

UN Treaty ‘beginning of the end for nuclear weapons,’ say Nobel Peace Prize winners

9 October 2017 – Speaking to journalists at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize winners – International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) – urged countries around the globe to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The award represents a special recognition for the efforts of the “new generation” of campaigners – “people who grew up after the Cold War and don’t understand why we still have the [nuclear] weapons,” said Beatrice Fihn, the Executive Director of ICAN.

In particular, she highlighted that it is also a huge recognition of the efforts of the *Hibakusha* (the Japanese word for the surviving victims of the 1945 atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) in realizing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Adopted on 7 July at a UN conference in New York, the Treaty is the first multilateral legally-binding instrument for nuclear disarmament in two decades.

Quoting Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, Ms. Fihn added: “7th of July marks the beginning of the end for nuclear weapons.”

Also at the press conference, Ray Acheson of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, an ICAN member organization, said diplomacy for dialogue and cooperation is all the more necessary right now given rising tensions in many parts of the world.

“I think it’s more important than ever for us to be emphasizing the importance and the utility and the practicality of working together,” she said, recalling the partnership between the civil society, governments and the UN in the realizing the Treaty.

At the press conference, the speakers outlined the dangers of by nuclear weapons as well as the rising tensions, including due to the nuclear weapons development programme of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the discussions over the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) [concerning](#) Iran’s nuclear programme.

Expressing that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons offered an alternative to a world – one without nuclear weapons – Tim Wright, the Asia-Pacific Director of ICAN, hoped that the Nobel Peace Prize will help ICAN to get countries to sign and ratify the Treaty.

“We’ll be working over coming weeks and months to persuade governments to do just that,” he added.

On World Day UN spotlights posts' contributions to development and people's lives

9 October 2017 – The post plays an important role in the everyday lives of people and businesses, as well as contributes to global social and economic development, the United Nations postal agency said Monday, marking World Post Day.

“It is important to constantly remind ourselves of the role that Posts play in our societies today, because some key trends are [turning our world upside down](#),” said Bishar Hussein, Director General of the Universal Postal Union, in his message for the [Day](#).

He specifically mentioned Internet pervasiveness; ever-more demanding customers; e-commerce and light logistics; as well as the world economy and international trade.

“Posts can only mitigate risks and seize opportunities if they engage in reform,” he emphasized.

“They need to reinvent themselves, embrace digitalization, redefine their value proposition, and develop new products and services. They also require political support and investments, as well as an appropriate regulatory framework for their activities,” he underscored.

Future gains could include more satisfied customers, stronger postal markets and more cohesive societies, Mr. Hussein said, adding: “With countries stepping up efforts to achieve the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), we should not forget that the postal sector is an enabler of inclusive development and an essential component of the global economy.”

“In the remotest and the most populated areas of our planet alike, it remains a key platform for delivering public services,” he continued.

As a specialized intergovernmental organization within the UN system, UPU strives to enable its 192 national networks of member countries to act as one.

“We offer platforms that let our members exchange views and find multilateral solutions to global issues. We provide affordable technical solutions and assistance to governments, regulators and postal operators wishing to upgrade their national postal infrastructure. And we are the only global knowledge centre for the sector, building on the power of postal big data to the benefit of all,” the Director General underscored.

Faithful to its mission, the UPU has chosen two main highlights for this year's World Post Day celebrations. Firstly, to recognize the top-ranked countries in the newly released Integrated Index for Postal Development.

"Providing a snapshot of postal development in 170 countries, this new index is a powerful tool which governments, regulators and postal operators can use to promote postal excellence," said Mr. Hussein – congratulating Switzerland, France and Japan along with the regional champions Brazil, Mauritius, Poland, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates.

He also gave a nod to "the younger generation, who are not losing the habit of writing even in this age of new technology," announcing Togo's fourteen-year-old Eva Giordano Palacios as the winner of UPU's International Letter-Writing Competition, who in a letter to [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, called for increased efforts to help poor countries abolish old practices which persist because of a lack of socioeconomic development.

"As these examples show," he concluded "the postal world is very much alive. So let us adopt new technologies, and embrace transformation!"

[UN concerned for safety of more than five million displaced in northern Iraq](#)

9 October 2017 – As the Iraqi offensive in and near Hawija in Kirkuk Governorate is drawing to a close, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners expressed deep concern on Monday for the safety of civilian populations in the region.

"Protection remains our overriding concern," said Lise Grande, the Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, [press release](#).

She said humanitarians are deeply worried about incidents of collective punishment, restrictions on free movement, evictions, forced returns and sexual exploitation and violence, including in emergency sites and camps.

Ms. Grande reported that more than 5.4 million civilians have been displaced since 2014, millions of which have been helped to safety and protected by the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Government.

Humanitarian partners working in Iraq characterize the humanitarian crisis as a protection crisis.

"There are heart-breaking cases of children, the elderly and disabled people being separated from their families. Hundreds of thousands of people,

including tens of thousands of very young children, have been exposed to extreme danger, stress, and trauma and will require years of specialized support and care,” said Ms. Grande.

[Global unemployment passes 200 million in 2017, UN labour agency reports](#)

9 October 2017 – More than 200 million people are out of work around the world – an increase of 3.4 million since last year, the United Nations labour agency said Monday, calling for policies that can recharge “sluggish” growth of small and medium-sized businesses.

In the new addition of its flagship report, [World Employment and Social Outlook 2017: Sustainable Enterprises and Jobs](#), the International Labour Organization (ILO) warned that small and medium sized enterprises has “stagnated,” the impact of which is worst in developing economies, where more than one in two workers are employed in small and medium-sized firms.

According to the report, private sector enterprises accounted for the bulk of global employment in 2016; they employed 2.8 billion individuals, representing 87 per cent of total employment. The sector, which also covers medium-sized firms, accounts for up to 70 per cent of all jobs in some Arab States, and well over 50 per cent in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

But ILO research revealed these companies are struggling to grow. The latest data from more than 130 countries shows that small and medium business had faster job growth than larger firms before the global financial slump in 2008.

From 2009 however, job creation in the small and medium sector was simply “absent”, according to the ILO report, which calls for government intervention to reverse the trend.

“To [reverse the trend](#) of employment stagnation in [small and medium enterprises], we need policies to better promote SMEs and a better business environment for all firms, including access to finance for the younger ones,” said Deborah Greenfield, ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy.

The ILO research shows that full-time female permanent employees in the formal sector are more likely to be found in small and medium enterprises than in large firms. On average, and across all regions, around 30 per cent of full-time permanent employees in these businesses are women, compared with 27 per cent in large enterprises.

As such, greater numbers of women in enterprises may therefore have a positive impact on growth and development, because micro-enterprises and

small businesses often offer women an entry point into the formal labour market.

Another aspect of the ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook report is on how people's working conditions can play a role in sustainable development. It says that providing training for staff can lead to 14 per cent higher wages and almost 20 per cent higher productivity.

Conversely, relying on short-term contractors tends to be associated with lower wages and lower productivity.

[UN emergency response fund reaches annual goal of \\$450 million, but more needed](#)

9 October 2017 – The United Nations global emergency response fund has reached its 2017 funding target of \$450 million, but much more is required given that the number of people in need of assistance is at a record high.

“Given the many challenges we face today with 145 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, achieving the target set for 2017 provides a [much-needed boost](#) in fulfilling our mission to reach the world's most vulnerable people with timely assistance,” UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock said Monday in a press release, acknowledging the generosity of donors.

“But given the increase in needs brought on by ongoing conflict and natural disasters this year, it is more important than ever that donors enable CERF [Central Emergency Response Fund] to reach its 2018 funding target of \$1 billion,” Mr. Lowcock, who is also Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

CERF has been at the forefront in responding quickly when crises emerged in 2017, enabling partners to deliver critical health care, food, clean water, sanitation and much more to people who need it the most, especially women and girls caught up in crises.

The Fund was among the first to provide resources when more than 20 million people this year were in or imminently close to famine in north-east Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, helping to stave off the worst.

It allocated \$145 million to help critically underfunded responses for 14 neglected emergencies around the world, and provided \$13 million to enable humanitarians to help tens of thousands of people needing assistance following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the Caribbean, as well as \$19 million for urgent help to refugees fleeing violence in Myanmar.

Recognizing that a larger and more robust fund is critical, the UN General Assembly last year endorsed the expansion of CERF's annual funding target from the current \$450 million to \$1 billion in 2018.

CERF's annual high-level pledging event in December 2017 can be an important milestone towards achieving the new funding target.

"For the sake of millions of people who are suffering, I ask all countries to further stretch their generosity," said UN [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres, who added; "A strong United Nations needs a strong, reliable CERF to reach people trapped in crises and to meet the needs of those still left furthest behind."