

Stakeholder submission for the 42nd session of the Universal Periodic Review

Report on Sri Lanka

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is a campaign coalition of over 600 non-government organizations in over one hundred countries. Following the historic achievement of the adoption of a strong nuclear weapons ban treaty, ICAN now campaigns for all States to sign and ratify the Treaty as a matter of urgency, take measures towards the global elimination of all nuclear weapons, and provide an overdue response to the victims of the humanitarian and environmental impact of nuclear weapon tests in the Pacific and elsewhere.

ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for “its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its groundbreaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.”

*National Human Rights Framework*

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has clear references to and implications for human rights law and practice. Preambular paragraph 8 reaffirms “the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law” The most relevant rights concern from a nuclear weapons attack is the right to life, other relevant rights concerns include the prohibition of inhuman and degrading treatment, the right to a home and to property, as well as rights violations resulting from nuclear weapons testing.

*Weapon Free State*

Sri Lanka has not yet signed or ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Sri Lanka has promoted universal adherence to the TPNW, including by consistently voting in favour of an annual UN General Assembly resolution since 2018 that calls upon all states to sign, ratify, or accede to the treaty “at the earliest possible date”. In December 2021, Sri Lanka’s cabinet of ministers “agreed to the proposal submitted by the minister of foreign affairs to sign the [TPNW] and to initiate the applicable national legal formulation review with the objective of finalising the ratification process as soon as possible”. In a statement to the United Nations in 2018, Sri Lanka described itself as “a stalwart supporter of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted last year.”

Sri Lanka participated in the negotiation of the TPNW at the United Nations in New York in 2017 and was among 122 states that voted in favour of its adoption.

In its first statement to the negotiating conference, Sri Lanka said that “the solution to counter the challenge of nuclear weapons lies within multilateralism, in the collective will of the [UN] member states”. In 2016, Sri Lanka co-sponsored the UN General Assembly resolution that established the formal mandate for states to commence negotiations on “a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination”.

Sri Lanka was among 127 states that endorsed a “humanitarian pledge” in 2015–16 to cooperate “in efforts to stigmatise, prohibit, and eliminate nuclear weapons”. The pledge was instrumental in building momentum and support for convening the TPNW negotiations.

At the last UPR of Sri Lanka in November 2017, Guatemala recommended that Sri Lanka sign the TPNW.

ICAN continues to urge Sri Lanka to sign and ratify the TPNW, as a matter of international urgency.