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CANADIAN VOICE OF WOMEN FOR PEACE

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C.,
M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons office
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

August 6, 2021

RE: Canadian Voice of Women for Peace call on the federal government to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and release a feminist foreign policy

Dear Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Minister Garneau,

On the 76th anniversary of the devastating atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) are writing to urge you to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and to release the promised feminist foreign policy.

The TPNW came into force on January 22 this year and now has 55 state parties and 86 signatories. It is disappointing to us that Canada has not yet signed this important new treaty to help abolish the worst weapons of mass destruction. We understand that Canada is not joining the TPNW because of our membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). We would like to inform you that Canadian women from coast to coast are opposed to Canada's continued membership in the nuclear-armed transatlantic military alliance. NATO's continued reliance on a dangerous, modernized nuclear deterrence undermines our security, diverts resources away from urgent social and environmental programs, and risks a nuclear war. NATO's regular, irresponsible nuclear war gaming provokes conflict with Russia and risks an accidental nuclear exchange. In the past, the testing and use of nuclear weapons have had terrible humanitarian and environmental consequences including increasing cancer and radioactive contamination worldwide. We know from a UNIDIR report on the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons that women are biologically more vulnerable to the harmful health effects of ionizing radiation than men. Thus, we are calling on the Canadian government to get out of NATO and into the TPNW.

We are also aware that the federal government is in the process of drafting a Canadian feminist foreign policy. Last fall, VOW and other women's peace organizations

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace founded in 1960.
A national & international network of women working to help
build a world founded on peace and justice for all.

Consultative Status with the
United Nations – ECOSOC
Economic & Social Council

Honourary Board Members:

Jean Augustine, Kim Phuc, Judy Rebick, Metta Spencer, Mary Wynne-Ashford and LeeAnn McKenna

participated in the consultations for this feminist foreign policy. In the consultations, VOW argued that for Canada to have a feminist foreign policy it must join the TPNW and demonstrate leadership for general and complete disarmament. As well, a dozen women's groups prepared a report and a list of recommendations, *Be Brave, Be Bold: Recommendations for Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy*, that explained that Canada must join the TPNW to have a foreign policy coherent with feminism. As women, we know that strategic and conventional weapons do not make us safe. A feminist foreign policy is premised on disarmament, preventative diplomacy, nonviolence, and conflict mediation.

Further, we want to bring to your attention the fact that 15 Canadian cities have recently endorsed the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) *Cities' Appeal* to urge the federal government to join the TPNW including Halifax, Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Over 100 Canadian cities have also joined with 8,000 cities around the world in the Mayors for Peace campaign to demand the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The continued existence of nuclear weapons makes us all more insecure and they are indiscriminate weapons for which there is no humanitarian response. NATO and nuclear weapons impede our ability to deal with the real security challenges we are facing. We are in a climate emergency, a pandemic and an opioid crisis. This summer in British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario there have been out-of-control forest fire causing communities to evacuate and degrading air quality to the level of 'very unhealthy'. In the West, there has also been a terrible heat wave with hundreds of Canadians dying and a drought that has led to crop failure. Across the country, thousands of Canadians have died from the toxic, illicit drug supply and the opioid epidemic. We also acknowledge that it is First Nations communities across the country that have unsafe water and housing that have suffered the most in these crises.

The climate change-induced extreme weather events and the health crises are the greatest security challenges that Canadians face and they cannot be solved with nuclear weapons and armed force. With disarmament, Canada could shift public spending from NATO and the military to green jobs, environmental protection, health care and reconciliation. VOW is calling on your government to sign the TPNW, to withdraw from NATO and to prioritize peace and disarmament.

Finally, we would like to know when Canada's feminist foreign policy will be released. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Vanessa Lanteigne
National Coordinator, VOW



& Taylor Douglas
Peace Campaign, VOW

cc: Ambassador for Women, Peace & Security Jacqueline O'Neill
Minister for Women and Gender Equality Maryam Monsef, P.C., M.P.

The Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) was established in 1960 and is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization comprised of a network of diverse women across the country. VOW has consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and every year takes a delegation of women to the UN Commission on the Status of Women conference in New York. For over 60 years, VOW has tirelessly advocated for a world without war. VOW stands for a feminist peace based on nonviolence, disarmament, diplomacy and common security with gender equality. For more information about VOW, please visit: <http://vowpeace.org>

Sources:

Be Brave, Be Bold: Recommendations for Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy (Action Canada, 2020)
https://www.actioncanadashr.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/FFP%20Be%20Brave%20Be%20Bold%20EN_0.pdf

GENDERED IMPACTS: The humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons from a gender perspective (UNIDIR, 2014)
<https://www.unidir.org/files/publications/pdfs/gendered-impacts-en-620.pdf>

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons: <https://www.icanw.org/>

Mayors for Peace: <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/english/>

