

**#WeThePeoples2020: Global Civil Society event in support of the United Nations
International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, September 26, 2020**

Remarks by Jacqueline Cabasso, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation; Co-founder Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons; North American Coordinator, Mayors for Peace

Today's commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of nuclear weapons is taking place at an unprecedented, dystopian time. One year ago, who could have imagined a deadly global pandemic, economic collapse, and massive racial justice uprisings. Add the rise of authoritarian nationalist leaders around the world, including in at least six of the nuclear-armed states, the alarming crisis of democracy in the United States, and hurricanes, wild fires and sea level rise of historic proportions and it is safe to say that we are living in a period of greater uncertainty than at any time in many of our lifetimes.

We are in a brave new world. In the midst of turbulent uncertainties, it is difficult to predict how progress on the elimination of nuclear weapons, much less efforts to prevent their use, can succeed. But one thing is clear. While we can and must vigorously support renewed multilateralism, we cannot depend on national governments to protect "we the peoples." Civil society must come together as never before to build durable, broad, diverse, multi-issue coalitions, networks and *networks of networks* based on our shared commitments to universal, indivisible human security.

Some of the groundwork has been laid over the last few decades.

The Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons was established in 1995 at the NPT Review and Extension Conference, with a primary goal of moving governments to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention that would prohibit nuclear weapons and provide a timebound framework for their verified elimination. But Abolition 2000 is not singularly focused. The network also promotes incremental measures to reduce nuclear risks, establish nuclear-weapon-free zones, stop the modernization of nuclear weapons, affirm the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons under existing international law, promote renewable energy in order to phase out nuclear power, and ensure NGO participation in nuclear disarmament processes. The network's 1997 Moorea Declaration on Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism and Indigenous Peoples recognizes that colonized and indigenous peoples have, in large part, borne the brunt of nuclear devastation. Its 2001 Saffron Walden Declaration on Human Security and Nuclear Abolition lays out the need for a new security framework. Abolition 2000's banner, with its iconic mushroom cloud morphing into a tree, features the demand: *No Nukes! No Wars!* After 25 years, Abolition 2000 is still going strong, with a family of affiliated organizations and networks around the world. At its May 2020 Annual General Meeting, held virtually, Abolition 2000 issued a statement condemning White House discussions to resume nuclear testing.

Mayors for Peace was established in 1982, during the UN Second Special Session on Disarmament, by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to promote the total elimination of nuclear weapons. With active support from civil society, as of September 1, 2020, membership has grown to nearly 8,000 cities in 164 countries. Mayors for Peace seeks to achieve two key

objectives: “realization of a world without nuclear weapons;” and “realization of safe and resilient cities,” which, taken together, will lead to lasting world peace.

In the United States, Mayors for Peace members work closely with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the official nonpartisan association of more than 1,400 cities with populations over 30,000. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has adopted Mayors for Peace resolutions for 16 consecutive years, in 2019, “Calling on All Presidential Candidates to Make Known Their Positions on Nuclear Weapons and to Pledge U.S. Global Leadership in Preventing Nuclear War, Returning to Diplomacy, and Negotiating the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.” This year, the U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted a resolution “Calling for Human-Centered Security in a Time of Global Pandemic,” demonstrating that local elected officials in the world’s leading nuclear-armed State understand the interconnected prerogatives for human security. The new resolution calls on the President and Congress to support the UN Secretary-General’s call for an immediate global ceasefire and international cooperation to address the COVID-19 pandemic; to reconceptualize security in human-centered terms, and to redirect funds currently allocated to nuclear weapons and unwarranted military spending to support safe and resilient cities and meet human needs; and to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war and actively pursue a verifiable agreement among nuclear armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. Unfortunately, the wise counsel of America’s mayors has largely fallen on deaf ears in the halls of power in Washington, DC,

There is an emerging movement in the United States that, I believe, has the vision and the potential to bring together the broad, durable coalition of constituencies that is needed to address the systemic roots of our current predicament and bring about real political change, The Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival.

Exactly one year before his tragic assassination, on April 4, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. declared: I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values....we must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

The Poor People’s Campaign is picking up Dr. King’s unfinished work for a revolution of values, connecting the interlocking injustices of systemic racism, systemic poverty, environmental devastation, militarism and the war economy and a distorted moral narrative of Christian nationalism in one “moral fusion” campaign. While “intersectional” is the new buzzword for cross-issue organizing, the Poor People’s Campaign is the first large-scale effort in decades to recognize the inextricable links between militarism and social, economic and environmental justice; domestic and foreign policies.

Relevant to today’s subject, the Poor Peoples Campaign Moral Budget calls for cutting U.S. military spending by \$350 Billion (by half), including by closing 60% of US foreign military bases, ending wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere, bringing U.S. troops home, and *dismantling and eliminating nuclear weapons.*

The Poor People's campaign is being supported by an incredible range of constituencies including labor unions, faith organizations of all kinds, anti-poverty, environmental and peace groups, and is building political power in the runup to the November election through its we must do M.O.R.E. campaign – Mobilizing, Organizing, Registering voters, and Educating.

As a nuclear disarmament movement, it is our responsibility to share our knowledge of the ever-present and growing dangers of nuclear war with others. Let us work together to understand the common causes of our current multi-faceted crises as we work with the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival and others to build the massive multi-generational, multi-racial, *moral fusion* movement we will need to overcome systemic state violence and build a peaceful, just, sustainable and inclusive world.