

Motion adopted by the EL Executive Board in Rome 18-19 February 2017

European Left supports UN negotiations for nuclear ban

The European Left supports the UN negotiations to outlaw nuclear weapons that will begin on 27 March 2017.

On December 23rd 2016 the United Nations General Assembly had approved a historic resolution to launch negotiations in 2017 on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. The vote followed a decision by the General Assembly's First Committee – which deals with disarmament and international security matters – to begin work on the new treaty, despite fervent opposition from some nuclear-armed nations.

It was a huge success for the peace and disarmament movement and for left parties, that a large majority adopted the resolution, with 113 UN member states voting in favor, 35 voting against and 13 abstaining. This decision was motivated by the fact that weapons that are indiscriminate in nature and are intended to cause catastrophic humanitarian harm should be prohibited under international law. This new treaty will place nuclear weapons on the same legal footing as other weapons of mass destruction.

The significance of this decision was highlighted in a leaked document distributed to all NATO members in October ahead of the First Committee decision. The United States – which possesses some 7,000 nuclear weapons – urged its allies to oppose the resolution and to boycott the negotiations, fearing that the treaty would erode the perception that nuclear weapons are legitimate for certain nations and make it more difficult for NATO to engage in nuclear war planning.

Now, after the inauguration of Donald Trump as US-President, the problem of nuclear weapons becomes even more urgent. More and more European politicians call for stronger European nuclear armament. We, as the European Left Party, strongly oppose this development.

More nuclear weapons do not equal with more security. A new nuclear arms race could be highly dangerous.

Therefore, we are calling on all the European governments to join the negotiations starting in March and work to achieve a strong and effective nuclear ban treaty.

Background information:

The treaty is likely to include provisions similar to those found in existing treaties banning biological weapons, chemical weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. These include prohibitions on use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, retention and transfer, as well as assistance, encouragement or inducement of anyone to engage in any of these prohibited activities.

Multilateral negotiations for nuclear disarmament have been deadlocked for two decades, as all nine nuclear-armed nations have invested heavily in upgrades to their nuclear forces. Alternative proposals for advancing a nuclear-weapon-free world have failed to gain traction or produce results. A majority of UN member states view the ban treaty approach as the most viable and promising pathway forward.

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