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TITLE: NOBEL COMMITTEE AWARDS OPCW AND UNDERLINES NEED TO DO AWAY WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

GENEVA - The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) welcomes the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Since its creation in 1997, through persistent efforts in highlighting the horror of these weapons of mass destruction and its commitment to humanitarian principles, OPCW has managed to secure 189 state parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the destruction of almost 80% of the world's stockpile of chemical weapons. OPCW has succeeded in establishing a strong international norm against these horrific weapons and has contributed to protecting humanitarian principles in warfare. The recent reactions to the use of chemical weapons in Syria demonstrate the force and indisputable nature of this norm. The success of the OPCW proves that when there is political will to protect and preserve humanitarian principles, the international community can create real progress in the push for a world without weapons of mass destruction.

As stated in the announcement of the prize, the Norwegian Nobel Committee has through numerous prizes underlined the need to do away with nuclear weapons. As with chemical weapons, the process of delegitimizing nuclear weapons as an instrument of power is crucial to their elimination and a legal instrument which outlaws their possession and use is a necessary element to take this process forward.

An international treaty to ban nuclear weapons would seal the current legal deficit, increase the stigma associated with these weapons and provide a long-term solution to the nuclear weapons problem.

A ban on nuclear weapons is long overdue but a growing number of states is recognizing the need to outlaw the last weapon of mass destruction and create a strong and universally binding regime. This instrument would finally fill that gap, make the possession and use of nuclear weapons illegal, settle a debacle that lasted for more than seven decades and demystify nuclear weapons for what they really are, not instruments of power and prestige, but menaces of war that must be banned.

"OPCW has contributed to establishing a strong international norm against these horrific weapons. The choice by the Norwegian Nobel Committee is a stark reminder that we must not linger in ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction. Nuclear weapons must not be given a pass in this reality. As the Chemical Weapons Convention and the OPCW have indicated, ban treaties are needed to facilitate elimination of weapons of mass destruction. This is also the way forward for nuclear weapons," Says Beatrice Fihn, member of ICAN International Steering Group.

For comments:

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