

More than 120 nations adopt first treaty banning nuclear weapons

By Edith M. Lederer
The Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — More than 120 countries approved the first-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons at a U.N. meeting boycotted by all nuclear-armed nations.

To loud applause, Elayne Whyte Gomez, president of the U.N. conference that has been negotiating the legally binding treaty, announced the results of the “historic” vote — 122 nations in favor, the Netherlands opposed, and Singapore abstaining.

“We have managed to sow the first seeds of a world free of nuclear weapons,” Whyte Gomez said. “We (are) ... saying to our children that, yes, it is possible to inherit a world free from nuclear weapons.”

“The world has been waiting for this legal norm for 70 years,” since atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 at the end of World War II, she said.

Setsuko Thurlow, who was a 13-year-old student in Hiroshima when a U.S. nuclear bomb destroyed the city, said survivors “have worked all our lives to make sure that no other human beings should ever again be subjected to such an atrocity.”

None of the nine countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons — the United States, Russia, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel — is supporting the treaty. Many of their allies also did not attend the meeting.

In a joint statement, the U.N. ambassadors from the United States, Britain, and France said their countries don’t intend to ever become party to the treaty.

They said it “clearly disregards the realities of the international security environment” and “is incompatible with the policy of nuclear deterrence, which has been essential to keeping the peace in Europe and North Asia for over 70 years.”

The treaty offers no solution to “the grave threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear program, nor does it address other security challenges that make nuclear deterrence necessary,” the three ambassadors said.

A ban that doesn’t address these concerns “cannot result in the elimination of a single nuclear weapon and will not enhance any country’s security,” they said. “It will do the exact opposite by creating



DISARMAMENT DIPLOMACY. Costa Rican ambassador Elayne Whyte Gomez, standing, president of the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, reacts after a vote by the conference to adopt a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, hopefully leading to their total elimination, at United Nations headquarters. More than 120 countries approved the first-ever treaty banning nuclear weapons at a U.N. meeting boycotted by all nuclear-armed nations. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

Philippines.

Rebecca Johnson of the London-based Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy, who spent the past decade helping to develop strategy for a treaty, called the vote “the first step to prevent a handful of militaries holding the world hostage with their nuclear arsenals.”

“We will use (the ban) to stop further nukes being made, used, or deployed,” she said.

North Korea’s nuclear and ballistic missile tests, including its July 4 launch, have become a timely argument for proponents and opponents of the treaty to ban atomic weapons.

Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, said 15,000 nuclear weapons around the world have not deterred Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions and a new approach is needed, starting with prohibition as a first step.

U.S. ambassador Nikki Haley said on March 27 when talks began on the treaty that “there is nothing I want more for my family than a world with no nuclear weapons, but we have to be realistic.”

She asked whether anyone thought North Korea would give up its nuclear weapons, arguing that Pyongyang would be “cheering” a nuclear ban treaty and Americans and others would be at risk.

even more divisions at a time when the world needs to remain united in the face of growing threats.”

The U.S., Britain, and France, along with other nuclear powers, instead want to strengthen the nearly half-century-old Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, considered the cornerstone of global nonproliferation efforts.

That pact sought to prevent the spread of atomic arms beyond the five original weapons powers — the U.S., Russia, Britain, France, and China. It requires non-nuclear signatory nations to not pursue atomic weapons in exchange for a commitment by the five powers to move toward nuclear disarmament and to guarantee non-nuclear states’ access to peaceful nuclear technology for producing energy.

All NATO members boycotted the treaty negotiations except for the Netherlands, which has U.S. nuclear weapons on its territory and was urged by its parliament to send a delegation.

The Netherlands deputy U.N. Ambassador, Lise Gregoire-Van-Haaren, told delegates her country couldn’t vote for a treaty that went against its NATO obligations, had inadequate verification provisions, or that undermined the NPT — and “this draft does not meet our criteria.”

Whyte Gomez, Costa Rica’s U.N. ambassador in Geneva, said 129 nations signed up to help draft the treaty, which represents two-thirds of the 193 member states.

The treaty will be opened for signatures

in September and come into force when 50 countries have ratified it, she said, and its language leaves the door open for nuclear weapon states to become parties to the agreement.

The treaty requires of all ratifying countries “never under any circumstances to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess, or stockpile nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.”

It also bans any transfer or use of nuclear weapons or nuclear explosive devices — and the threat to use such weapons.

Iran, which signed an agreement with six major powers in 2015 to rein in its nuclear program, was among the countries that voted for the treaty.

Other countries that voted in favor include Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Brazil, South Africa, Egypt, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and the

Political prisoner, Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo dies at age 61

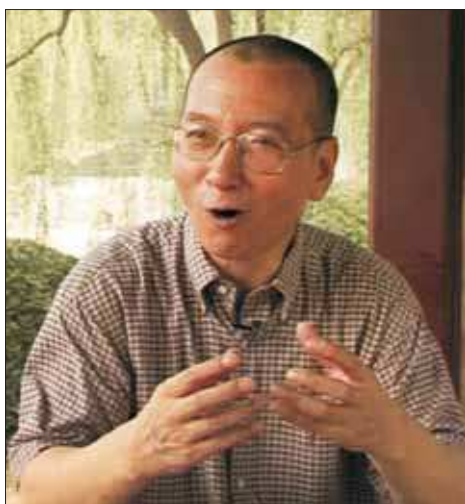
By Christopher Bodeen, Gillian Wong, and Han Guan Ng
The Associated Press

SHENYANG, China — Imprisoned for all the seven years since he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Liu Xiaobo never renounced the pursuit of human rights in China, insisting on living a life of “honesty, responsibility, and dignity.” China’s most prominent political prisoner died July 13 of liver cancer at age 61.

His death — at a hospital in the country’s northeast, where he’d been transferred after being diagnosed — triggered an outpouring of dismay among his friends and supporters, who lauded his courage and determination.

“There are only two words to describe how we feel right now: grief and fury,” family friend and activist Wu Yangwei, better known by his penname Ye Du, said by phone. “The only way we can grieve for Xiaobo and bring his soul some comfort is to work even harder to try to keep his influence alive.”

The 1989 pro-democracy protests centered in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, by Liu’s account, were the “major turning point” of his life. Liu had been a visiting



DISSIDENT DIES. In this image taken from July 24, 2008 video footage by AP Video, Liu Xiaobo speaks during an interview at a park in Beijing, China. Liu, China’s most prominent political prisoner, died July 13 of liver cancer at age 61. (AP Video via AP) scholar at Columbia University in New York but returned early to China in May 1989 to join the movement that was sweeping the country and which the Communist Party regarded as a grave challenge to its authority.

When the government sent troops and tanks into Beijing to quash the protests on the nights of June 3 and 4, Liu persuaded

Continued on page 13

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