Zealand has co-chaired the TPNW's verification work stream,

alongside Mexico. Work to implement this provision of the Treaty is fundamental to its full and effective implementation, and will be essential to its success.

We have made meaningful progress on many important issues in the informal working group, to develop a common language and understandings that will be required in readiness for the day nuclear-armed and hosting States decide to join the TPNW.

Thank you to all States and observers who have participated in the informal working group, and helped us to advance our work. We are confident a good start was made this year, in a process we anticipate will take several years to complete. We look forward to continuing this work in the next intersessional period with other stakeholders in the Treaty.

New Zealand has also actively engaged in a number of other work streams, including on Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation, which are of particular relevance and importance to the Pacific, stemming from a legacy of nuclear testing in our region. We commend the co-chairs, Kiribati and Kazakhstan, for their committed stewardship of this important work stream, and assure them of our continued interest and support.

Elsewhere, New Zealand has contributed, including to work on gender, complementarity, and universalisation, with a particular focus on the Pacific.

In that regard, we are pleased to be joined by so many of our Pacific friends today. Already we are delighted with the number of TPNW States Parties from the Pacific. The TPNW reflects our region's values, and long-standing position against nuclear weapons. It complements the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga) and we will continue to work closely

as a Pacific community to address issues stemming from our region's nuclear legacy.

We also welcome the establishment of the Scientific Advisory Group and commend its work, including the work it has completed of particular relevance to our region. And finally, as part of our support for universalisation efforts, and the TPNW more broadly, we were pleased to have contributed to UNODA's TPNW Sponsorship programme.

President,

New Zealand is committed to the Vienna Action Plan and its continued implementation in the next intersessional period.

We remain a long way from a world in which nuclear weapons are diminished in salience for all States, let alone totally eliminated. But the work of the TPNW gives us the most hope for actually achieving the total elimination of nuclear weapons. This goal, and this Treaty, is something to which we must all remain staunchly committed.

Thank you.