

## **UNCA MEDIA ALERT for June 21, 2017**

News Briefing with Nuclear Experts on Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty

June 21, 10:30am

UNCA Meeting Room S-310, UN Secretariat Building, New York

Contact: Stephen Kent, [skent@kentcom.com](mailto:skent@kentcom.com), [914-589-5988](tel:914-589-5988)

### **With Nuclear Dangers Mounting and the Existing Nuclear Treaty Regime Deteriorating, a New Nuclear Treaty Could Shift Global Norms**

**WHAT?** North Korea is [stepping up](#) missile tests, President Trump is [discussing](#) the possibility of a US first strike, and Russia-NATO tensions over Crimea are prompting overt nuclear [sabre-rattling](#). China is [expanding](#) its nuclear forces and deploying a nuclear submarine, and nuclear weapons states are doubling down and modernizing their arsenals. Nuclear tensions and risks are [higher now](#) than anytime since the height of the Cold War. That contrasts sharply with the expectations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime and other post-Cold War nuclear arms agreements, which call for progressive deep cuts and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

The devolution of the arms control regime led by weapons states, is giving way to level-headed action by non-nuclear weapons states now conferencing to negotiate a legally binding instrument to support nations choosing to ban and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons. The second session of the conference takes place in New York June 15 – July 7 and is [likely](#) to produce a treaty. A [draft](#) has been published. Nuclear weapons states are not participating, but a ban treaty could still affect them and address growing nuclear threats in important practical ways. Other nuclear treaties were led by nuclear weapons states, which invited non-weapons states to join. For the first time, the ban treaty process reverses that pattern, and presents a new opportunity to change global norms. As one NGO observer said, “democracy is breaking out” in this treaty conference.

A [series of side events](#) throughout the conference will field leading experts on issues ranging from rising nuclear threats, the declining treaty regime and the path back from the brink, to environmental justice issues and disproportionate impacts on civilian populations, including underestimation of radiation harm tied biological gender. This news briefing for UNCA members will assemble five nuclear experts from these side events to explain key issues underlying ban treaty negotiations, and to answer journalists’ questions. The briefing is organized by the Nuclear Information and Resource Service and co-sponsored by Federation of American Scientists, Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Natural Resources Defense Council and Physicians for Social Responsibility.

*-more-*

**WHO?** The following nuclear experts will present at the briefing and answer UNCA members' questions:

[Hans M. Kristensen](#), Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, and a co-author of a new study on changes in targeting capability of US nuclear weapons (more below). He is also the co-author of the Nuclear Notebook column in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists and the World Nuclear Forces overview in the SIPRI Yearbook. He will discuss how nuclear weapons states are modernizing their arsenals, and appear determined to keep nuclear weapons indefinitely, and how this affects the existing treaty regime and underpins current ban treaty negotiations.

[Dr. Matthew McKinzie](#), Natural Resources Defense Council Senior Scientist and Director of NRDC's nuclear program. He's the co-author of a study unearthing new, alarming findings about remarkable changes in targeting capability of US nuclear weapons that have made them significantly more destructive. He'll present those findings and their implications for contemporary nuclear threats and existing nuclear agreements, and map out a path forward to reduce mounting nuclear dangers.

[Dr. Arjun Makhijani](#), president of the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, discuss his analysis of how revelations about US nuclear arsenal targeting capabilities affect the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and other historical agreements.

[Mary Olson](#), Nuclear Information and Resource Service. The world's leading organizations of physicians and health professionals have cited a large body of evidence about the nuclear weapons complex as a public health threat and have urged the UN to negotiate a nuclear ban treaty on health grounds. But Olson will present surprising, underreported research on disproportionate health effects of ionizing radiation releases on women and girls. She will also speak to the resulting under-assessment of social, medical and environmental impacts of making and testing nuclear weapons.

[Dr. Tilman Ruff, MD](#), Co-President of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, founding chair of the governing bodies of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in Australia and internationally. "The fact that we are now coming together to demand action on disarmament is unprecedented, and raises a loud alarm about the unacceptable danger a handful of states are imposing on the entire world," he said. "We have a professional obligation to prevent what we cannot cure or treat."

[Jeff Carter, JD](#), Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility, will moderate.

**WHEN & WHERE?** The press briefing will take place on Wednesday, June 21 at 10:30am in the UNCA press room, United Nations Correspondents Association Meeting Room, Secretariat Building, Third Floor, Room S-310. Side interviews are available on request. For more information, please contact Stephen Kent, [skent@kentcom.com](mailto:skent@kentcom.com), [914-589-5988](tel:914-589-5988)

**Media Kit Materials are posted in digital form here:**  
<https://www.nirs.org/international/>