

Mombasa Appeal for peace and prevention of Nuclear War

At our 23rd World Congress in Mombasa in April 2023, we, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, discussed the risks and impending consequences of the current, crisis situation on our planet. The war in Ukraine bears enormous costs for people mainly, but not only in Ukraine and causes unspeakable suffering. So many civilians and soldiers from both sides have lost their lives, health and livelihoods. In addition, global food supplies have already suffered and prices for essential goods are rising. According to current figures, hunger in Africa threatens to increase by 117% if the war is not stopped immediately.

Crucially there is a real and growing risk that the world will enter a nuclear war in the near future. With every day of the ongoing war in Ukraine, this risk increases.

At the same time, the conflict over Taiwan threatens to escalate further, including the danger of nuclear war involving China and the USA.

Nuclear war will almost certainly not remain limited. Military planning games regularly lead to total escalation and mutual annihilation once nuclear weapons are used.

The principle of nuclear deterrence, essentially unchanged since the Cold War, with the credible threat of mutual total annihilation due to its failure, threatens human existence.

A single bomb can completely destroy the urban core of a major city, with hundreds of thousands dead, injured and contaminated. The use of many nuclear bombs, as is likely in a nuclear war, would not only lead to many millions of dead and injured, but destroy key infrastructure, transport routes, the food supply and the health system. Recovery would take decades. We doctors must make it clear: In the event of nuclear war, there will be no medical aid. We will not be able to help you - or ourselves!

While already the use of fewer than 100 nuclear weapons would have severe impacts on global food production and cause up to 2 billion victims of hunger, the humanitarian consequences and risks of an all-out nuclear war would be devastating. Both Russia and the US possess over 5000 deployable nuclear weapons. The use of even a part of them would lead to climate change with a sustained drop in temperature of over 10°C on average. Life would then no longer be possible in large parts of the planet, the nuclear winter.

In a nuclear war there are no winners, only losers. Then the millions of immediate victims will be the lucky ones, then the living will envy the dead.

Comparable at most to the situation in 1962 and the second peak of the Cold War in the 1980s, mankind today is at a crossroads. It will either find its way back to its noble skills of reconciliation, cooperation and empathy - or it will follow its darkest inclinations of greed, vindictiveness and all-consuming destructiveness.

As doctors, we therefore address those who bear responsibility for the survival of us all on behalf of all humanity: the adversaries war, President Putin and President Zelensky; the governments of the nuclear weapons states, especially Presidents Biden and Xi Jinping; and the governments of the NATO countries and all those involved in the conflict in any way.

We demand:

- An immediate ceasefire.
- The immediate withdrawal of all invading forces.
- The refraining of all measures that lead to a further escalation of the war.
- The declared renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons by all nuclear-weapon states
- The entry into earnest negotiations on a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine.

There are numerous initiatives and proposals that could serve as a basis for such negotiations.

Due to the well-founded concern that the conflict over Taiwan will also turn into a war threatening humanity, our 3rd, 4th and 5th demands apply analogously here as well.

Furthermore, we demand that the nuclear powers enter into negotiations in good faith on effective measures to end the nuclear arms race in the near future and to achieve complete nuclear disarmament, as they have pledged to do in Article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

In order to effectively counter the danger of nuclear annihilation, we propose that all states - especially those that have hitherto relied on the illusory security provided by nuclear weapons - sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

To all people with creative minds and the ability to moderate, we appeal:

Let us end the deadly spiral of escalation and re-enter peaceful coexistence.

This could be the last chance for us humans to close Pandora's box and opt for common survival instead of mutual annihilation.

And once we have overcome the current crisis, we must turn back to the other existential dangers facing humanity: The climate crisis, environmental degradation and the continuing divide between rich and poor. We will need all human skills and virtues to ensure long-term survival on our wonderful planet.