

*The following minute was passed at the 2021 Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting
Annual Sessions*

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, the United States became the only nation to use nuclear weapons, destroying the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This act caused incredible suffering to the civilian population and ushered in an age of fear.

This was not just the fear of a bomb blast killing humans and destroying cities. It was also the fear of radiation poisoning air, earth and water miles from the bomb craters, leaving living things with no way to eat, drink or even breathe that would not cause radiation sickness and slow death.

Still, nations raced to pour precious resources into creating a “doomsday machine” that could destroy their enemies, in spite of the fact that this would trigger retaliation in kind. The U.S. and the Soviet Union embraced as part of their national security policies the doctrine of “Mutually Assured Destruction,” saying in effect, “If we both know we can utterly destroy each other, neither of us will do it.”

And yet the catastrophe has almost happened more than once. Many accidents and misinterpretations have edged close to disaster, and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis nearly led to open war.

Fortunately, world leaders drew back from that brink. The Nuclear Freeze movement grew; in 1982 a million people gathered in New York’s Central Park to call for an end to the nuclear arms race. Every U.S. President from Eisenhower through Obama respected the need for limits on nuclear weapons. President Reagan declared, “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” Over the decades, diplomatic negotiations resulted in treaties and agreements that de-escalated the arms race and cut the global nuclear stockpile by 80%.

But now, the danger of nuclear war has risen as high as ever. The Trump administration backed out of a number of agreements despite the fact that these agreements provided us with useful information, resulted in the destruction of dangerous weapons, or reduced nuclear proliferation to other nations. The Trump administration re-opened the possibility of resuming nuclear test explosion, and maneuvered in a way that threatened to derail the much-needed New START treaty. Congress has authorized spending \$1.2

trillion for a new generation of nuclear weapons, including “usable” nuclear weapons—as though “low-yield” nuclear weapons (which are almost the same size as the Hiroshima bomb) could be employed without provoking a cataclysmic nuclear response. But as the late Senator Richard Lugar, together with other high-ranking former officials, warned: “It is unlikely there is such a thing as a ‘limited’ nuclear war; preparing for one is folly.”

Experts warn that nuclear war is just as likely today as it was at the height of the Cold War, whether it begins on purpose, through an accident or cyber attack, or because of a miscalculation of other powers’ reactions to deployment of “usable” nuclear weapons. Even a “small” nuclear war between India and Pakistan, with 3% of world nuclear arsenals, would kill two billion people—over a quarter of the world’s population—as the clouds of debris would block sunlight from reaching food crops. War between the United States and Russia could well extinguish life on Earth.

The bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, was the first time nuclear weapons were used in combat. Let us make sure that the bombing of Nagasaki on August 9 was the last.

This is the time to take action. The people of the world have awakened to the fact that we face the existential threats of global warming and a mishandled pandemic, and that these threats are driven by systems of oppression that must change. In our nation, movements to save the climate, achieve racial justice, and protect voters’ rights are beginning to coalesce, and abolition of nuclear weapons needs to be part of the world-saving work.

Therefore the Whitewater Quarterly Meeting of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends encourages all who hear or read these words to consider how to forward the cause of peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons. We ask you to do all you can to support these actions:

Urge the government of the United States to **restore the network of agreements and the process of diplomatic negotiation that brought us a measure of shared security** over past decades. Specifically, the U.S. should:

—Indicate readiness to extend the New START treaty, returning to bilateral talks with Russia whether China chooses to be involved or not

—encourage open discussion among all nations of steps toward reducing nuclear arsenals, building on New START

—Affirm commitment to the spirit of our agreements, where possible repairing and re-entering the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA), and the Open Skies treaty.

Urge the government of the United States to adopt **a better nuclear policy:**

—Adopt a No First Use policy

—Take land-based Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles off launch-ready alert, and in fact rid ourselves of the vulnerable and dangerous land-based ICBM system altogether

—Ensure that any decision to launch nuclear weapons is reviewed by designated officials in addition to the President

—Eschew any future nuclear test explosions

—Close the door on the notion of “usable nukes”

—Replace plans to “modernize” our nuclear arsenal with plans to work toward eliminating it

—Sign and seek ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Call upon Members of Congress to **radically reduce the military budget**, especially nuclear expenses:

—Deny appropriations for “usable” nuclear weapons, new nuclear weapons and nuclear test explosions

—Channel saved funds into meeting human needs and increasing peace-building efforts

Encourage voters to **explore candidates’ positions on the use or abolition of nuclear weapons and to vote and support candidates as led by conscience**
Support the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a campaign that won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize. ICAN describes itself as “a broad, inclusive campaign, focused on mobilizing civil society

around the world to support the specific objective of prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons” in accord with the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW has been ratified by 50 nations and thus entered into force on January 22, 2021. The U.S. has yet to ratify the TPNW. While the treaty is only legally binding on nations that have ratified it, it still became an instrument of international law on that date.

ICAN’s U.S. partner, NuclearBan.US, offers the Treaty Compliance Campaign, by which individuals, businesses, faith communities, schools, organizations, cities and states can align themselves with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear weapons and the Paris Climate Agreement by undertaking to disconnect and divest, as far as possible, from both fossil fuels **and** the nuclear weapons industry.

—Learn more about these partnered campaigns
(see <https://www.icanw.org/> and <http://www.nuclearban.us/about/>)

—Consider joining as an individual

—Encourage your meeting or faith community, other organizations to which you belong, your city or town, and your members of Congress to join the campaign

These actions may bring us to a new era of shared security and hope.