Statement by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to the 81st session of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly

Delivered by Céline Nahory, Director of Government Relations and Advocacy, ICAN

15 October 2026

Check against delivery

Chair, distinguished delegates,

Eighty-one years after the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we still live under the shadow of nuclear weapons.

Nine states still possess more than 12,000 of them. Every one of those states is modernising its arsenal. In 2025 alone, they spent nearly 119 billion US dollars on weapons that, if ever used, would cause harm in proportions that no government and no agency on earth could address .

We know what these weapons do. More than 38,000 children were killed in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The harms from more than two thousand subsequent so-called tests continue to affect communities, generations later.

New technologies such as cyber capabilities and artificial intelligence shorten decision times and cloud judgment. The risks, whether intentional, inadvertent or accidental, are growing.

Events this year have exacerbated risks. The U.S. and Israel, bombed Iran, using nuclear non-proliferation as their justification. The last arms control treaty between Russia and the United States expired. France is attempting to forge a new European nuclear umbrella. The eleventh Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty ended without an outcome document, for the third consecutive time, and even the final unadopted draft offered no meaningful commitments on disarmament.

These are challenging times, but that does not mean we should lower our ambitions. The stakes are too high.

There is another path. A global majority - 101 states - have now taken action under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. These states strengthen the norm that nuclear weapons can never be used and must be abolished. They brought the fight for nuclear justice to the fore and created a forum for affected communities to discuss their ongoing needs. They are supported by thousands of parliamentarians, hundreds of cities and countless individuals who recognise the time of nuclear weapons must come to an end.

More must act:

Every state should express grave concern about the humanitarian and environmental consequences of any nuclear use.

Condemn every threat to use nuclear weapons. Condemn nuclear sharing, and call on states to end it.

Remind nuclear-armed states of their binding obligation under the NPT's Article VI to eliminate their arsenals;

Support assisting victims and remediating environments affected by nuclear weapons

Co-sponsor and vote for the resolutions on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and on the TPNW

Most of all, to every state that has not yet done so: they must sign and ratify, or accede to, the TPNW. Join us at its first Review Conference, from 30 November to 4 December, this year.

Security cannot rest on the threat of mass destruction. The choice before us is not between security and disarmament. Disarmament is the only security that lasts, and to achieve sustainable security ICAN will work with all interested parties to, as John Wesley suggested, "Do all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can."

Thank you.