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**Talk to IPAN Conference, Canberra**  
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Thank you to IPAN for making this conference possible, and for the invitation to speak.

I join you this afternoon from Naarm in Melbourne, the lands of the Wurundjeri People, of the Kulin Nations. I acknowledge the elders of this beautiful place, and that the lands here - and throughout what is known as Australia - were never ceded. This is a central acknowledgement, as the war on First Nations peoples continues in this country. As a person from an old settler colonial background, I am mindful of how much we need to ground our work for peace back home before anything else.

I was honoured to be asked to speak today. All of you here no doubt have much to share on this topic - *How to win: Collaborative activism for peace and climate action*.

So I want to touch on two things – firstly the key example of collaboration that has seen the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons come into force - through the work of global networks like ICAN and the broader peace movement, alongside certain governments. And secondly, the work we face from here.

But before that I wanted to mention the IPAN report as a fantastic example of collaborative collectivism. Its scope – across First Nations, environment, security, unions, social justice, foreign policy and more – is indicative of the breadth of challenges identified by the peace movement. I want to congratulate all the authors, coordinators and contributors to this remarkable new resource. I hope it will be received in Canberra and around the world with great interest.

ICAN Australia welcomes the new report. We particularly welcome the calls in the report for the Australian Government to *“explicitly reject all use of nuclear weapons in pursuing*

*Australia's national security; and to sign and ratify the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons."*

It is well past time they did.

Nine countries hold over 12,700 nuclear weapons in the world right now. Many on hair trigger alert. I do not have to tell you the number and gravity of the threats that have been made in recent times around these weapons.

Juxtaposed to this, we have the TPNW - and a global movement that is uplifting and working towards the goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Treaty itself is groundbreaking – it was informed by civil society, survivors, and experts as well as governments. It comprehensively bans not only nuclear weapons but also the threat of use of them, the testing, the sharing and hosting of them. Under this treaty, the only thing you can do with nuclear weapons, is get rid of them.

The Treaty also acknowledges the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons. The Treaty stipulates support for victims, or survivors, of nuclear weapons use and testing. It seeks to address environmental remediation. It aims to build positive obligations for those people and places most affected by nuclear weapons use and testing. These commitments must be led by those who have lived experience expertise, assisted by those with other political, humanitarian, scientific and medical knowledges.

So - while national polls show that 72–78% of Australians support the TPNW, we have yet to see the Australian Government join the Treaty.

But importantly, we have a strong commitment, built into the Labour Party's national policy platform since 2018, for this government to sign and ratify the TPNW.

A promise made must be kept. We have seen far too many broken promises, too many half measures in the past. So we still have work to do here.

When we began our campaign, it was in an era of diplomatic disappointment, frustration and war – not dissimilar to today, in some ways. It was in the years following the September 11 attacks, as the War on Terror raged and Bush radicalised talk of being either “with us or against us”. At this time, we also saw something of a collapse of diplomacy, and the work for nuclear disarmament was largely sidelined, to say the least. But never entirely. Because there has never been a time in modern human history that there have not been voices speaking for peace.

We began ICAN with a grassroots collaboration across nations, pushed from us here in Australia, building expectations that we needed to talk of disarmament, despite the pervasive atmosphere of war. We recognised that to address the multifaceted challenge of nuclear weapons, we needed to work to stigmatise, ban and eliminate these weapons.

In the founding of ICAN we recognised that it is the human story that cuts through all else – that lived experience is essential when seeking to address disarmament and remediation. Remembering and truth-telling about the past helps break silences imposed on us, and prevents future harm. To locate these stories takes true collaboration – the respectful, careful, skilled and honest collaborations that builds trust between impacted communities and activists, technical experts, governments and more.

From our launch here in Naarm in 2007 to the day we saw the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons voted in at the United Nations in 2017, it was a dizzying decade of global collaboration across over 100 countries and hundreds of partner organisations. Here in Australia, that has included 88 partner organisations, including IPAN. It has been another five years of work seeing the Treaty enter into force and hold its first meeting of States Parties, which it did in July this year.

The States Parties to the TPNW (and other signatory and observer states) came together in Vienna for that first. The new Albanese government sent a representative to the meeting, a welcome change in engagement after a decade of utter obstruction previously. The government has since made other small steps in the right direction. But as others have called for today, we welcome all efforts to urge this government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. We expect to see a far more vigorous engagement with the Action Plan that arose from States Parties in Vienna in July.

You've heard so much today from many speakers and no doubt in conversation in the room together about the challenges we face. But I go back to something Richard Tanter said this morning – in the face of increasingly polarised military alliances on the global stage, we need to find our own forms of alliances for peace.

The collaborations for war are far too dominant in today's world. As dysfunctional, divisive and dangerous as they are, we see these alliances at play all around us. In response to the war in Europe; to the ideological brinkmanship at play between US and China; the instability in many of the nuclear armed states; the failure of the nuclear umbrella states to relinquish the falsehood of extended nuclear deterrence. We have seen new threats of nuclear testing and nuclear dumping; and the ever-present threat of outright nuclear war. We see it in Australia's shameless acquiescence towards interoperability for our military with the US, and with AUKUS.

– while all these factors weigh heavily on our collective sense of security, we also know the value and the possibility of what it means to collaborate for peace.

We can build alliances for peace, but they must be bigger than simply opposition to war. Peace is much more than the absence of war, as we all know.

Alongside the questions of avoiding war in our region, we need to address issues of racism, Treaty for First Nations Peoples, nuclear colonialism, gender and sexual violence, violence against the LGBTIQ+ community, and climate threats (so intricately linked to militarism). I will post in the chat here some excellent papers on climate and militarism or nuclear weapons that have been written by ICAN's Tilman Ruff and a recent paper on defence emissions from MAPW as examples of that climate link.

But my basic message is that to build alliances for peace, we have to fearlessly acknowledge the breadth of the challenges we face. While we each have areas of particular interest, specialisation, or specific aims (and certainly ICAN has had those over the past 15 years), our alliances for peace must create room to listen, learn and grow through understanding the intersectionality in this work.

The power of civil society movements is the ability to be free to explore issues without the limitations of pragmatism that we find in politics – particularly politics beholden to state capture.

Many of us in civil society have the opportunity to bring together science, medicine, the lived experience, as well as moral and cultural issues to understand both the problems but also solutions. It is a powerful thing. And as such, civil society is an essential element of a functioning democracy. We have that here in Australia, despite its fragility, the many challenges and the systemic racism, agism, homophobia and misogyny that ensures this is not always an even playing field. But we have more privileges than many in the world right now. And we therefore have a big responsibility to speak up, act up, and show up for - and with - one another. This is how we win.

Thank you.