

Wildfire>_ statement to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, 9 December 2014
(as delivered)

I have nothing to say to the nuclear-armed states here, except briefly to express my admiration for the delegate of the United States, who with one insensitive, ill-timed, inappropriate and diplomatically inept intervention yesterday managed to dispel the considerable goodwill the US had garnered by its decision to participate in this conference. Well done.

No, my message today is for those states which do not have nuclear weapons; for those states which, whatever the security threats they face, have forsworn nuclear weapons by joining the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty; for those states which, despite having no nuclear weapons, unjustly bear the risks and will wear the terrible consequences of their use. And my message to you begins with these words from Isaiah:

How long, O Lord? Until the cities are wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without people, and the land lies utterly desolate?

How long will you keep playing this game? How long will you continue to accept the procrastination, empty promises, and endless excuses of the nuclear-armed states? How long will you listen politely to nuclear-armed states that claim to support the Comprehensive Test-ban Treaty as a crucial step towards disarmament, but haven't ratified it after 18 years? How long will you listen to the nuclear-armed states expressing their "unequivocal commitment" to nuclear disarmament, and then saying that they need their nuclear weapons for "stability"? How long will you wait for the mythical "right conditions" for nuclear disarmament?

And now you have at last begun this discussion of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, how many more meetings will you have? How many times will you listen to the harrowing tales of victims? How many times will you listen to the chilling scientific accounts of catastrophic consequences? How many times will you listen to analysis of the alarming risks of accident, miscalculation or deliberate use? How long will you sit, and worry, and complain, and talk, and talk, and talk?

How long until you decide to take this matter into your own hands, and act? Because until you do, this charade is going to continue.

Even if we take the nuclear-armed states at their word, and believe that they are sincere about disarmament, it is clear that they are addicted to their weapons. They are like the alcoholic who is always promising to stop drinking, but somehow never does. Their weapons possess them.

Nobody can force an alcoholic to stop drinking. And nobody can force the nuclear-armed states to disarm. Only they can choose to give up their weapons. But you, the sober members of the family of nations, can stop enabling them. You can remove the ambiguity that supports their habit. You can make clear where you stand, and what you will not accept. You can negotiate, and adopt, and bring into force a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

This is something you can *do*. It is something you can do *now*. The alternative is to sit, passive and impotent, while the nuclear-armed states continue as they always have, risking your security – along with all of human civilization – in a misguided attempt to protect theirs.

It's your future and your choice. You can sit and wait and whine, or you can take control, and negotiate a treaty banning nuclear weapons.
