Remarks at the Signature and Ratification Ceremony for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

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Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to participate in today’s ratification and signature ceremony for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Today is the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. It is an appropriate day to take stock of the progress made towards to entry into force of the TPNW and the commitment it represents to the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

When the Treaty was opened for signature one year ago, the Secretary-General noted that it was the “product of increasing concerns over the risk posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons, including the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences of their use.” The number of signatures and ratifications to date shows that these concerns remain paramount in many States’ minds.

With today’s signatures and ratifications, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has been ratified by 19 States and signed by 67. It is on its way to reaching the threshold of 50 ratifications needed to enter into force. When it does, it will become an important element of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation framework.

While the decision to sign and ratify a treaty is ultimately one for States to take, we should nevertheless take a moment to recognise the role that civil society and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement have had in this treaty’s genesis. Since the Treaty opened for signature a year ago, ICAN’s “ground-breaking efforts” have been recognised with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The United Nations has pursued the global elimination of nuclear weapons since the very first resolution of the General Assembly in 1946. When the Secretary-General launched his disarmament agenda “Securing Our Common Future” earlier this year, he unequivocally reaffirmed that the total elimination of nuclear weapons remains the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations.

Seven decades after their invention, nuclear weapons continue to pose unacceptable threats to collective, national, environmental and human security. The only sure means to remove the threats posed by nuclear weapons is through their total elimination.

I look forward to working with all of you to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons – a safer and more secure world for all.

I thank you.