

Oslo Conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons

Opening remarks by NPA, Secretary General Liv Tørres - 4 March 2013

- Dear minister, dignitaries, friends
- We are here **to discuss the humanitarian consequences** of a weapon we believe belongs to the old world, to a cold war climate. A weapon that has less utility and value than people may think. A weapon associated with high risk of being used. A weapon we know will have devastating consequences if used.
- The risk of full nuclear war between super powers, or total extermination may be small today. **The risk of a nuclear detonation is, however, larger than ever.** More nations have acquired the weapons or are working to develop them. The more people that have a finger on the button, the larger the chances of someone pushing it. The risk increases in parallel with the temptation of non-state actors or terrorists wanting to buy, steal or sabotage such weapons. An accident may also be a relevant scenario.
- We have hesitated for too long to talk about such risks. But **denial cannot continue to be our only defence.** The idea that

we have permitted ourselves to develop weapons that may destroy us all is surrealistic and irrational. It is naive to believe that nuclear weapons have a utility that outweighs their enormous risks. We now have to talk about what the consequences will be if the unspeakable happens.

- **I stand here today, representing one out of many organisations that have a strong sense that this is the time for a new beginning.**
- **One reason for our optimism is the development of a humanitarian agenda on nuclear weapons. This conference will play a crucial role in increasing recognition of the unacceptable consequences that a detonation will have. And I am proud that it is my government that is the host of this historical event.**
- **Our optimism is also carried forward by a new generation.** There is a new post cold war generation entering this debate, having less understanding for cold war deterrence logic and demanding an end to old time paradigms and a ban on nuclear weapons. The intelligence and determination of the civil society group which gathered over the week-end here in Oslo confirmed this.

- **The impressive turnout of states here gives us added confidence.** Your presence here sends a strong message that nuclear weapons are weapons of mass suffering and that preventing their use is the responsibility of everyone.
- My organisation the Norwegian People's Aid will be heavily involved, together with our international ICAN partners, in the years to come **in the reframing of the debate on nuclear weapons** - and in demanding a ban as a real solution to the very real humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation.
- We, as civil society have an enormous room for power in world politics. We are many. We are determined. We are strong willed. And we are convinced of the solution.
- Nelson Mandela appealed to civil society when he came out of prison in apartheid South Africa in 1990. He said: we leave it on your shoulders to be watchdogs, keep us on the right track and assure a peaceful democratic future. We take that challenge and wish you a good conference.