The risk of nuclear war is greatly increased by the production of “mini-nukes”

Working paper submitted by Disarmisti Esigenti

1. This paper was written by Disarmisti Esigenti and WILPF Italia.

2. Are called “mini-nukes” nuclear bombs of “low power”, that is to say of an intermediate power between that of the bomb on Hiroshima and those of the most powerful conventional bombs.

3. Paradoxically this type of bombs could turn out to be the most dangerous, at least initially, since they are more suitable for the “battlefield”, which clearly lowers the “threshold” for their use. In addition, their relatively low power would have the effect of tending to "erase" the power gap between nuclear bombs and conventional bombs, which would break the present 'taboo' for the use of nuclear weapons with a power of at least that of Hiroshima (≈ 15 Ktonnes) and, on average, of several hundred Kilotonnes.

4. Here is a concrete example: the B61-12 bombs, currently in the production phase in the USA, are intended to soon replace the ≈ 150 'old' B61 bombs, purely 'gravitational', currently in service in Europe in the 5 countries of the NATO of 'nuclear sharing': Italy, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands and Turkey.

5. These B61-12 bombs are remote-controlled, reinforced at the front to be able to penetrate enemy bunkers (bunker-buster), and with power adjustable by the pilot before their launch between 0.3 Kton and, typically, 50 Kton.

6. However, 0.3 Kton means a power 50 times lower than that of the bomb on Hiroshima, and 30 times greater than that of the most powerful conventional bomb, so they are in fact "mini-nukes".

7. In view of the current trend which increasingly refers to "low-power 'tactical' nuclear bombs for the battlefield", we believe that it would be important to bring this subject back to the table at the next Conference revision of the TPNW.

8. In our opinion, we should therefore: either dedicate a specific paragraph in the text of the TPNW to this serious problem of the 'mini-nukes', or, at least, specify in its Article 1, that the mentioned ‘nuclear weapons’ are ‘nuclear weapons of any power’:
(a) Article 1

Prohibitions

1. Each State Party undertakes never under any circumstances to:

(a) Develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons, \textit{whatever their power}, or other nuclear explosive devices.