

**INTERNATIONAL PHYSICIANS FOR THE
PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR**
23rd World Congress – Mombasa, Kenya
April 2023

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL RESOLUTION

Title of Resolution: Spread of military nuclear technology to Australia

Submitted by:

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Received by: IPPNW Resolutions Committee

BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

IPPNW:

- Reaffirms its statement of September 2021 opposing the proposed nuclear-powered submarines for Australia, and expresses heightened concern at the growing risk of war, and of nuclear war, to which the submarine proposal contributes.
- Notes that to develop this proposal Australia would be the first nation to exploit a loophole in Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) safeguards agreements that are designed to prevent the proliferation of weapons-usable nuclear material. There are concerns in other nations about a future decision by Australia to use the same nuclear technology to acquire nuclear weapons, despite assurances that there is no such intention.
- Notes that these concerns are heightened by the ongoing acceptance - not only in nuclear-armed nations but also in those under the 'nuclear umbrella' - of a role for the deployment and threat of use of nuclear weapons, a role often couched as 'deterrence'. Nuclear umbrella states (of which Australia is one) directly assist with such deployments and/or threats. Australia has no policy explicitly prohibiting the entry of nuclear weapons into its land, sea or airspace.
- Strongly opposes the use of weapons grade highly-enriched uranium (HEU) for the naval reactors, and all uses of HEU in reactors everywhere. It is a significant weapons proliferation risk, and the acceptance of HEU use for any country sets a precedent for others to follow.

- Regards as unacceptable the degree of secrecy and misinformation from governments on important matters of nuclear reactor – including naval reactor - safety and high level nuclear waste management.

IPPNW urges that:

- Australia establish firmly and durably that planned nuclear-powered submarines and any and all other military developments will not further the stationing in, delivery by or acquisition of nuclear weapons by Australia. The most effective way to do this is for Australia to promptly sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Australia should require all air or sea craft stationed in or transiting Australia not to carry nuclear weapons.
- No new naval reactors fuelled by HEU be built anywhere, and those that exist should be urgently phased out. (Chinese and French submarines currently use non weapons-usable low-enriched uranium; US and UK submarines use weapons-grade HEU.)
- International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) member states take action to foreclose, on a consistent and non-discriminatory basis, the paragraph 14 loophole in the IAEA Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (INFCIRC/153) under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.
- All countries that possess nuclear reactors exercise transparency and honesty in relation to the public health and safety risks that arise from those reactors and their high level waste.

Reasons for Above:

The risk of a global nuclear war is increasing. Nuclear-armed states are heavily involved in war, instability and tensions, including in Europe, the Asia-Pacific, South Asia and the Middle East. Militarisation is increasing in many places.

The announcement in September 2021 of Australia's plans to acquire nuclear-powered submarines immediately sparked concerns around the globe. Reasons for the concern included the nuclear weapons proliferation potential of the proposed HEU fuel, the possibility of an arms race in the region, and the risk of reactor accident causing severe environmental contamination. The nuclear weapons fears reinforce the shameful history of nuclear colonization suffered by the people of the Pacific and elsewhere, the health and environmental impacts of which continue.

The Australian government emphasizes that the proposed submarines will not be nuclear-armed. However, doubts linger about future possibilities. The government has not yet signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – a step the governing party has previously committed to – and continues support for the targeting, command and control of its major ally's nuclear weapons. The signature, ratification and faithful implementation of the TPNW by all 'nuclear umbrella' states would provide the strongest possible and most durable commitment by them to a nuclear weapons free world.

On matters of public health and safety, secrecy and highly misleading official pronouncements are used to evade scrutiny, including on the still unresolved problem of safe long-term management of the high-level radioactive waste from nuclear reactors. The Australian government recently rejected a Senate order to produce documents about options to manage the nuclear waste from the submarines. In the UK, the Ministry of Defence has not released annual safety assessments from its internal

watchdog, the Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator, since 2017. This secrecy undermines public health and safety in relation to naval nuclear reactors.

Describe how this resolution might be implemented and by whom:

Implemented by the affiliates to whom it is most relevant, in whatever ways assist their campaigning for a reduction of the danger of nuclear war and reliance on nuclear weapons, as a step towards nuclear weapons abolition.

Estimate for amount of staff time and resources required to implement this resolution:

Minimal staff time, and no other resources, are needed

Estimated expenses and sources of funding:

No funding is needed.