

## **Briefing Paper for the Climate Emergency Committee, 23 September 2020**

The Calder Valley CND for Peace and Justice group requests the support of the Committee and that of Full Council for a resolution calling upon the UK Government to sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Nuclear weapons, like climate change, represent an existential threat to humankind. Climate change multiplies the potential for conflict over resources such as land, drinking water and food reserves, and increases the pressure to migrate. Political collapse, in turn, leads to extremist leaders gaining control over nuclear weapons, which poses a risk in regions where there already is political tension. There are still almost 14,000 nuclear weapons, held by nine states. Nuclear weapons would cause catastrophic consequences if used, by accident or design; the impact on humanity, all other living creatures and our environment would be devastating and irreversible. <sup>1</sup>

The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by 122 nations at the United Nations on 7 July 2017. 81 member states have since signed the treaty and 40 have formally ratified it. Once 50 member states ratify the treaty, it will become international law. Like treaties banning chemical, bacteriological and biological weapons this treaty would outlaw the production, possession, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Unfortunately to date, the nine nuclear weapons states, including the UK, have refused to sign the Treaty.

As civilians are the main victims of nuclear weapons, Councils are in a unique position to speak out against their municipality being a target and local authorities across the world, from Sydney to Berlin, have passed special resolutions calling upon their national government to get on board with public opinion and sign the treaty. Pressure from Councils and the general public will, in this country and in the other nuclear weapons states, make it more likely that their national governments will eventually sign the treaty.

The UK Government in signing the treaty would be making a bold declaration in favour of establishing a nuclear weapon free world and would honour the commitment this country made under international law, as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, to 'negotiate in good faith' for international nuclear disarmament.

The Calder Valley CND for Peace and Justice Group is asking the committee to recommend to the Full Council that it endorse the special resolution at a future meeting. Passing such a resolution would be a hugely symbolic act in this the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. Only Hebden Royd Town Council and Shaw and Crompton Parish Council in Greater Manchester have done so in the UK. It is our hope that Todmorden Town Council will become the third.

More information about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons can be found at

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<sup>1</sup> More information about the links between nuclear weapons and climate change can be found here <https://www.pressenza.com/2019/09/nuclear-weapons-and-climate-change/>

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>

Thank you for considering our request.

The suggested wording of the resolution is:

Todmorden Town Council:

- Is deeply concerned about the grave threat that nuclear weapons pose to communities throughout the world, including ours. Any use of nuclear weapons, whether deliberate or accidental, would have catastrophic, far-reaching and long-lasting consequences for people and the environment.
- Firmly believes that our residents have the right to live in a world free from this threat.
- Recognises the necessity of creating a nuclear weapons free world.
- Consequently, declares its unequivocal support for the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a treaty adopted by 122 nations in July 2017. This Treaty once ratified will result in a complete prohibition on developing, testing and using nuclear weapons.
- Is disappointed that the United Kingdom government has refused to sign or ratify this landmark treaty.

This Council resolves to write to:

- The United Kingdom government urging it to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, thereby joining the global majority of countries opposed to nuclear weapons.
- Local Members of Parliament urging them to press the UK Government to sign and ratify this Treaty.