

## **An Urgent Call to Step Back from the Brink of Nuclear War**

Events of the last year have brought the world closer to nuclear war than we have been since the end of the Cold War. Two years ago, the leaders of the P5 warned that nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought, and G20 leaders stated that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible. Today we call on the leaders of all nine nuclear armed states to step back from the brink of a conflict that will kill billions of people and end modern civilization.

Specifically, we call on them to declare unequivocally that they will not use nuclear weapons. We also call on them to sit down together to negotiate a timetable for the elimination of their nuclear arsenals, to establish the necessary verification and enforcement provisions and to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which has already been signed by nearly 100 nations. And we call on them to demonstrate significant progress in these negotiations by the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki next August.

We further call on the Secretary General of the United Nations and the leaders of all nations to do everything in their power to facilitate this process.

The complete elimination of these weapons is the only reliable means to guarantee that they will never be used, either intentionally or in error. There have been many documented instances of technical failure or human error that could have led to the unintentional launch of nuclear weapons. These risks are heightened in times of international tension. If these weapons remain in the arsenals of the nuclear armed states, it is not a question of “if” but “when” they are used, causing unimaginable suffering for humanity.

We strongly support the Secretary General’s 2023 New Agenda for Peace, which identified the elimination of nuclear weapons as the highest priority action to secure peace. In the upcoming Summit for the Future, we urge all states to support the call for nuclear-armed states to prevent any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, pending their total elimination. The time for words is over; the world needs action.

The armed conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the resulting confrontation between Russia and NATO, marked by frequent and explicit threats to use nuclear weapons, is the most obvious source of the current danger. But there are others. The growing enmity between the United States and China, the escalating tensions on the Korean peninsula, the unresolved conflicts between India and Pakistan and in the Middle East, including the current conflict between Israel and Hamas, all have the potential to escalate to nuclear war.

This danger is magnified by the increasing use of artificial intelligence in the military, which is speeding up warfare and reducing the time for nuclear decision-making. It also increases the potential for cyber hacking and terrorism involving nuclear weapons.

During the Cold War, leaders of opposing blocs understood that they needed to work with each other to avoid nuclear Armageddon. The current crisis demands that nations, in the interest of their own national security, put aside traditional relations based on competition and create a new world order based on cooperation. Such cooperation is necessary to secure the elimination of nuclear weapons, and will enable us to deal more effectively with climate change, biodiversity loss, the next great pandemic and other existential threats that may arise.

Now is the time to act.