

Written by John Hallam

Friday, 24 October 2014 19:25 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 February 2015 22:18

155 GOVERNMENTS SIGN UP TO STATEMENT ON CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS: WHERE IS AUSTRALIA?

PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT

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Yesterday at the United Nations, 155 governments led by New Zealand, presented a joint statement at United Nations First Committee on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use.

In 2013 in First Committee, a similar statement obtained the signatures of 125 governments.

Both last year and this year, Australia has refused to sign these statements.

The very existence of humans as a species may conceivably depend on action to eliminate nuclear weapons stemming from the considerations these statements underline.

The statement adopted this year, like last years, points out that as long ago as 1955, prominent physicists and philosophers (Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein) adopted a statement in which they said that nuclear weapons represent a threat not just to civilisation but to the very continuance of humans as a species. The statement goes on to stress the continuing existential relevance of the nuclear threat.

Australia has a statement of its own in which it stresses the difficulties of nuclear disarmament and the need to create the right conditions for it to take place. While there is no dispute as to the attachment that certain governments have to their nuclear arsenals, this cannot be used as an excuse for continued inaction. Nuclear disarmament needs to be treated as the existential priority that it is.

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A conference on catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons is being held on 8-9Dec in Vienna, hosted by the government of Austria. Let us hope that the governments of Australia and others who so far have failed to sign this most important joint statement attend it, determined to play a truly constructive role that leads to the swift and total elimination of nuclear arsenals.

John Hallam

61-2-9810-2598

johnhallam2001@yahoo.com.au

jhallam@gmail.com