



**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP,
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB**

**Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street
Westminster
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9 December 2017

Dear Mr Williamson and Mr Johnson,

You are no doubt aware that the Nobel Peace Prize has this year been awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), "for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons."

ICAN has 22 organisations in Britain, along with many thousands of supporters. We were disappointed to hear that the British ambassador to Norway was instructed not to attend the Peace Prize Award ceremonies in Oslo on 10 December. There is still time to reverse this churlish snub to Norway, an important ally, and the Nobel Committee and guests, which include ambassadors from other nuclear-armed states as well as many who negotiated and adopted the UN Treaty

As ICAN partners in the UK, we urge you to promote UK accession to the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Even though the government chose not to allow British diplomats to participate in the multilateral negotiations that took place under UN auspices, we believe that this Treaty will strengthen the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), of which the UK is a depositary. Most importantly, it will further Britain's security interests. By signing, Britain will demonstrate our commitment to the rule of law, international security needs, and the objectives of peace and security in a world free of nuclear weapons.

In various letters and responses to MPs, government spokespeople have been repeating the erroneous view that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) undermines the NPT. On the contrary, it was negotiated by over two-thirds of the NPT's states parties after the 2010 NPT Review Conference adopted its final document that highlighted the humanitarian risks of nuclear weapons and put the need for such a treaty on the international agenda.

During the next seven years NPT states led a multilateral process based on facts and evidence about the risks, dangers, accidents, near misses and humanitarian effects and consequences of nuclear weapons in the past and present. The governments of Norway, Mexico and Austria convened three international conferences in 2013 and 2014. Debates on humanitarian disarmament initiatives took place at the UN First Committee and in two UN-mandated open-ended working groups in 2013 and 2016. Throughout the process, the leading governments made sure that the new treaty would fulfil and strengthen key elements of the NPT and non-proliferation regime, with the objective of facilitating further steps towards the complete elimination of this most abhorrent weapon of mass destruction.

The resulting treaty makes a vital contribution to fulfilling the NPT and bringing us closer to the goal of peace and security in a world free of nuclear weapons. In its key provisions, this multilateral Treaty prohibits the use, threat of use, and a range of acts and activities aimed at developing, using or acquiring nuclear weapons by anyone whatsoever. The Treaty provides a process by which nuclear-armed countries like the UK can sign and negotiate a practical timetable to dismantle and eliminate existing nuclear arsenals.

Adopted by 122 NPT States Parties, the TPNW has already been signed by over 50 governments, and is expected to enter into force by 2020. It is also supported by the Scottish government, representing the majority of Scottish people who do not wish to continue hosting the nuclear-armed submarines or stockpiling the warheads for the UK's Trident nuclear weapons system.

As President Trump and Kim Jong-un threaten each other and ratchet up the risk that nuclear weapons could be used in the near future, it is clear that there are no safe hands for these dangerous, abhorrent and unsafe weapons. This has become abundantly clear for the UK's nuclear arsenal as well, with increasing accidents, disciplinary problems and human, computer and mechanical errors affecting the Atomic Weapons Establishment, nuclear warhead transports, and Vanguard nuclear submarines carrying Trident.

We therefore urge you to take all necessary steps to participate from now on, with a view to taking the necessary steps to join and implement the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons without further delay.

To prepare, it would be wise for the relevant departments in the Ministry of Defence and FCO to commission or undertake studies into what steps would be required to enable the UK to sign and implement this UN Treaty. Such steps would include, for example, an immediate halt to further nuclear weapons development and Dreadnought construction; redirection of defence funds from Trident replacement to resource our real security needs, including preventing nuclear threats and disarmament and verification; and negotiations with Treaty parties on the practical steps and timeline leading to the elimination of the UK's nuclear arsenal and production capabilities, thereby enabling full compliance with both the TPNW and the NPT.