Youth and Gender Inclusion in the TPNW

Working paper submitted by the British American Security Information Council (BASIC)

I. Introduction

1. In recent years, inclusion has become one indicator of the validity, values and willingness to change of international and multilateral institutions, from treaties, to organisations, to events. For States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in particular, inclusion and representation are a significant priority. Support for women’s full participation in the promotion and attainment of sustainable peace and security is enshrined in the Treaty’s preambular text, as is recognition of the disproportionately harmful impacts on women and girls of nuclear testing. Youth inclusion, meanwhile, has received renewed attention throughout the disarmament community since the 2019 passing of UNGA Resolution 74/64 on Youth, Disarmament and Non-Proliferation. This focus has been operationalised through increased investments in disarmament education programming, in youth-focused bodies like the Emerging Voices Network and the Oslo Nuclear Forum, in academic and practice-based training opportunities such as the ACONA Arms Control Negotiation Academy and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship Programme at the IAEA, and in youth-led conferences like the Project on Nuclear Issues (PONI) conferences convened regularly in both London and Washington DC.

2. There is, however, a long way to go in the meaningful inclusion of women, gender minorities and young people, let alone in terms of race and ethnicity, language, LGBTIQ+ identity, neurodiversity and disability. A vital next step for the TPNW community in its mission to increase diversity and inclusion is to articulate not only how to include women and minority groups such as youth in disarmament, but what outcomes should be sought. The outcome of further inclusion could be strengthening the impact of pathways to disarmament, as well as improving the experience of those who previously experienced harm and marginalisation within the nuclear policy community by rectifying these harms. This means, in particular, envisioning how a truly inclusive institution feels and functions, the policies and practices that institution will leverage to fulfil its mission, and what success could like for inclusion in the TPNW community (noting, of course, that no solution is perfect, and that there will always be room for institutions to improve). It is important, equally, to recognise
that these groups – people of colour, women, young people, LGBTIQ+-identifying people etc. – are distinct from one another and within their membership, and that interventions to boost inclusion of one group may not be appropriate for another. In this Working Paper, we lay out recommendations for TPNW States Parties specifically tailored to ensuring the participation and inclusion of young people and of women, being two priority cohorts at present due to the gendered dynamics at play within existing nuclear institutions.

II. Recommendations on Inclusion of Young People

1. One difficulty States Parties may face when making decisions about youth inclusion is a) how to define ‘youth’, ‘young’, ‘next-generation’ and similar terms and b) agreeing what they want to achieve by including more young people in their work. In this working paper, we suggest taking a broad definition of ‘youth’ and offer a range of recommendations to cover different age groups and aims.

Defining ‘youth’

2. We recommend defining ‘youth’ broadly. Too narrow a definition of ‘youth’ can create additional, burdensome administrative work for States Parties in policing participation, and may serve to further disadvantage and exclude young people who have already experienced marginalisation. Specifically, a narrow definition of youth privileges those individuals able to complete tertiary education more quickly, to join the workforce in more senior or high-skilled positions, or who are facilitated to enter the nuclear policy community by existing interpersonal connections.

3. Given the age distribution within the global nuclear policy community, a working definition of ‘youth’ should include those in the first 10 years of their career, including those who have shifted career focus and may therefore be older. Particular interventions and outcomes could be tailored for individuals in different experience brackets within that group, distinguishing, for example, groups by whether they are still in secondary or tertiary education or are in the first three years of their career.

Inclusion in Delegations

4. Inclusion of young people in the official business of arms control and disarmament is vital, both in terms of the role of diversity in boosting innovation, collaboration and problem-solving ability as well as due to representing important developmental opportunities for the up-and-coming generation of practitioners. We recommend that States Parties seek to include young people in delegations in one or several of the following ways:

   (a) Agree to a target of 20% of delegation members aged 35 and under, by the first TPNW Review Conference, or;

   (b) Convene regional or sub-regional committees of young delegates to attend MSPs and Review Conferences as official delegations, or;

   (c) Hold national programmes or competitions to identify young people seeking greater involvement in disarmament, or;

   (d) Engage in capacity-building and disarmament education amongst young MFA or Mission staff, or;
(e) Engage young experts from civil society and academia to participate in MSPs alongside governments.

5. Many young and emerging experts may be more likely to choose not to engage with TPNW processes, including the MSP, due to a lack of a sense of safety or a lack of accessibility arrangements. We recommend that state parties create an accessibility and safety checklist to ensure that all potential experts feel able to engage in a comfortable and safe environment. Some examples of what could be included in such a checklist include:

- Selecting venues that are wheelchair accessible
- Creating codes of conduct for engagement that ensure that minorities, including queer people and people of colour, are not faced with discriminatory languages or practices
- Adding relief breaks and breakaway spaces for those who may need to use such facilities, such as neurodivergent people or breastfeeding parents
- Ensuring that digital materials are screen readable

**TPNW Review Cycle Workstream on Youth and Disarmament**

6. Substantive work within the TPNW Review Cycle is critical to maintain States Parties’ engagement on youth issues, to ensure the development of contemporary, evidence-based policy and to develop the inclusiveness of the TPNW as an institution itself. On this front, we recommend:

- Inclusion of a formal statement at each Meeting of States Parties and at the TPNW Review Conference outlining progress on the global Youth and Disarmament agenda, challenges in advancement of this work, and current or future objectives
- That States Parties seek and promote meaningful youth inclusion in all disarmament institutions

**Meetings of States Parties and Review Conference Side Events on Youth**

7. Meaningful civil society participation is a vital ingredient for youth inclusion and progress on global nuclear disarmament. Dedicated, State Party-supported side events at Meetings of TPNW States Parties and at TPNW Review Conferences are an ideal opportunity to foster Track 1.5 engagement on youth, to bolster innovation, and to ensure that practitioners of all ages working on TPNW implementation can collaborate as a community. To that end, we recommend:

- That a position is earmarked at each Meeting of States Parties and Review Conferences for at least one dedicated civil society side event on youth engagement, to be supported and formally recognised by the Meeting Chairperson or the Chairing State
- That a Working Paper on Youth and Disarmament developed by civil society is tabled at each meeting, supported by the Chairing State
III. Recommendations on Inclusion of Women

1. Women’s continued marginalisation in international policy fora, and especially in conversations around disarmament, arms control and other nuclear policy matters, is increasingly recognised as unacceptable. Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of women and gender minorities will not improve on its own without targeted interventions.

2. We recommend that States Parties adopt the following measures and steps to progress the meaningful inclusion and leadership of women and non-binary people within the TPNW regime:

   • Agree to a target of 50% of delegations comprising women and non-binary people by the second Meeting of States Parties

   • Adopt a standing agenda item within the broad victim assistance workstream on specific intergenerational impacts of nuclear weapons testing and use on women and girls, per the TPNW’s preambular text

   • Adopt a standing agenda item on women and disarmament in the TPNW context more broadly, considering in particular the gendered nature of nuclear politics and how they should be challenged or redressed

   • Agree to a target of 50% of positions within Committees, amongst Meetings’ administrative staff and within the Chairing State’s delegation of women and non-binary people, by 1st Review Conference

   • Adopt an assessment mechanism before the 2nd MSP to learn which methods worked, which did not, and what could be added or amended in light of new context and new challenges