

REPORT # 2

LAWYERS' COMMITTEE ON NUCLEAR POLICY

666 BROADWAY #625 NEW YORK NY 10012 (212)674-7790

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WE'RE GOING TO THE WORLD COURT!

A ground breaking resolution passed on May 14 at the World Health Organization's (WHO) annual assembly in Geneva. The resolution, "Health and Environmental Effects of Nuclear Weapons", instructs WHO to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice ("World Court") on the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons.

The resolution passed with overwhelming support, 73 countries in favor, 40 against, and 10 abstentions, a testimony to the work of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) which lobbied for the resolution. Supportive countries argued that eradicating nuclear weapons remains a top health priority in a world where nuclear capability is rapidly spreading. They argued successfully that the health community's voice must be heard on this great threat to human health and survival.

The US and the UK campaigned vigorously against this World Court Project (WCP) initiative. First, they argued that the question was beyond the competence of WHO. Supportive delegations replied that WHO has a mandate to protect global public health. Previous WHO studies ("Effects of Nuclear War on Health and Health Services", 1987) concluded that the only way to treat health effects of nuclear warfare is to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. The Director-General of WHO, Dr. Hiroshi Nakajima, concluded in a report to WHO that the risks associated with nuclear weapons "will continue as long as nuclear weapons are produced, and the only remedy is their elimination." Supporting the resolution was therefore the next logical step for WHO to take.

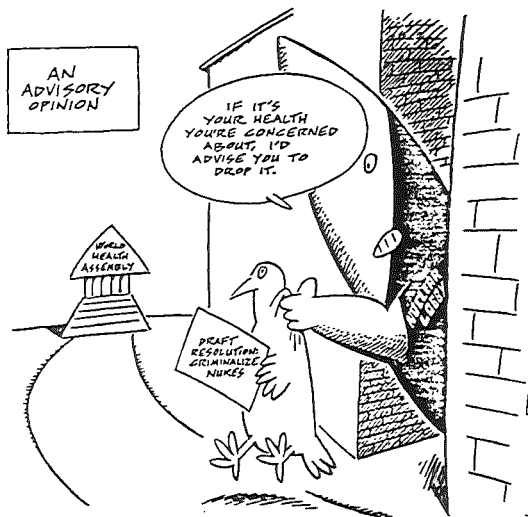
Hilda Lini, Health Minister for Vanuatu and co-sponsor of the resolution, spoke passionately on the health effects of past testing and production of nuclear weapons. She noted that "as a result of nuclear activities, the Pacific Island States are now already suffering. Miscarriage is a common problem. Women give birth to a substance that breathes but doesn't have a face, legs, or arms. I say enough is enough."

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New York University Hosts WCP Public Meeting on May 20th

A distinguished academic institution was an appropriate setting for the first New York City public forum after the World Court Project's victory in the World Health Assembly. Within a few years, professors might question students on the legal precedent underlying the World Court's opinion on the use of nuclear weapons.

Five speakers, highlighted by His Excellency Mr. Simbarashe Simbenduku Mumbengegwi, Zimbabwe's Ambassador to the UN, seized upon the World Court Project's success to not only look ahead but to also look back at the project's beginnings. The speakers were relaxed and witty, enjoying a brief respite before beginning the project's next phases—promoting a UN General Assembly resolution and preparing the legal case to the Court. ●



WCP Bristol Launch Available on Video

This video enables you to experience the excitement of the WCP Bristol Launch. Project superstars Katie Boanas-Dewes, Rob Green, Phon van den Biesen, Bruce Kent, and Colin Archer describe how nuclear weapons, like slavery, will become a thing of the past. The video is 45 minutes, \$5 to rent, and \$15 to purchase. Please order from LCNP and include \$1 for postage. ●

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The US and UK continued their offensive against the resolution. They then argued that initiating the case at the Court would waste WHO's money when it should instead be spent on "genuine" health needs. Dr. Chavez Peon, delegate for Mexico, responded by asking delegates to consider the cost to human health and health services of a single use of a nuclear weapon. IPPNW, after contacting the World Court Registrar, informed delegations that the Court itself and not WHO would pay Court costs, minimizing WHO's expenses.

Illogical arguments having failed, the US and UK also put financial pressure on countries not to support the resolution. Delegates from one island state noted privately to IPPNW that their country's support for the resolution was putting at risk aid to them from the West.

IPPNW is confident that the Court will now rule against the use of nuclear weapons. Michael Christ, member of the IPPNW lobbying team in Geneva, stated that "no judge could look into the eyes of my two-year-old daughter and say that nuclear genocide is legal."

Some activists are asking: "Why continue with the UN General Assembly resolution on this issue later this year?" First, a request from the General Assembly (GA) will indicate to the Court that this is an important concern for those UN bodies that consider political issues as well as those UN bodies that consider health issues. Second, the UN GA resolution will ask for an opinion on both the use *and* threat to use (the WHO resolution only asks about the legality of the use of nuclear weapons). An opinion from the Court on threat to use will challenge the prevailing policy of nuclear deterrence and will generate powerful political pressure for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. ●