
First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

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Nuclear Armament Increasingly at Odds with Sustainable Development?

Working paper submitted by ICAN on behalf of member organization Scientists for Future Austria

General background: Sustainable Development Goals, climate, and peace

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal framework to secure human well-being and to protect our planet, adopted by all members of the UN in 2015. Its preamble states "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development." Furthermore, an integrated approach to all of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals is considered necessary for their achievement.
2. Estimates of the finances required to reach the SDGs are on the order of 2.5 to 5 tn USD per year; the cost of reaching the Paris climate goals was estimated to be 0.35 tn USD per year (might be higher now to due insufficient action).¹
3. A clear nexus exists between the SDGs and the TPNW. There can be no doubt that actual use of nuclear weapons would jeopardise all of the SDGs. In addition, Article 6 of the TPNW on victim assistance and environmental remediation as well as Article 7 on international cooperation and assistance make direct contributions towards the SDGs.
4. This has been previously recognised. For example, the fact that adherence to and implementation of the TPNW supports the SDGs was also pointed out in a study by ICAN and Soka Gakkai International which lists positive impacts on ten out of the 17 SDGs.² At the 2021 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under

¹Alexander Dill (2018) The SDGs are public goods - Costs, Sources and Measures of Financing for Development. Policy paper to the UN Inter-Agency Taskforce on Financing for Development, Basel Institute of Commons and Economics, https://developmentfinance.un.org/sites/developmentfinance.un.org/files/The_SDGs_are_public_goods_IATF_2019.pdf. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

²The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and Sustainable Development Goals, October 2019. Downloadable via https://www.icanw.org/tpnw_and_sdgs. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

the auspices of ECOSOC, a panel was devoted to the discussion of how engagement in nuclear disarmament fosters the achievement of the SDGs.³

5. Among the SDGs, climate action is especially urgent. Already the heading of Goal 13 reads "Take *urgent* action to combat climate change and its impacts", in correspondence with the preamble, recognising that due to climate change, "the survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk".

6. At COP 21, the Parties to the UNFCCC agreed on the landmark "Paris Climate Agreement"⁴ which by now, with 193 ratifications, has reached practically universal acceptance. States have committed to keep "a global temperature rise this century well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5°C". The Agreement furthermore mandates, *inter alia*, to make "finance flows consistent with a low GHG emissions and climate-resilient pathway".⁵

7. However, humanity lags behind. According to UNEP's 2020 Emissions Gap Report "Current NDCs remain seriously inadequate to achieve the climate goals of the Paris Agreement".⁶ The UNEP 2021 Adaptation Gap Report found that "Estimated adaptation costs in developing countries are five to ten times greater than current public adaptation finance flows, and the adaptation finance gap is widening."⁷

8. The reports of the 6th assessment cycle of the IPCC were completed in spring 2022, confirming previous findings and underlining again the urgency of action. The Summary For Policymakers of WG III Report states: "All global modelled pathways that limit warming to 1.5°C (>50%) with no or limited overshoot, and those that limit warming to 2°C (>67%) involve rapid and deep and in most cases immediate GHG emission reductions in all sectors." And: "Average annual modelled investment requirements for 2020 to 2030 [in agreement with Paris Agreement goals] are a factor of three to six greater than current levels".⁸ In the words of the UN Secretary General: "First, we must keep the goal of 1.5°C alive. This requires greater ambition on mitigation and immediate concrete action to reduce global emissions by 45 % by 2030".⁹

9. The 2015 UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris set a roadmap for developed countries to provide 100 bn USD of climate finance yearly to developing countries by 2020.¹⁰ This target was still not reached in 2021, and it thus was one of the main topics at the COP 26 in Glasgow.¹¹

10. Resource limitations are felt in several dimensions: six of the nine planetary boundaries have already been transgressed.¹² Nuclear weapon production has its share of environmental burden, especially through the mining, milling, refining and con-

³<https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Conceptnote%28HOPe%29%20%281%29.pdf>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

⁴https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

⁵<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement/key-aspects-of-the-paris-agreement>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

⁶<https://www.unep.org/emissions-gap-report-2020>. Last accessed 19 Dec 2020.

⁷<https://www.unep.org/resources/adaptation-gap-report-2021>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

⁸Working Group III Contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), Summary for Policymakers. https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_SummaryForPolicymakers.pdf (p. 32, 61). Last accessed 28 May 2022.

⁹<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-11-01/secretary-generals-remarks-the-world-leaders-summit-cop-26-delivered-scroll-down-for-french-version>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

¹⁰<https://unfccc.int/topics/climate-finance/the-big-picture/climate-finance-in-the-negotiations>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

¹¹<https://ukcop26.org/cop26-goals/>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

¹²<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2022-04-26-freshwater-boundary-exceeds-safe-limits.html>

version of uranium, and the processing of plutonium from spent fuel. Large tracts of land have been contaminated.¹³

11. It can also be noted that for years, the famous "Doomsday clock" of the Science and Security Board, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, lists nuclear war and global climate change as the leading existential threats to humankind. It appears proper to consider their nexus. An integrated approach to global catastrophic risks is argued for by, *inter alia*, the Global Challenges Foundation¹⁴ and the Club of Rome.¹⁵

Specific background: the nexus between climate and nuclear weapons

12. Nuclear weapons and their delivery systems have already consumed significant resources. This includes finance, but also research and development, general workforce, energy, and natural resources including territory contaminated by radioactivity. These activities continue, and all nuclear powers are said to be engaged in modernisation and / or build-up programmes.

13. The USA, for example, plan to spend 400 bn USD in 2017–26 on maintaining and comprehensively updating their nuclear forces.¹⁶ For the period from 2017 to 2046, the costs for their nuclear weapon modernisation programme are estimated at 1.2 tn USD.¹⁷ The lifetime costs for the next generation of the UK nuclear weapon systems including the new strategic submarines were estimated to amount to 300 bn USD.¹⁸ France has foreseen 42 bn USD for maintenance and modernisation of its nuclear forces and infrastructure in the period 2019–2025.¹⁹ Numbers for other nuclear-armed states are less well known.

14. Concerns have been expressed about a possible further erosion of the non-proliferation regime in the future, which would lead to even more resources being diverted to related activities. States may even now hedge for such scenarios by investing into nuclear dual-use projects that are economically problematic.

15. It should be recalled that the preamble to the TPNW reminds "that the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security are to be promoted with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources". On the background of the urgency of climate action as expressed in all relevant documents issued recently in the context of the UNFCCC, UNEP, and IPCC, this call must be taken more seriously. Humanity cannot afford to continue spending very significant amounts of financial as well as non-financial resources on armament, especially on nuclear armament.

¹³See for example Srivastava, et al. (2020). Environmental and Health Impact Due to Uranium Mining. In: Gupta, D., Walther, C. (eds) Uranium in Plants and the Environment. Radionuclides and Heavy Metals in the Environment. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14961-1_3.

¹⁴<https://globalchallenges.org/>. Last accessed 30 May 2022.

¹⁵<https://www.clubofrome.org/impact-hubs/reframing-economics/stockholm50/>. Last accessed 30 May 2022.

¹⁶<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/52401>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

¹⁷<https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53211>. Last accessed 28 May 2022.

¹⁸Report by Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, UK, prepared for NPT/PrepCom 2017.

¹⁹SIPRI Yearbook 2021, p. 365.

Actions recommended to the IMSP

16. Call on governments of nuclear weapon states and their allies to consider the full cost of nuclear weapons, including environmental and health damage caused by the whole nuclear weapon production chain.

17. Encourage governments, research institutions, and NGOs to finance, conduct and publish research on the full cost of nuclear weapons, including environmental consequences and health damage by the whole nuclear weapon production chain.

18. Consider the urgency of the climate crisis, the limitation of resources, and what impact this has on other policy fields, in particular disarmament. Heed the interdependence between sustainable development and peace, aware that humanity cannot afford the current level of military spending, ongoing armed conflict, and threat of nuclear weapons if disastrous global change with potential consequences *en par* with large-scale nuclear war is to be avoided.

19. Use all suitable international fora and bilateral contacts to call on all states to honour their commitments made in the Paris Climate Agreement and subsequent UNFCCC COPs and reconsider their spending and resource allocation, with a view for nuclear-weapon states and their allies to shift resources from nuclear-weapon-related activities to the implementation of SDGs, especially for climate action.

20. Call on governments, public institutions, companies including financial institutions, and individual citizens everywhere

- not to make available funds, loans, energetical, material or natural resources of any kind, or workforce, to activities forbidden under Article 1 of the TPNW
- not to make available funds, loans, energetical, material or natural resources of any kind, or workforce, for the purchase, deployment, development or testing of delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons
- to carefully scrutinise dual-use capabilities of any major technical or industrial project, especially those related to nuclear fuels or potential nuclear weapon delivery vehicles, to cautiously judge associated benefits and risks, and to eventually withhold or withdraw support for such projects according to the outcome of such investigation
- to direct any resources freed up by the above-mentioned actions to the implementation of the SDGs with particular consideration of the urgency of climate action.
