



## **Here's how to call on the UK government to take part in the May 2018 UN conference on nuclear disarmament**

The UN General Assembly holds a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament from May 14 to 16, 2018. The conference follows on from the adoption of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons UN Treaty in July 2017. In light of the recent threats exchanged between the Presidents of the US and North Korea, and both US and Russian Presidents declaring intentions to modernise their respective nuclear forces, the conference will come at a timely moment.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe includes the parliaments of France, Russia, UK, USA, all NATO countries and other European Countries. As a body, it calls *'on all participating OSCE States to participate in the 2018 UN international conference on nuclear disarmament at the highest level, to include parliamentarians in their delegations to the conference and to pursue the adoption of nuclear risk reduction, transparency and disarmament measures at the conference.'* However in the recent Lords Debate on 1 March, Baroness Childs replied to speakers' calls for the UK government to attend by saying *"We will consider our approach to the 2018 UN High Level Conference closer to the time."*

In December, Quakers in Britain joined with leaders and representatives from other faiths across the UK to call on the government to affirm the new UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which you can read online at: [www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/faith-leaders-urge-signing-of-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons-1](http://www.quaker.org.uk/news-and-events/news/faith-leaders-urge-signing-of-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons-1) It is a cause for hope in encouraging real political engagement with the topic of nuclear disarmament.

Every state signatory to the Non-proliferation Treaty is legally committed to engage in activities intended to lead to disarmament negotiations. The UK's failure to play a full role in recent disarmament meetings, including the official UN meeting on the humanitarian



consequences of nuclear use, the UN Open Ended Working Group meetings, and the UN Ban Treaty negotiations, demonstrates bad faith in living up to its legal and moral obligations. The UN conference is another opportunity to correct this and demonstrate responsibility towards the international community.

## **Actions that Quakers could take**

### **Write to your MP/MSP**

You and/or your local meeting could write to or even meet your MP(s) ahead of the UN conference. As this will be taking place in May, it may be quickest to send your letter by email, although a paper letter sent quickly may also reach Parliament in time. You could send your MP or MSP the full statement from Quakers in Britain and use the list of points on this document to write in your own words. Although an original letter is more effective, you could use this template: [www.unfoldzero.org/26-september-2015/#](http://www.unfoldzero.org/26-september-2015/#).

### **Demonstrations**

If you are interested, CND and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) have

events planned including a global ban lobbying training day on 7 April. For more information go to:

[www.cnduk.org/get-involved/events](http://www.cnduk.org/get-involved/events).

### **Get the word out**

We encourage you to write to your local newspaper, tweet and blog. You could open up a discussion on Facebook or tell your local radio that you have written to your MP or MSP or are attending a demonstration. If the media approach you for comment, contact Anne van Staveren at [annev@quaker.org.uk](mailto:annev@quaker.org.uk) for support.

### **Join a social media action**

- If you use Twitter or Instagram, post a picture of yourself holding a message onto the #nuclearban hashtag. Perhaps you can share a line on why you want



the UK to take part in discussions.  
@BritishQuakers will share posts that  
you tag us in with our networks.

could spark discussion among your  
friends and encourage them to join you  
in taking action too.

If you are on Facebook, sharing a picture  
of yourself holding a powerful message

### **Engage within your local meeting**

Not everyone in your local meeting will be of the same mind about a suitable Quaker  
response. If your Quaker Meeting is unsure about how to respond, you could read  
*Nuclear Weapons: Frequently Asked Questions* for guidance. Find it at:

[www.quaker.org.uk/documents/print-nuclear-weapons-faq-international-version-2017](http://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/print-nuclear-weapons-faq-international-version-2017)



## Six ways to talk about the issues

1. Any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic human, economic and environmental consequences. There are 15,000 nuclear weapons in the world's stockpiles, of which around 4,000 are 'operationally deployed', many on hair-trigger alert ready to be fired at very short notice. Using just a small fraction of these could end civilisation as we know it.
2. The UK has a responsibility, not least given its privileged UN status, and a legal obligation under the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to seize all opportunities to engage with the vast majority of member states on the agenda of nuclear disarmament.
3. The UK often considers itself the most 'responsible' of the five Nuclear Weapons States. It needs to live up to this self-image and build bridges between States and with supporters of the ban treaty.
4. Boycotting the forthcoming High Level Conference would deepen the increasing damage to the UK's credibility at the United Nations by its failure to engage. It would send the message that the UK does not take the security of other states seriously.
5. Faith communities believe our country should act with wisdom and far-sighted courage. A wisdom that recognises the urgent need to abandon



security policies based upon the threat of mass annihilation of innocent civilians. A wisdom that looks back at the nuclear failures in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and learns from those experiences. The courage – and strength – to think through the likely consequences of actions to find a long term, lasting solution which does not lead to war.

6. The UK is legally bound, under Article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to negotiate – in good faith and at an early date – the elimination of their nuclear weapons. This obligation was confirmed by the International Court of Justice in 1996.

## **We are asking our politicians to...**

Call on the government to participate in the UN High Level Conference at the highest level, and to propose concrete initiatives there that reduce the risks of nuclear weapons being used, and to advance the phased prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Call on the government to support the participation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other representatives of civil society in the UN High-Level Conference.

Look carefully at how national and international actions have contributed to the creation and maintenance of nuclear threats, and develop nuclear policies that reduce reliance on nuclear weapons.



Observe Article 6 of the NPT, *'Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.'*

Build cooperation among nations, strengthening those international institutions which contribute to peace and disarmament.

## Contact us

Advice on writing to MPs: Jessica Metheringham, Parliamentary Engagement Officer, [jessicam@quaker.org.uk](mailto:jessicam@quaker.org.uk), 020 7663 1107

Advice on the media: Anne van Staveren, Media Officer, [annev@quaker.org.uk](mailto:annev@quaker.org.uk), 020 7663 1048 or 07958 009 703 (mobile)

Advice on vigils, demonstrations and policy: Sahdya Darr, Peace & Disarmament Coordinator, [sahdyad@quaker.org.uk](mailto:sahdyad@quaker.org.uk), 020 7663 1108