AMA urges elimination of nuclear weapons

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Citing some of the medical and environmental consequences of nuclear war—no matter how “limited”—the AMA urged the U.S. Department of State to eliminate nuclear weapons and work to reduce nuclear arms in a letter sent earlier this month.

The letter comes just weeks after the World Medical Association updated its statement on nuclear weapons during its General Assembly meeting in Moscow. The AMA is a founding member of the World Medical Association.

Among other actions, the statement condemns the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, deployment, threat and use of nuclear weapons. It also notes the devastating effect of using nuclear weapons, even beyond the immense human suffering and substantial death tolls among victims.

Catastrophic effects of even a so-called “limited” nuclear war would be felt in the earth’s ecosystem. That includes a subsequent decrease in the world’s food supply, which would put a significant portion of the world’s population at risk of famine.

Addressed to Secretary of State John F. Kerry, the letter notes the imperative for physicians to speak out on this issue. “As physicians, we have a clear duty and responsibility to preserve and safeguard the health of our patients and consecrate ourselves to the service of humanity,” it states. “Therefore, the AMA supports good faith efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons and urges the Administration to continue the process of bilateral and verifiable nuclear arms reduction.”