



# Position Statement

## Towards elimination of weapons of war and conflict

### ICN Position:

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) considers peace and security to be fundamental to health and development and urges government leaders and decision-makers to do their utmost to prevent war and armed conflict of any kind.

ICN abhors the accidental or deliberate use of nuclear, chemical, biological and conventional weapons and land mines; all of which undermine health and threaten survival. Recent advances in weapons such as use of drones to assassinate people at a distance can cause collateral damage. To this end, ICN fully supports:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>1</sup>.
- The Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons<sup>2</sup>; and
- The Ottawa Convention<sup>3</sup> on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction;

ICN calls on national nurses associations (NNAs) to support international efforts towards the elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and land mines and the indiscriminate use of firearms.

NNAs can do this by:

- Collaborating with human rights groups, lawyers, national disaster prevention agencies, health groups, the mass media and others to create a united front against the production, distribution and use of these weapons.
- Educating the public and nurses about the social, economic, environmental and public health consequences of nuclear, chemical, biological and conventional weapons.
- Encouraging nurses to work with groups that develop strategies for action to reduce the threat of these weapons.
- Lobbying national governments to stop the manufacture, distribution and importation of such weapons and abide by international arms control and disarmament agreements.
- Joining groups working to eliminate these weapons.

ICN further calls on NNAs to work to prevent the consequences of all types of weapons by:

- Actively participating in disaster response and preparedness plans.
- Preparing health personnel at all levels for the problems and demands associated with caring for the victims of such weapons.
- Lobbying governments to find non-violent and democratic means to resolve conflicts.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Adopted 10 December 1948

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/events/npt2005/npttreaty.html>

<sup>3</sup> *Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personal Mines and on Their Destruction*, Ottawa: Canada, 1997

## **Background**

There is a growing threat of chemical, nuclear or biological weapons and land mines during war, in situations of armed conflict, and as an act of terrorism. The single or combined impact of weapons can result in catastrophic global public health and development consequences. The death, injury and devastation resulting from use of these weapons exceed the response capacity of the health care systems or civil defence plans, because of destruction and pollution of food, water supply, shelter, medical supplies and transportation and communication facilities.

Land mines are indiscriminate weapons which pose a threat to life and development - often years after the conflict is over. Their long-term and persistent use stretches the capacity of health care and other resources for treatment, care and rehabilitation of victims.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the declaration can be fully realised. Peace and security provide the best conditions within which to pursue political stability and disarmament. Racism, religious and ethnic intolerance as well as economic and social inequities are precipitating factors for violent conflict.

The ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses<sup>4</sup> affirms that inherent in nursing is respect for life and dignity of people thus nurses have a responsibility to work towards elimination of these threats to life and health.

### **Adopted in 1999**

**Reviewed and revised in 2006 and 2012**

Previously: *Nuclear War*

#### **Related ICN Position:**

- Reducing Environmental and Lifestyle-related Health Hazards

The International Council of Nurses is a federation of more than 130 national nurses associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses and leading nursing internationally, ICN works to ensure quality nursing care for all and sound health policies globally.

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<sup>4</sup> International Council of Nurses, *Code of Ethics for Nurses*, Geneva: ICN 2000