



United Nations

International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

26 September 2025

The Current Global Situation

In January 2025, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* set the Doomsday Clock at just 89 seconds to midnight; the closest humanity has ever been to symbolic annihilation. The Clock reflects the growing peril of nuclear conflict, as wars escalate, arms-control agreements unravel, and global tensions deepen.

Pulitzer Prize–finalist Annie Jacobsen’s *Nuclear War: A Scenario* (2024) delivers a minute-by-minute reconstruction of how a surprise nuclear strike could spiral into global Armageddon in less than 72 minutes. Grounded in exclusive interviews with military and civilian experts and grounded in real-world strategic protocols like “launch on warning,” the book dramatizes the terrifying fragility of nuclear deterrence, showing how miscommunications and rigid response systems could trigger a full-blown thermonuclear exchange.



The United Nations has always placed the highest priority on achieving global nuclear disarmament. This goal was at the heart of the General Assembly's very first resolution back in 1946, which led to the creation of the Atomic Energy Commission (though it was dissolved in 1952). The commission was tasked with coming up with specific proposals to control nuclear energy and eliminate atomic weapons, along with other major weapons of mass destruction. Fast forward to today, and there are still about 12,100 nuclear weapons in existence; less than during the Cold War era, but more than enough to obliterate civilisation as we know it. The countries that possess these weapons have well-funded, long-term plans to modernize their nuclear arsenals as “deterrence.” ([United Nations, 2025](#)).

The New START Treaty (formally the *Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms*) remains the last surviving nuclear arms control agreement between the U.S. and Russia. Signed in 2010 and in force since 2011, it caps each side at 1,550 deployed warheads, 700 launchers, and 800 total delivery systems, underpinned by rigorous on-site inspections and data exchanges. Both nations met these limits by 2018, and the treaty was extended to February 2026. Yet progress has faltered: Russia suspended participation in 2023, inspections ceased, and by early 2025 Moscow signalled little appetite for renewal. With expiry looming, the collapse of New START would strip away the last layer of verifiable restraint, raising fears of a renewed nuclear arms race and the erosion of global security architecture ([U.S. State Department](#); [Reuters, 2025](#)).

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Having already marked 29 August as the International Day against Nuclear Tests in 2009, the United Nations General Assembly - following on from a special high-level meeting on disarmament in New York in 2013 - intensified its focus on a world free of nuclear weapons by declaring 26 September the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

The vision behind the 2013 resolution was clear: it called for urgent negotiations on a global treaty to ban nuclear weapons completely, ending their possession, development, testing, stockpiling, and use, and ultimately ensuring their destruction. Since then, the UN has

reaffirmed this commitment year after year, reminding governments and communities alike that the threat of nuclear weapons is not some distant concern, but a real and present challenge to our shared humanity.

Since 2014, this International Day has been observed every year. Across New York, Geneva, and UN Information Centres worldwide, events are held to raise awareness and spark conversations. Governments, NGOs, academics, media, and everyday people are invited to take part. The message is simple but powerful: the world is safer, fairer, and more hopeful when we work together to eliminate the nuclear threat.



(Written by Perry Bowe, HOPE researcher Qld)
