

CPG on Nuclear Disarmament, September 21st 2021

Bill Kidd MSP Chaired the meeting

MSPs present - Patrick Harvie, Richard Leonard, Paul McLennan, Mark Ruskell, Bill Kidd, James Dornan

Civil Society Organisations present: MEDACT, Nukewatch, Peace Education Scotland, Scottish CND, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, SNPCND, Edinburgh Yes Hub, Secure Scotland, UNHS, UN-A, Trident Ploughshares

It was agreed to renew the purpose of the group - as per the report of the informal discussion(tabled):

1. to provide a platform for MSPs to engage with various organisations regarding nuclear weapons issues in Scotland.
2. To act as a forum for the challenges and opportunities in Scotland arising from the TPNW.

The proposed membership was agreed - as per the report of the informal discussion(tabled).

Proposed officers were accepted - as per the report of the informal discussion(tabled).

Officers:

Convenor - Bill Kidd MSP

Vice-Convener - Ross Greer MSP

Secretary - Janet Fenton Scottish CND

The meeting then continued with a substantive item:

Briefing from ICAN regarding the first meeting of State parties to the TPNW in Vienna in March 2022 and how Scotland can contribute to the success of that summit.

Notes from the discussion follow:

Beatrice Fihn - executive director of ICAN, Nobel Peace Laureate of 2017

- Scotland plays an integral role in disarmament efforts
- Excited to see the support from Scottish government and NGOs for disarmament
- Context: 22nd January 2021, TPNW entered into force and became international law. Nuclear weapons are banned under international law now for all states party to the treaty. We in civil society want this treaty to become customary IHL and impact all states even if they haven't joined the treaty.

- Now that the treaty has entered into force, we are focused on increasing membership from states to the treaty. Treaty membership will hopefully continue to grow. The next phase is to ensure that the treaty is implemented and that the prohibition is actually effective and impactful.
- The 1st Meeting of States Parties of the Treaty- (TPNW 1MSP) President of the meeting is Alexander Kmennt, who was also the chair of the third Humanitarian Impact conference in Vienna in 2014 that preceded the 2015 NPT Review.
- Some actions need to be made - for example, on issues of assistance to victims of nuclear weapons and how they will be honored, etc. It will also be an opportunity to iron out some technicalities of the treaty, e.g. imposing a deadline for states that join the treaty to get rid of their weapons upon joining.
- Participants: states party to the treaty, other states that are not party to the Treaty can participate as observers including the ICRC and other UN agencies and ICAN. Civil society organisations etc can also have a crucial role in this. No other nuclear weapons treaty has had such a large civil society role as this does.
- ICAN is the civil society coordinator for the TPNW 1MSP in Vienna, and they are facilitating in-person and virtual opportunities for increased participation. They will be providing resources in the hopes of making it a big event similar to the treaty negotiations or the three humanitarian conferences in Oslo, Nayarit, and Vienna.
- ICAN is organising many side events too, in particular for parliamentarians around the world to increase domestic participation efforts.
- Youths, parliamentarians, and citizen groups, etc. all aim to be included in this summit.

Campaign coordinator with ICAN, **Daniel Hogsta**

- What can people expect at the TPNW 1MSP in Vienna
- Parliamentarians are crucial in advancing nuclear weapon prohibition domestically and thus, internationally
- Making the TPNW a political reality domestically is an enduring goal of ICAN
- Options available to parliamentarians: passing motions, studies commissioned, joining the Humanitarian pledge, etc. which all increase the drive and impact for prohibition domestically. Example given of Switzerland, who through parliamentary support and consistent rejection of the Swiss decision to not ratify the TPNW, reversed their decision and Switzerland is now a part of the TPNW.
- Important that parliamentarians participate in main and lateral events of the TPNW 1MSP
- Some events: The Austrian government wants to ensure that the Humanitarian Imperative remains a central focus of the TPNW, thus they are holding a meeting prior to the first day of the meeting to contextualise future negotiations under that vibe. ICAN will be working with the Austrian parliament to help facilitate this. A civil society event with the mayor of Vienna will also take place.

- The conference itself follows rules of procedure that have not been formally settled, but it is looking likely that there will be 2 ways for parliamentarians to participate: 1.) to join a government delegation and participate directly, or 2.) to join as a group of parliamentarians (e.g. “group of friends of the TPNW”) not attached to a state party to the treaty.
- Would be good to hear from Parliamentarians who wish to participate in the conference soon to help facilitate their presence and impact at the meeting.

Beatrice Fihn: It is challenging to get media coverage about nuclear weapons, especially as it’s an issue that can be ignored by the majority. Hence it’s important to highlight the risks of nuclear weapons as a matter of *urgency* as it removes the ability to ignore. Then focus on the Scottish dynamic that opposes nuclear weapons within the larger UK government - the more Scottish parliamentarians engage in this process, the clearer it will become that there is not unity within the UK government regarding nuclear weapons which could highlight conflicts that are able to gain significant media coverage in Britain. The more people that speak out and talk about the TPNW 1MSP the better, and the more likely that mainstream media can pick up on the issue too.

Rebecca Johnson, founding chair of ICAN and member of the **Scottish Government Working Group on Scotland without Nuclear Weapons (2008)**

- Key issues for the UK regarding nuclear weapons
- The UK is in a peculiar situation because the UK as a member of the UN is essentially run by the Westminster parliament and signs the UK up to a whole host of treaties, but under devolution Scotland has its own government and parliament and the Scottish parliamentary majority has been committed to getting rid of Trident which are both stored and deployed in Scotland. This puts Scotland and the UK in a peculiar situation in regards to the TPNW, as the UK government would have to sign it in order for Scotland to be a party to it and this is not likely to happen.
- The UK’s most recent **UK Integrated Review (2021)** has disintegrated its position of being able to claim that it is in compliance with the NPT.
- What will make it possible to realise the Scottish people and government’s position to be nuclear free?
- Five scenarios for the UK to be nuclear free, the most likely being: a decision by Scotland to go independent, and in that decision an independent Scotland will seek to sign the TPNW.
- Article 4.2 of the TPNW makes it clear that the immediate removal of nuclear weapons is necessary to commit to the TPNW. Scotland joining the TPNW as an independent entity would need to adhere to the treaty and remove the UK’s nuclear weapons from their land etc.
- Scotland’s obligations are to get the nuclear weapons taken out of Scottish territory, which is a matter of extreme concern, as the UK has nowhere else to credibly store and deploy their weapons within the UK other than Scotland, so this solution would be extreme.

- Once Scotland has control over its own treaty compliance (including all other treaties, which would take a couple of years), they would be able to sign the TPNW to initiate the process of being nuclear weapon free.
- Scotland would not be responsible for destroying the weapons, just returning them to the UK, their owner and Article 4.4 would then come into play
- There is a lot more to be done until this can be achieved, however. The participation of Scottish MSPs at TPNW 1MSP is extremely important.
- Potential proposal to have a European Parliament delegation at the TPNW 1MSP, led by the Greens, is a strong one, and would be possible to have lateral Scottish MSP participation in that group given the majority Scotland rejection of Brexit.
- There are ways in which Scotland can play a significant role in preparing the ground for the potential ratification of the TPNW including monitoring and reporting on activities.

Bill Kidd

made a **statement of commitment to attend TPNW 1MSP** as a Scottish Parliamentarian both **personally and on behalf of the CPG**, and encouraged other MSPs to make similar commitments.

Owen Thompson MP also sent a message to say that he **has also committed to attending TPNW 1MSP**

Further discussion

COP

Rebecca: The 1MSP is the equivalent of a COP-1 for the TPNW, in which the states involved are addressing the issues of the implementation and adherence of the treaty. The ways in which climate and nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons are intrinsically linked and should not be ignored, and as such these issues will **not** be ignored.

Beatrice These are big global existential threats created by a small number of impactful actors. These issues do not stop at borders and thus the issue cannot be left alone. The industry and economic involvement of nuclear power and nuclear weapons cannot be underestimated, much like the fossil fuel industry, and are the main challenge areas to be addressed in the future. The good thing is that we have the treaty that solves the problem, so increasing state participation to the treaty and enforcing its implementation is a clearer path for success (as opposed to the fickle Paris agreement which is less clear for eradicating climate change). We need to work with the climate change activists to integrate the approaches in the hopes for lateral success by learning from each other's ideas and lessons.

Essential to make links and to utilise these to engage young climate activists in nuclear disarmament.

Participation by NAS and Umbrellas in TPNW 1MSP

Daniel Hogsta: there is very little interest from the nuclear-weapons-states in attending the TPNW 1MSP, some even trying to get some states to reverse their ratifications too (actively antagonistic). For them, this meeting being a success will hurt their cause, so it's not likely that their participation will be earnest. Hopeful that Germany (host state) will attend, it's looking likely.

Also hopeful that Norway (not a host state but a member of NATO) will also attend. Belgium (host state) is also looking likely to attend.

Beatrice: significant if umbrella states agree to participate. Messages from governments not participating are also important, alongside actual participation. Public commitments from parliamentarians participating will help ICAN campaign gain further commitments from others to join in on the 1MSP.

UK weapons based in Scotland

Rebecca Johnson: it's important for us to point out why it's right for the UK to move their weapons out of Scotland. There is nowhere else for the weapons to go, but it is not Scotland's responsibility to find a solution for the UK regarding their weapons.

Conclusions

Daniel's conclusions: really great to hear the commitments from MSPs to attend TPNW 1MSP. We are in the process of finalising the process of parliamentary participation, so MSPs should contact Daniel and Janet to help get on board and communicate with the Austrians.

Beatrice's conclusions: The TPNW 1MSP is going to be a huge milestone towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Knowing that Scottish parliamentarians will be attending makes a massive impact and makes it easier for other parliamentarians in other countries to make similar commitments, as it sets a positive precedent. The Austrian government is very intent on holding this in person instead of virtually, so participation from civil society also is highly encouraged. These events are big opportunities to get everyone involved and mobilise the public, politicians, and media to get everyone more engaged in the TPNW.

Rebecca's conclusions: TPNW 1MSP is crucial as all further developments are built upon what is done in the first meeting. Everyone that participates can bring what they learned back directly to their domestic circumstances, to local media, which will be highly impactful.

(The TV show *Vigil* is based upon instances that have happened in real life, and Emilie Mc Swiggan (SCND) is collating a list of these, as this will be an opportune moment to engage with popular media about something relevant at the intersection of entertainment and politics.

We look towards these future milestones and are encouraged by the participation of the Scottish parliamentarians, as they are making such a big difference for what happens in the future.

Bill Kidd thanked everyone for attending and for Daniel, Beatrice, and Rebecca's participation, giving his full support to ICAN and hopes that TPNW 1MSP and the TPNW itself are successful endeavours.