

Humanitarian Impact on Nuclear Weapons

International Conference

Working Session III

Humanitarian preparedness and Response

ICAN intervention

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Following the discussions of the past one and a half days, it is clear that it is not possible to coordinate and deliver any meaningful humanitarian response to a catastrophe brought by nuclear weapons.

We know from the experience of Hiroshima and Nagasaki that insuperable obstacles prevent such a response, a point reiterated by the International Red Cross and the Red Cross Red Crescent movement, as well as IPPNW, ICAN's lead medical partner and many States, international organizations and experts present at this conference.

Even in the case of large-scale natural disasters, emergency assistance can be seriously hampered by conditions on the ground including damage for infrastructure. Nuclear weapons eradicate the infrastructure such as transportation, hospitals, food and water supplies, and communications required for treatment of survivors.

Physicians and paramedics arriving from outside would have to work without resources needed for effective treatment; furthermore, radiation, as we know from both Chernobyl and Fukushima, can make it impossible for rescuers to enter highly contaminated areas.

Because of these facts, no amount of preparation can significantly improve the chances of survival from a nuclear attack or make emergency response more effective. And of course, no emergency response can bring the thousands of dead back to life.

In a nuclear exchange where many weapons were used against a number of cities, these already insuperable problems would be multiplied to an almost unimaginable degree.

Moreover, there is no way to prepare for or respond to the resulting global agriculture losses from climate disruption.

The City of Hiroshima conducted a scientific study in 2007 on how to protect civilians in a nuclear attack scenario. They stated that “however long we discuss the facts, we will never find a means of preventing damage in the event of a nuclear attack. Our conclusion is, the only answer is the total abolition of nuclear weapons.”

Our discussions must be directed towards how to prevent such a humanitarian catastrophe and how to prepare for a treaty to ban and eliminate nuclear weapons. It is our strong hope that this conference concludes with concrete plans for the next steps to do so.