

IPPNW International Council Statement 2024
Call for sanity, Call for action

Today humankind faces the twin existential threats of climate change and nuclear war. The former is already making large parts of our planet uninhabitable; far greater climate action is critically needed. For nuclear war, which could kill billions and end human civilisation, prevention is the only cure.

At the same time, war and armed conflict has killed or injured hundreds of thousands of people. Millions more have been forced to [abandon their homes](#). The already devastating conflicts in Ukraine and Israel and Palestine involving nuclear-armed states raises the spectre of wider regional wars or even a global confrontation. Respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians, children, and health professionals in armed conflict must be restored.

We physicians and members of our international organisation in 56 countries, are increasingly worried about the rise of militarism, marked by historic [military spending](#) that has diverted precious resources away from urgent human and environmental security needs. There seems to be a growing belief that conflicts can be solved by violence and that arms provide security.

A return to diplomacy is required to end today's wars, to prevent new conflicts, and to protect human and planetary health from the ravages of climate destruction and nuclear war.

We must also confront the illusion that nuclear deterrence provides security. Human rationality is not assured and nuclear war can break out unintentionally, by technical or human error or cyberattack. Deterrence fuels proliferation and obstructs nuclear disarmament. The possible use of automation and artificial intelligence in nuclear command and control is deeply troubling.

A regional nuclear war involving less than 3% of the global nuclear arsenal could cause abrupt climate disruption and [global starvation](#). Famine could result for a third of the world. Despite this deadly prospect, nuclear-armed states are spending billions in a new nuclear arms race.

Growing insecurity and mistrust has also led to the near collapse of the international arms control and disarmament regime. Yet the 2017 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) stands as a beacon of hope. With almost half the world's nations party or signatory to the Treaty, the TPNW is challenging the current norm that enshrines nuclear weapons in security doctrines. It is also driving financial institutions to divest from companies making nuclear weapons, and to work for justice for survivors of nuclear use and testing. It is imperative that all UN Member States join the TPNW at the earliest possible date.

Nuclear abolition and peace-building could be a substantial part of the solution to the climate crisis. Military activity and armed conflict are destroyers of ecosystems and major sources of greenhouse gas emissions. If we could utilise the massive material and human resources now wasted on the nuclear arms race to solve our urgent crises of climate change and loss of biodiversity, this would contribute substantially to saving the planet and human civilization.

The current direction is alarming, but climate destruction and nuclear Armageddon are not the future that must be. We have the knowledge and tools to create a safer, healthier future. We call upon the nations of the world, especially those engaged in armed conflict, to uphold international humanitarian law, engage in serious dialogue for peace, and work toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. Please join us in our collective efforts to secure our common future.