

January 19, 2021

The Honourable Marc Garneau, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Mr. Rob Oliphant, MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Dear Honourable Marc Garneau and Mr. Rob Oliphant,

The Commission on Justice and Peace of The Canadian Council of Churches urges the government of Canada to sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). In doing so we join our voices with other civil society organizations in Canada and global organizations such as the World Council of Churches (WCC) and other national councils of churches urging their governments to do the same.

For decades, The Canadian Council of Churches has been consistent in our call for a world free of nuclear weapons. Most recently in 2018, the leaders of our 26 member denominations signed a letter to the Prime Minister urging the government to support the treaty.<sup>1</sup> We understand peace to be core to the mission and identity of all the member churches of The Canadian Council of Churches. Peacemaking requires abolishing war and transforming conflict, including eliminating weapons of mass destruction.

On October 24, 2020, the TPNW reached the required 50 ratifications and on January 22, 2021, 90 days after the 50<sup>th</sup> state ratification, the TPNW will enter into force.

For decades, the CCC has advocated for cooperative efforts to prohibit the development, testing and use of nuclear weapons, and has worked to impress upon the Government of Canada the immorality of nuclear weapons and the need for their total elimination. As a community of churches in Canada, we believe that nuclear weapons are evil and that they present a unique existential threat to humanity. The number of states possessing nuclear weapons continues to grow, and by extension, the possibility of terrorists and other non-state actors acquiring nuclear weapons.

In the early part of 2020, the world as we knew it changed suddenly and radically due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. Thousands are dying every day, up to a quarter of the global population is or has been under some level of confinement, national borders have been closed,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.councilofchurches.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Canadian-Council-of-Churches-United-Nations-Treatyon-the-Prohibition-of-Nuclear-Weapons.pdf>

and economies ground to a halt. In some parts of the world, public health systems and personnel have been completely overwhelmed.

The impacts of the current global health crisis share similarities with those of any future nuclear attack. Like the COVID-19 pandemic, the health, environmental and economic consequences of a nuclear explosion would not be contained to the city or country where the attack took place. Nuclear tests have demonstrated that radiation can spread into the atmosphere, oceans, plants and animals, and into whole populations. The pandemic has demonstrated - more than ever - how closely linked our economies are, and how interruptions in one place can impact whole chains of production throughout the world. The same consequences could be expected from a nuclear attack anywhere in the world.

But, unlike a pandemic, we know what we have to do to prevent a nuclear attack. We already have the answer in the TPNW, which was adopted by the United Nations in 2017. Now that 50 countries have ratified the TPNW, it will enter into force on January 22, 2021.

We urge our government to use the opportunity of the Treaty entering into force to join the growing community of States which have rejected nuclear weapons entirely. We appeal to you to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to continued productive engagement by the government in the search for sustainable peace and human security.



Donna Geernaert S.C.

Chair: The Commission on Justice and Peace of The Canadian Council of Churches

CC:

Michael Chong, MP, Critic for Foreign Affairs: Conservative Party of Canada

Stéphane Bergeron, MP, Critic for Foreign Affairs, Bloc Québécois

Jack Harris, MP, Critic for Foreign Affairs: New Democratic Party of Canada

Jeff Wheeldon, Critic for Peace and Disarmament: Green Party of Canada

Rev. Stephen Kendall, President, The Canadian Council of Churches

Rev. Peter Noteboom, General Secretary, The Canadian Council of Churches