

Declaration

On the anniversary of the Treaty between the United Kingdom and the French Republic for Defence and Security Co-Operation ('Lancaster House Treaties/Traités de Lancaster House')

Today, nine countries possess 12,121 nuclear weapons, representing a threat to humanity as serious as that posed by climate change or the collapse of biodiversity. Indeed, the use of a very few of these weapons in a conflict situation, even a geographically limited one, could lead to a widespread environmental catastrophe, not to mention the devastating loss of human life that would result.

The awarding of the 2024 Nobel Peace Prize to the Japanese organization Nihon Hidankyo for its fight against nuclear weapons reminds us of the horror of the human suffering that any use of these terrifying weapons would inevitably cause. The members of the Nobel Committee express their concern about the heightened risks of such a cataclysm being triggered.

Furthermore, global expenditure on the production and maintenance of these weapons is colossal: it is estimated at more than 90 billion dollars per year (more than 80 billion euros), or more than 150,000 euros per minute. These are huge sums that could be invested in education, health or the fight against poverty, and thus help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN for 2030.

The usefulness of these weapons stems from an illusory belief rather than from any real effectiveness they may have as a deterrent. The nuclear weapons held by NATO countries did not prevent Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Quite possibly, the weapons held by the latter enabled Vladimir Putin to engage in this war, at the risk of seeing it become a global nuclear conflict.

It is within this context that we make this joint statement, on the 14th anniversary of the signing of the Lancaster House Treaties on the 2nd November 2010, by our two countries, the United Kingdom and France.

The Treaties call for a *"mutually beneficial long-term partnership in defence and security matters,"* and provide for the joint use of the Valduc (France) and Aldermaston (UK) facilities to model and improve the performance of their nuclear warheads, while recognising that *"the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security."*

The Treaties also state that both countries will work *"to strengthen the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, one of the cornerstones of the international security architecture, and will support ongoing efforts in its three pillars: non-proliferation, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and disarmament."* Fourteen years later, it appears that our two countries have not, in fact, taken any steps in this direction.

We wish to take the opportunity provided by this anniversary to urge the leaders and governments of the UK and France to take meaningful and verifiable steps to honour their commitment to nuclear disarmament, set out in article VI of the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to which both our countries are party. We encourage them to also take a more constructive approach to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which came into force on 22nd January 2021 and to announce their participation as observers in the next meeting of the 94 countries which have already signed this treaty, of which the Holy See was one of the key promoting parties. The TPNW is construed by its signatories as a concrete application of Article VI of the NPT.

This declaration is in line with the teaching of the Catholic Church, reaffirmed clearly and solemnly on numerous occasions since the start of this century, in particular by Popes Benedict XVI and Francis. It also reflects ‘Called to be Peacemakers: A Catholic approach to arms control and disarmament’ published recently¹ by the Bishops of the Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, which calls on the British government to ‘ultimately forsake its nuclear arsenal, helping to create a world without nuclear weapons’ and to fulfil its obligations under the NPT. The document also challenges the British Government to engage meaningfully with the processes of the TPNW and ultimately to sign and ratify the treaty itself; thus enabling expenditure on nuclear weapons to be redirected towards social purposes and the promotion of the universal common good.

In a joint statement issued in 2023, the leaders of our two countries reiterated their opposition to the TPNW on the grounds that it “does not reflect the increasingly challenging international security environment and is at odds with the existing non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.” However, it cannot be said that the TPNW would be “at odds with the existing non-proliferation architecture” since it is precisely the NPT itself, which our countries want to uphold, which advocates non-proliferation and disarmament. The TPNW only takes this logic to its inevitable conclusion.

On his return from Hiroshima in November 2019, Pope Francis reaffirmed that “the use of nuclear weapons is immoral (...) not only their use but also their possession is immoral, because an accident [due to] this possession or to the madness of a leader (...) could lead to the destruction of humanity”.

This affirmation from Catholic church teaching invites us not to remain silent, otherwise the stones themselves risk crying out (Luke 19:40).

¹ <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2024/05/Called-to-be-Peacemakers.pdf>

Core signatories

- Action des chrétiens pour l'abolition de la torture - ACAT France (Yves Rolland, Président)
- Anglican Pacifist Fellowship (Sue Claydon, Chair)
- Centre de recherche et d'action sociales - CERAS (Marcel Rémon, Directeur)
- CCFD - Terre Solidaire (Virginie Amieux, Présidente)
- Commission Justice et Paix - France (Michel Roy, Secrétaire général)
- Communauté Mission de France - CMdF (Henri Védrine, Vicaire Général)
- Cymdeithas y Cymod - Fellowship of Reconciliation, Wales (Peter Cutts, Executive Committee Member)
- Fellowship of Reconciliation, England and Wales (John Cooper, Director)
- Mouvement International de la Réconciliation – Fellowship of Reconciliation France Gazzaniga et Augustin Nkundabashaka, co-présidents)
- Pax Christi - England and Wales (Andrew Jackson, Chief executive)
- Pax Christi – Scotland (Marian Pallister, Chair)
- Pax Christi - France (Alfonso Zardi, Délégué général)

Supporting singatories

- Abolition des armes nucléaires - Maison de Vigilance (Denis Stienne, membre du Bureau)
- Agir pour le Désarmement Nucléaire - ADN Franche-Comté (Pierre Jacquin-Porretaz, Président)
- Cardiff Stop the War Coalition (Adam Johannes, Joint Secretary)
- Collectif Bourgogne-Franche-Comté pour l'abolition des armes nucléaires (Anne-Béatrice Scherrer, porte-parole)
- Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (Sophie Bolt, General Secretary)
- Christian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (Martin Tiller, Co-Chair)
- CND Cymru (Jill Evans, Vice Chair)
- Démocratie & Spiritualité (Daniel Lenoir, Président)
- Greenham Women are Everywhere (Alison Lochhead, Convenor)
- Haringey CND (David Polden, Secretary)
- Heddwch ar Waith (Sam Bannon, Coordinator)
- ICAN-France, Campagne Internationale pour l'abolition des armes nucléaires, organisation prix Nobel de la Paix 2017 (Jean-Marie Collin, Directeur)
- Initiatives pour le Désarmement Nucléaire IDN (Général Bernard Norlain, Président)
- Les Amis de la Terre - France (Marie Cohuet et Laura Thieblemont, coprésidentes)
- Movement for the Abolition of War (Hilary Evans, Committee Member)
- Mouvement de la Paix (Roland Nivet, porte-parole national)
- Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-violente - MAN (Comité d'Animation)
- Peace Pledge Union (Ed Bridges, Committee Member)
- Trident Ploughshares (Angie Zelter, member)
- Université Européenne de Paix - UEP (Roland de Pénanros, Président)
- Les Amis de la Terre Cote d'Or
- Guy Aurenche, avocat honoraire, ancien président de l'ACAT et du CCFD-Terre solidaire
- Agnès Barrucand, membre, Communauté Mission de France
- Marie-Pierre Bovy, ex-présidente du MIR France, fondatrice de Stop Essais
- Annick Hautdidier, membre, Communauté Mission de France
- Michel Hautdidier, membre, Communauté Mission de France
- Patrick Hubert, membre, Communauté Mission de France

- Mayeul Kauffmann, Président de l'Institut de recherche sur la Résolution Non-violente des Conflits (IRNC)
- Marie-Christine Marchand
- Christian Mellon, jésuite, membre du CERAS, ancien secrétaire de la Commission Justice et Paix
- Robert Morel
- Dominique Renaudie, membre, Mouvement pour une Alternative Non-Violente
- Christian Terras, responsable éditorial de la revue Golias
- Marie-Claude Thibault, membre, Abolition des Armes Nucléaires – Maison de Vigilance
- Marine de Vanssay, Rédactrice

- Simon Barrow, Ekklesia Network
- Joseph Birdseye
- Martin Birdseye, Founder, Nuclear Morality Flowchart Project
- Lyn Bliss
- Owen Butler, Individual member, Pax Christi
- Marian Dodd
- Rob Esdaile, Parish Priest, Woking & Knaphill Catholic Parish, Surrey, UK
- Michael Freeman, Trustee, Aberaid
- Sheila Gallagher, Member, Pax Christi
- Mary Hickman, Member, JandP
- Heather Huntley, Individual peace activist
- Susan Jones, Activist, CND
- A.M. Kelly, Member, Pax Christi
- Ann Kobayashi, Member, Trident Ploughshares
- Shigeo Kobayashi, Organiser, Japanese Against Nuclear UK
- Dylan Lewis-Rowlands, CND Cymru
- Lesley Marshall, Retired
- Helen McAuley
- Lucia McGuckin, Member, Holy family of Bordeaux
- Marc Morgan, Member, Trident Ploughshares and CND
- Alan Owen, Founder, LABRATS
- Megan Rayner
- Diana Shelley, CND, National and Haringey Group
- Jim Sikorski, St Martin in the Fields Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Group, London
- Alison Williams, Merton Branch Contact, UNA-UK