

The nuclear bomb is 65: time for compulsory retirement

NEW YORK – More than 30 foreign ministers, including US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, will meet on Monday at the United Nations in New York for the beginning of the month-long nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference.

The last review conference took place in 2005, and was deemed a failure because the parties to the treaty were unable to reach a consensus on any path forward. “Our aim at the conference is to shift the debate from nuclear arms control to nuclear abolition,” said Tim Wright, a spokesperson for the UN office of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

“If governments are serious about realizing their vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world, they will agree at this conference to begin negotiating a comprehensive ban — a nuclear weapons convention.”

Roughly 1500 civil society representatives from across the globe are registered to attend the conference. “The nuclear bomb is now 65 years old. The message we’re taking to the conference is that it’s time for compulsory retirement,” Wright said. “Governments must agree to negotiate a comprehensive treaty outlawing and eliminating all nuclear weapons within a specified timeframe and under strict international control. The nuclear powers are legally obligated to disarm, and an abolition treaty is the most obvious and realistic path to zero.

“A repeat of the failed 2005 review conference would be devastating for the already fragile Non-Proliferation Treaty. Unless the nuclear-armed nations are prepared to support concrete, verifiable disarmament steps, the countries without the bomb are unlikely to accept more stringent non-proliferation measures. The result would be further paralysis, which is in no one’s best interests.”

ICAN is an umbrella campaign representing more than 200 non-government organizations in 60 countries. It was launched internationally in 2007 with the aim of galvanizing public and political support for a nuclear weapons convention banning all nuclear weapons. Four Nobel Peace Prize winners, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, have added their voices to the campaign. Jody Williams, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her work to ban landmines, will speak at an ICAN event at the UN on Friday, May 7.

Thousands of people from around the world are expected to take to the streets of New York this Sunday, May 2, in advance of the review conference to call on governments to back a global ban on nuclear weapons. The rally and march will begin in Times Square at 1:30PM and conclude at the United Nations Headquarters.