OEWG: Final Session – August 5, 16, 17 & 19

The May session of the OEWG made it clear that a majority of governments support the urgent start of negotiations of a treaty banning nuclear weapons, even without the support of the nuclear armed states. The working group will reconvene in August for its third and final session, where it will prepare a report to be submitted to the UN General Assembly in September. The work of ICAN campaigners in Geneva and across the world has been central to the success of the OEWG so far. It is therefore important that we keep up the pressure in the run-up to August.

- **ICAN campaigners should push their governments to attend the final OEWG session and to encourage the adoption of a strong report which recommends the start of negotiations on ban treaty**

Notes from the May session

- 100 governments participated over the course of two weeks at the United Nations and many more contributed their support through a joint working paper from the Humanitarian Pledge group (now numbering 127 States). The majority of governments support a new legal instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, or “ban treaty”
- A clear division among governments is evident: the governments who seek to preserve the status quo and the large majority of States who want change through the prohibition of nuclear weapons
- Substantial progress was made by governments and civil society in identifying and elaborating the content of a future ban treaty in the discussion of the specific elements and actions related to nuclear weapons that should be prohibited
- A minority of States, especially those in military and nuclear alliances with nuclear armed states, continued to oppose the need for a ban treaty, claiming that such a treaty wouldn’t have any effect without the nuclear weapon states or that it would “endanger international stability”

For an overview of the support among governments for the need to start negotiations for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, see: [http://www.icanw.org/campaign-news/calls-for-a-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons/](http://www.icanw.org/campaign-news/calls-for-a-treaty-banning-nuclear-weapons/)

**What will happen at the August session? Why is it important?**

- The purpose of the August session is to agree on and adopt a final report which will contain a summary of the OEWG’s findings and recommendations on what legal measures governments consider most appropriate to bring forward nuclear disarmament. This report will then be delivered to the United Nations General Assembly in September/October.
- **Expectations:** ICAN expects that the report will properly reflect the fact that an overwhelming majority of governments at the OEWG agreed that a prohibition of nuclear weapons is urgently
needed. The start of negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons must be included among the recommendations in the report.

- **Threats:** As we have seen over the last years, there is a minority of governments, mainly those claiming to rely on nuclear weapons for their national security, who have consistently tried to stop the progress of the humanitarian initiative and the momentum of a treaty banning nuclear weapons. This group of governments is expected to strongly resist any mention of the prohibition of nuclear weapons in the report. It is possible that procedural tricks may be used to try to defy the will of the majority of states who are in favour of the prohibition of nuclear weapons.

- **A vote?** One possibility at the August session is that a group of governments demand a vote on part or all of the report. It is therefore very important that ICAN campaigners push for the highest possible attendance at the August session.

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**What can ICAN campaigners do to ensure success in August?**

- **Review the information in this briefing paper and study your government’s record at the OEWG**

- **Contact your ministry for foreign affairs. Will your government be represented at the OEWG in August?**
  - Did your government attend the OEWG in February or May? If so, they should be strongly urged to complete their OEWG work in August.
  - Explain the importance of attending the OEWG session, especially in light of the possibility of a vote on the final report on August 19.

- **Contact your government’s mission to the United Nations in Geneva**
  - Governments are most likely to send diplomats already in Geneva to the OEWG session. However, many missions are understaffed and overworked – we need to explain the critical nature of attending, even if only for the last day of the OEWG on August 19.

- **Report back!**
  - Let us know what information you were able to get from your government and whether any follow-up action is needed.

*Don’t know whom to contact? Send an email to daniel@icanw.org and we will try to determine the best government official to reach out to.*