

Des Browne Highlights Success of Vienna Humanitarian Impact Conference

10 December 2014



In a speech to The Foreign Policy and United Nations Association of Austria, NTI Vice Chairman [Des Browne](#) said countries with nuclear weapons for far too long have been "allowed to abdicate their responsibility" to address questions about the destructive power of the weapons and the implications for humanity. Browne, in Vienna to attend the 3rd Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, said he was pleased that 150 states, including the United States and the United Kingdom, attended the conference and that he believes a spotlight will remain on the important humanitarian issues. Also at the Conference, Browne read from [a letter to Austrian Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz](#), signed by 129 former senior political, military and diplomatic leaders, expressing support for the conference and outlining a four-point agenda for progress.

Excerpts from the speech:

"Discussions about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are uncomfortable and difficult. But to my mind, there are no more consequential issues to consider—and no more important discussions to have—when it comes to nuclear weapons policy. ...

"The explosions that racked Japan killed tens of thousands of people instantly and destroyed entire cities. Seventy years later, we know that today's nuclear weapons dwarf the bombs that fell in August 1945 and would unleash horrors far beyond even what the Hibakusha endured. As difficult as that is to imagine, we have a responsibility not to allow the horrors of nuclear detonation to be an abstraction. ...

"It seems quite reasonable and legitimate for countries to want to have a high-level discussion about the effects of nuclear weapons – a discussion that's centered on the absolute inhumanity of these indiscriminate weapons, rather than only on the strategic security and geopolitical implications. ...

"The focus on humanitarian consequences can and should support the NPT in all its aspects—in particular, it should support efforts to gain traction on Article 6, calling for all states to work toward eliminating their arsenals. ...

"For far too long, governments have been allowed to abdicate their responsibility to address the humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons use. They have used the NPT as a shield. But the humanitarian initiative and the conferences held in Oslo, Nayarit and now Vienna have provided a platform for discussion that I believe serves to strengthen the foundation of the NPT."