

# U.N. votes to start negotiating global nuclear weapons ban

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NEW YORK, Oct. 28 (UPI) -- As nations with nuclear weapons modernize their arsenals, and in some cases increase their size, non-nuclear countries overwhelmingly embraced a proposed ban on nuclear weapons in a United Nations committee meeting Thursday.

A vote in the U.N.'s disarmament and international security committee [offered solid support for a global ban on nuclear weapons](#), with 123 nations voting in favor, 38 opposing and 16 abstaining from the vote.

Among those voting against the ban were all nine of the countries known to have nuclear weapons -- the United States, Britain, Israel, Russia, China, France, India, Pakistan and North Korea.

Even without the support of all five veto-bearing permanent members of the security council, the ban will be considered by the U.N.'s General Assembly in March, when much of the world now expects to start negotiating a legally-binding path to the elimination of all nuclear weapons on Earth.

Many states protected by countries with nuclear weapons also voted against the global ban, with Australia among the most vocal.

"We do not support a ban treaty," said Richard Sadleir, assistant secretary of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. "A ban treaty that does not include the nuclear weapons states, those states which possess nuclear weapons, and is disconnected from the rest of the security environment, would be counterproductive and not lead to reductions in nuclear arsenals."

Proponents of the measure say that, even without the initial support of nuclear countries, the pressure from the rest of the world to draw down and destroy the 15,000 nuclear weapons deployed globally will eventually be successful.

The United States reiterated its support for the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, which restricts countries from becoming nuclear and seeks to limit the creation of new nuclear weapons, rather than to seek a blanket ban.

In a statement, the U.S. Department of State said a ban is impractical and ignores security concerns around the world which are, arguably, kept in check with the deterrent of mutually-assured destruction.

"The challenges to disarmament are a result of the political, technical and security realities we presently face," Robert Wood, the U.S. special representative to the conference on disarmament at the United Nations, [said in remarks today](#). "The United States is ready to take additional steps including bilateral reductions with Russia and a treaty ending the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, some states are currently unwilling to engage in further nuclear reductions, and others are increasing their arsenals. At the same time, violations of international norms and existing agreements are creating a more uncertain security environment and making the conditions for further reductions more difficult to achieve. A ban treaty will do nothing to address these underlying challenges."

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