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Media Backgrounder: 22 June U.S.-Russia arms control meeting in Vienna

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Highlights

- US and Russian officials [will meet](#) on 22 June in Vienna to discuss extending the New START.
- The United States will be represented by Marshall Billingslea, the special presidential envoy for arms control, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov will represent Russia.
- The US has invited China to the talks but China has stated they will not participate.
- ICAN, winner of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, is available for comment in Vienna and Geneva.
- New START limits both countries to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and it expires in February 2021.
- China, Russia and the US can engage through existing multilateral treaties to curb nuclear arsenals. New START cannot be the venue for trilateral reductions.
- The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) currently has 81 signatories and 38 state parties putting it extremely close to entry-into-force.
- Bilateral and multilateral dialogue is encouraging, but ultimately all states must respect international law by rejecting WMDs including nuclear weapons and joining the TPNW.

World Nuclear Arsenals

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [estimates](#) that as of January 2020, nine countries possess 13,400 nuclear weapons, about 90 percent of which belong to Russia and the United States. The United States has 5,800 nuclear warheads, Russia possess 6,375 nuclear warheads and China has 320 nuclear warheads, a slight increase from its 2019 arsenal of 290 nuclear warheads.

[ICAN research](#) released this May estimated that these countries spent \$73 billion developing and maintaining nuclear weapons in 2019, a \$7 billion increase from 2018. The United States spent \$35.4



billion, Russia spent \$8.5 billion and China spent \$10.4 billion; all three countries increased their nuclear spending from 2018 as part of planned long-term nuclear upgrades.

New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START)

In 2010, the United States and Russia signed [New START](#), which limits both countries to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads, 700 deployed nuclear missiles and bombers, and a total of 800 deployed and non-deployed launchers for nuclear missiles and bombers.

New START expires in February 2021 but can be extended for an additional five years with the agreement of both Russia and the United States.

Russia [has proposed](#) extending the treaty, but the United States has not taken up Russia's offer. Although the United States has reportedly not "[ruled out](#)" extending the treaty, it [insists](#) on also negotiating a new trilateral agreement with China, despite China's [consistent and repeated refusal](#) to engage in these negotiations.

However, several multilateral disarmament agreements already exist in which China, Russia and the United States can engage to eliminate their nuclear arsenals, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

The [1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#) has [191 states-parties](#), and at its core, prohibits most of the world's countries from acquiring nuclear weapons, commits five nuclear-armed states, including China, Russia and the United States, to pursue disarmament negotiations (Article VI), and guarantees the right to peaceful nuclear energy to all states-parties.

Every five years, NPT states-parties meet to review progress on commitments and to adopt a consensus final document with additional commitments for treaty implementation. Past Review Conference documents in 2000 and 2010 [have been sparsely implemented](#).

The 2020 NPT Review Conference, originally scheduled for April-May 2020, [has been postponed](#) until a date no later than April 2021. At this conference, the five nuclear-armed states party to the treaty, including China, Russia and the United States, will answer to many non-nuclear-weapon states [who argue they have not fully implemented the treaty](#), more than 75 years after its adoption.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The [1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty](#), which Russia and [signed and ratified](#) and China and the United States [have signed but not ratified](#), bans nuclear testing and establishes a global network of

monitoring facilities to detect nuclear tests, overseen by the Preparatory Commission for the [Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty Organisation](#). 184 states have signed the CTBT and 168



have ratified it, but it has not entered into force because it requires [44 specific states](#) to ratify it for it to enter into force, including China and the United States.

The United States is [reportedly discussing](#) resuming U.S. nuclear testing and [has accused](#) both China and Russia of not complying with the CTBT, although those claims have not been substantiated.

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The [2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), which currently has [81 signatories and 38 states parties](#), includes prohibitions of the use, testing, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons, as well as positive obligations for states parties to provide assistance to victims of nuclear use and testing and environmental remediation for land contaminated by nuclear use and testing. It will enter into force once 50 countries have ratified or acceded to the treaty.

The treaty articulates two pathways for nuclear-armed states to join (Article 4). A nuclear-armed state may either join the treaty and the negotiate a time-bound plan for complete nuclear disarmament, or it may complete nuclear disarmament first and then join the treaty and cooperate with the designated international authorities to verify the “irreversible elimination of its nuclear-weapon programme.”

China, Russia and the United States have not signed or ratified the treaty.

The survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (the hibakusha), who will commemorate the 75th anniversaries of the bombing of their cities this August, are recognised within the treaty’s preamble for their role in advocating for and negotiating the treaty and have continued to champion the treaty’s entry into force, individually and collectively. Setsuko Thurlow, [who accepted the Nobel Peace Prize](#) alongside ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn in 2017, has continued to advocate for the entry into force of the TPNW as a moral imperative. [The Hibakusha Appeal](#), with over [10 million signatures](#), calls for all countries to join the TPNW.

About ICAN

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is a global campaign working to mobilize people in all countries to inspire, persuade and pressure their governments to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. ICAN is comprised of more than 500 partner organisations in over 100 countries. More information about ICAN can be found at www.icanw.org.