The Australian Government has been urged to do an immediate U-turn on its policy on nuclear weapons.

Starting Monday in New York at the UN, a negotiating process to produce a 'legally binding instrument' to make nuclear weapons illegal is taking place. Initial meetings happen 27-31 March and 15 June-7 July at UN headquarters in New York. The process was set up by a General Assembly vote supported by 123 governments.

In an unprecedented move, Australia, considered by some to be a leader in nuclear disarmament is boycotting these meetings.
People for Nuclear Disarmament and the Human Survival Project are urging them to do a U-turn and to support and constructively participate in, the process to make nuclear weapons illegal.

According to PND and Human Survival Project's UN nuclear weapons campaigner John Hallam, who will be attending UN meetings in Vienna in May and the New York 15June-7July meeting,

“Australia is on the wrong side of history in boycotting this negotiating process for an instruments that leads, ultimately, to the abolition of nuclear weapons. Indeed, the nuclear weapon states themselves are on the wrong side of history in opposing it and in encouraging others – such as Australia – to do so. They too would find it in their interests to take part in this negotiating process.”

“ Australia argues that the creation of a multilateral treaty that makes nuclear weapons illegal, which is almost certainly what will emerge from this process, will not help to advance the world toward the elimination of nuclear weapons, and may undermine the Nuclear NonProliferation Treaty (NPT). This is absolute nonsense, and one wonders if even those who mouth these arguments truly believe them, so lacking are they in credibility.”

“Article VI of the NPT clearly obliges governments – and not merely the nuclear weapon states, but all governments – to engage in a negotiating process whose end point is the total and unequivocal elimination of all nuclear arsenals. What will undermine the NPT is not engagement in a process to eliminate nuclear weapons, but Australia's failure – indeed, refusal – to engage in that process.”

“Finally, our failure to to engage in the elimination of nuclear weapons not only does not enhance our security in any way, but undermines that also. If we fail to eliminate nuclear weapons, the risk that they will be used in large numbers will continue to grow and eventually what we call 'civilisation' (and much else besides) will simply perish, probably taking Pine Gap and possibly a number of Australia's larger cities with it. The 'end of the world' can hardly be in
Australia's security interest. Rather it is the sort of event we should be trying to prevent.”

“Australia must turn around its nuclear disarmament strategy immediately, and engage in the New York negotiations as if the fate of civilisation and of humans as a species depends on it. Because it does.”

The Australian Institute of International Affairs is holding a meeting on the UN negotiations for a nuclear weapons ban this Tuesday at 6pm. (see announcement from AIIA below)

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The Australian Institute of International Affairs invites you to:-

**Banning Nuclear Weapons in 2017 - Australia's role**
In one of its final acts before the end of 2016, the UN General Assembly approved a resolution launching negotiations for a treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons in 2017. The first of two negotiating sessions will begin on March 27.
The Australian Government voted against the resolution, and is not planning to attend the negotiations, despite having been present at all of the conferences that have led to this moment. In defence of the nuclear umbrella, Australian diplomats have even gone so far as to try and undermine the process.
The policy of extended nuclear deterrence has long gone unchallenged and is now preventing Australia from engaging in the most important nuclear disarmament initiative to emerge in decades.
The election of president Trump has reignited global fears of living in a world still armed to the brink with 15,400 nuclear weapons. This is an opportunity to reassess our attachment
to the US nuclear arsenal, by which we support the possibility of nuclear catastrophe being committed on our behalf. This will be the first time that Australia has failed to take part in disarmament negotiations. We're a party to treaties prohibiting chemical weapons, biological weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions. Australia is turning its back on the UN at a time when multilateral approaches to global challenges are more important than ever.

Robert Tickner is a former under-secretary for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation and the former chief executive officer and secretary general for the Australian Red Cross - a position he held from February 2005 to August 2015. In his work as CEO of Australian Red Cross Robert was one of the global Red Cross Red Crescent champions working in support of the ICRC call for a convention to outlaw the use of nuclear weapons.

Gem Romuld is the outreach coordinator for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons in Australia. Since 2013 she has been working to grow political will and civil society pressure in Australia for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, while producing two radio programs for 3CR in Melbourne. She also works with Australians for War Powers Reform.

Date: Tuesday March 28, 2017
Time: Refreshments 6:00 pm; Presentation 6:30 pm - 7.30pm
Venue: The Glover Cottages, 124 Kent Street, Sydney (located adjacent to the Kent St Fire Station)
Cost: AIIA NSW members $15.00; Senior/student members: $10.00
Non-members $25; Student non-members $15

NO PARKING AT GLOVER COTTAGES except for speakers and councillors

PLEASE RSVP ONLINE or EMAIL ACCEPTANCE to nswexec@internationalaffairs.org.au
Please register as we only cater for the number of people registered

Tickets can be pre-paid by credit card through Paypal when registering online. Payment may be made at the door in cash or by credit card.