UN Human Rights Council, 42nd Session
Geneva, 9th-27th September 2019

General Debate on Item 3 - Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development.
Oral statement delivered by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation.

Mr. Vice-President,

The High Commissioner addressed this Council¹ in the opening of this session pointing out the danger of climate change and urging to take measures to reverse the tendency to destroying the planet. We hear as well of wars in many places and the development of sophisticated weapons, even nuclear ones. Life on earth is dramatically threatened!

IFOR outlines the urgent need to take action to implement the Right to Life which is “the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted”².
If the right to life is violated, no other rights can be exercised: [“it is the prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other human rights”³].

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights refers to the right to life. And this right is currently neglected.
On October 30th, 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee adopted a new General comment⁴ on art. 6⁵, which concludes also that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the Right to Life and may amount to a crime under international law.

On July 7th 2017 the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted⁶ by the U.N. Conference⁷.
[We are currently halfway into the path for the Treaty to entering into force⁸.]

We invite all member States to ratify this UN Treaty.

Civil society worldwide will be making this same appeal during the 2nd World March for Peace and Nonviolence⁹ which will commence¹⁰ in Madrid on October 2nd 2019, on International Day of Nonviolence.

We urge this Council to prioritize and implement the human Right to life which should also comprehend the right to refuse to kill, whether as a conscientious objector to military service, a law enforcement agent, or a person who is called upon to administer the death penalty.

We restate, therefore, the call to abolish the death penalty and to realize nuclear disarmament.

Thank you.

¹ High Commissioner 42nd HRC Annual report.
² Parag. 2 of General Comment n. 36 of the Human Rights Committee.
³ Parag. 2 of General Comment n. 36 of the Human Rights Committee.
⁴ No. 36 (2018).
⁵ Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) on the right to life.
⁶ By a vote of 122 States in favour, with one vote against and one abstention.
⁷ In 2017 the General Assembly decided through Resolution 71/258 to convene a United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.
⁸ 26 ratifications have been deposited up to the present time.
¹⁰ It will end on the 8th of March, 2020, on International Day of Women.