



**Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons
Nayarit, Mexico
13-14 February 2014**

Final Statement by Ambassador Dell Higginson

Our meeting here has helped to underline the terrible risk that nuclear weapons continue to pose for us all. This is not a risk that we should force our societies to face. It is a risk that we must act to eliminate. Accordingly, New Zealand very much welcomes Austria's offer to host a further conference in Vienna later this year and to sustain our ability to address this challenge.

Some states have tried in recent times to insist that the nature and effects of nuclear weapons are so obvious that our discussions here can serve no useful purpose.

Were we to agree with them, we would again be allowing the spotlight to turn away from the *human* security consequences of nuclear weapons and put it back on to the arcane debates about *state* security. Were we to agree with them, we would risk ceding to others our collective responsibility, under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to carry forward nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Foreign Minister Meade, in opening this Conference, rightly emphasised the *transitional* nature of the nuclear-weapon-possessor status given to five states under the NPT. When the NPT was negotiated, nuclear weapons were certainly not envisaged as an intrinsic or permanent part of the global political and military landscape.

Perhaps in 1968, no country had a very clear idea just how long the transition under the NPT was to last. But I very much doubt that anyone intended it to last 45 years.

Now, 45 years on, there is a groundswell in the number of countries that believe it is time to place the abolition of nuclear weapons on a legally binding, and a durable, basis.

We cannot continue to rely only on what was framed in the NPT as transitional arrangements and to hope for global understanding and compliance with the rules of international humanitarian law.

There was a time *before* nuclear weapons, and there must be a time *after* nuclear weapons. This Conference reminds us of just how essential it is that we get there.

[Statement online at <http://www.icanw.org.nz>]