ICAN parliamentary outreach

Stigmatizing, prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons

More than 750 parliamentarians around the world have joined ICAN’s call for a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons. Working with elected representatives is an important way for us to ensure that nuclear disarmament is high up the political agenda. Even in countries where the governing party or parties oppose a ban on nuclear weapons, there will likely be some parliamentarians and political parties willing to support our call.

1. Resolutions

In many parliaments, members are able to propose resolutions or motions to be adopted. These typically do not have legal weight but are nonetheless an important way to draw attention to a particular issue and demonstrate support for a certain course of action. A resolution could be adopted that:

- Welcomes events held to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki;
- Expresses deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons;
- Acknowledges the victims and survivors of the use and testing of nuclear weapons;
- Endorses the Humanitarian Pledge to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons;
- Calls on the government to join negotiations for a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons.

2. Questions

Members of parliament are typically able to ask questions of government ministers or departmental officials. Here are some suggested questions for the foreign ministry:
• Does the government support the Humanitarian Pledge issued by the government of Austria? (You can check the current list of endorsers here: www.icanw.org/pledge)
• Does the government agree that nuclear weapons should be prohibited just as all other weapons of mass destruction have been prohibited?
• What is the government doing to implement Article VI (the disarmament provision) of the NPT, which applies equally to all nations, whether they possess nuclear weapons or not?
• Does the government oppose the use of nuclear weapons under all circumstances?

3. Speeches

A member of parliament could deliver a speech in parliament supporting a ban on nuclear weapons. This could also be published in the parliamentarian’s newsletter to constituents or a local newspaper. Here are some points he or she might consider including:

• More than 100 nations have endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge to stigmatise, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.
• Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not yet outlawed; we must urgently address this legal anomaly.
• It is time to launch negotiations for a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons and establish a framework for their elimination.

4. Events

Holding an event at your parliament house is a good way to draw attention to the issue of nuclear disarmament and build support for a ban. This could be anything from the launch of a photographic exhibition on nuclear weapons to a roundtable discussion with parliamentarians from different political parties.

5. Lobby meetings

One-on-one meetings with parliamentarians from different political parties are useful for explaining why we need a treaty banning nuclear weapons and how parliamentarians can work with ICAN to achieve this objective. It is an effective way to bring them up to speed with the latest campaign developments. If they are unavailable to meet you in person, ask to speak by phone or to meet one of their advisers.
6. Appeal

For the past two years, ICAN has been collecting signatures for the Global Parliamentary Appeal for a Nuclear Weapons Ban. Here is the full list of signatories so far: http://www.icanw.org/projects/appeal. It is not too late to encourage your parliamentarians to sign it and ask them to promote it among their colleagues. This is a useful way to demonstrate the strength and breadth of political support for a ban.

7. Additional ideas and reporting

If you have additional action ideas aimed at building parliamentary support for a ban, please share them with the ICAN campaigners’ e-list (ican-campaigners@googlegroups.com). Please also share reports on your progress in reaching out to parliamentarians.