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ICRC News Release

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Southern Africa: States commit to a global nuclear ban

Pretoria (ICRC) – The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes southern African states' collective commitment to contribute to a global ban on nuclear weapons by signing and fully ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 26 September 2019.

The Treaty comprehensively prohibits nuclear weapons on the basis of international humanitarian law and further prevents the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons.

"It is commendable that southern African states are reaffirming the continuing urgency of the threat of the use of nuclear weapons. We call on them to encourage as many states as possible to support this groundbreaking international agreement, and to ensure that they have played their part by transforming their commitment into binding domestic law," said Tamalin Bolus, legal advisor at the ICRC. "This will enable provisions that prevent the manufacture, transfer, possession or stockpiling of nuclear weapons to be fully enforced."

Eleven of 16 member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have signed the Treaty, namely Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Madagascar, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. South Africa is the only SADC member state to have ratified the Treaty. Globally, 79 countries have so far signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, while 32 have ratified the Treaty. Fifty ratifications are needed for the Treaty's provisions to enter into force in international law.

The devastating and irreversible effects of nuclear weapons are still present today and the risk of them being used today is growing at an alarming rate. Nuclear weapons would cause incalculable human suffering and have global and long-term environmental, health and development consequences.

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