



2017-09-11

***To the government of Sweden
att Margot Wallström
Foreign Department
Regeringskansliet
103 33 Stockholm***

Your Excellency,

Greetings from the churches gathered in the Christian Council of Sweden.

In accordance with the long tradition of the churches to argue for disarmament and for proclaiming the possession and use of nuclear weapons as non acceptable, the board of the Christian Council of Sweden, in its meeting 2017-09-06, decided to send this letter to you.

The new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) opens for signature on 20 September 2017 at the United Nations. A solid majority of governments have brought it this far. We write to request that our country takes part in the next step towards entry-into-force.

We urge our government:

- To sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the earliest possible date.
- For our prime minister or foreign minister to join other world leaders in signing the TPNW on 20 September 2017 during the high-level segment of the United Nations General Assembly.

We applaud the 122 governments that voted to adopt the new treaty on 7 July 2017. The World Council of Churches, which we are connected to, has members in many of these countries and looks forward to even broader support for bringing it into effect.

States with nuclear weapons continue to fail to negotiate nuclear disarmament. Early signatures for the TPNW by a solid majority of United Nations members are a constructive demonstration that all states share in the obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons under international law.

We recognize that the Swedish government made a comprehensive investigation grounding the clear position in October 2016 to support in the UNs 1st committee the negotiations of a prohibition treaty. We consider that to be an important contribution to the progress of the recently announced investigation of the consequences of the treaty in the Swedish context. We ask for a prompt and focused process leading to a soon Swedish signing. The timing is probably

of importance both for the strength of the treaty and for the respect of the independence and sovereignty of signing states. The latter refers to information from diplomatic sources regarding pressure, especially on African states, not to sign.

We find much in the treaty to engage all who work for peace. The use of nuclear weapons “would be abhorrent to the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience”, it states. The treaty recognizes “the unacceptable...harm caused to the victims”, the ionizing radiation that has a “disproportionate impact on women and girls”, and the suffering nuclear tests inflict on indigenous peoples. It notes the many efforts to raise public conscience including by “religious leaders”.

When the treaty was adopted, Ms. Setsuko Thurlow, a survivor from Hiroshima, told the negotiators, “Nuclear weapons have always been immoral. Now they are also illegal. This is the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons.” We believe and wish that the TPNW will become an instrument for that widely shared hope.

We ask that our government joins in signing the accord on September 20th and, if possible, becomes one of the first 50 states to ratify it as well.

We thank you for your attention and look forward to positive action in this regard.

Sincerely yours

For the Christian Council of Sweden, the presidium
Antje Jackelén, (chair) Archbishop, Church of Sweden
Anders Arborelius, Cardinal, Catholic Diocese of Stockholm
Dioscoros Benyamin Atas, Archbishop, The Syrian Orthodox Church
Lasse Svensson, President, The Uniting Church of Sweden
Karin Wiborn, General Secretary, Christian Council of Sweden

Signed by



Karin Wiborn

cc:

Peter Prove, director, Commission of the Churches on International Affairs/ World Council of Churches