

South Africa welcomes UN resolution on the Treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons

Too be adopted in December 2016

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USPA NEWS - South Africa welcomes the adoption on 27 October 2017 of a resolution entitled "Taking forward multilateralism nuclear disarmament negotiations" by a Committee of the UN General Assembly responsible for disarmament and international security. The resolution, should be adopted on December 2016

South Africa welcomes the adoption on 27 October 2017 of a resolution entitled "Taking forward multilateralism nuclear disarmament negotiations" by a Committee of the UN General Assembly responsible for disarmament and international security. The resolution, which will be tabled for adoption at the General Assembly during December 2016, recommends the convening of a Conference early in 2017 to negotiate a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination.

Two-thirds of the UN Member States present and voting, supported the resolution, which provides evidence of the commitment of the vast majority of the world to heed the call by the outgoing UN Secretary-General to, once and for all, eliminate the threat posed by nuclear weapons to the survival of our planet. This decision is particularly important at a time of increased international tension that increases the risk of the use of these weapons, whether by accident or on purpose. While some of the States possessing nuclear weapons oppose the idea of a nuclear weapons prohibition on the basis of complexities in the international security environment, South Africa shares the view of the vast majority of States that this situation compels us to act now. South Africa together with its partners from Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico and Nigeria played a key role in securing a positive vote on the resolution. This core group of countries received strong support from civil society groups and international organizations. South Africa also appreciates the support that the resolution received from the vast majority of African states. This is a historic decision in line with the aims and objectives of the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly 70 years ago, the nuclear disarmament obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as well as the provisions of the Pelindaba Treaty, which has already established Africa as a zone free from nuclear weapons.

THE NEGOTIATIONS ON A TREATY PROHIBITING WEAPONS ARE EXPECTED AT THE UN-----

The negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons are expected to take place at the United Nations headquarters in New York during March and June 2017 and will be open to all States, as well as to civil society and international organisations. While biological and chemical weapons have been banned, nuclear weapons remain the only category of weapons of mass destruction yet to be subjected to an international prohibition. Such a treaty would therefore be an important step towards addressing a glaring gap in the international legal architecture on the legality of nuclear weapons. It will also provide a solid foundation for the conclusion of additional legally-binding instruments needed to secure and maintain a world free from nuclear weapons. In addition, South Africa believes that such a treaty will strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty norms and emphasise the urgency of implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations and related commitments during a time of heightened international tension.-----

It would be an appropriate response to the findings of three international conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons held in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna from 2012 to 2014, where evidence was shared on the catastrophic consequences of a nuclear weapon detonation on human health, the environment, climate change, human displacements and the global economy, as well as the need for sustained engagement on nuclear disarmament. Despite the reservations expressed by some States on this initiative, South Africa hopes that they would nevertheless actively participate in, and contribute to, the upcoming negotiations. Source Republic of South Africa: Department of International Relations and Cooperation and apo

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org
info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com