

*Leading Towards a
World Without Nuclear Weapons*

First Youth-Parliament Nuclear Summit

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It is a pleasure to be participating in the First Youth-Parliament Summit and I would like to thank Senator McPhedran for the invitation. I am delighted to have the opportunity to address you young people upon whom your - and our - future depends; and to know that you are ready and willing to engage your minds and energies - to breathe new life into - what I believe is - the most critical issue of our time.

I, too, was young – a mother and a University student - when I began to work for a nuclear weapon-free world. I was horrified because my young daughter was having nightmares about nuclear war. I wondered if fear of nuclear weapons had become part of the psyche of young people in North America and began to research on the subject. I found two psychological studies - one of kindergarten age children and one of college students. In their discussions with the psychologists none of these young people mentioned nuclear war as a conscious concern but in reporting their dreams, nuclear war featured in *every one* of these young peoples' dreams.

I established The Simons Foundation in 1985, when I was in Graduate School, because of my concern for my daughter, and because I discovered that science and technological citizenship – a colleague of mine's excellent phrase to describe ethics-based science – was not the subject of discussion or reflection in the University. I was concerned about this absence of thought on the negative effects of science and technology; and concerned because many scientific and technological developments are exceedingly inhumane and work against life – instead of for life.

In the early 1980s during the Reagan build-up of nuclear weapons, I marched with students and professors from my university. Even without Twitter and Facebook as mobilization motivators, over one hundred thousand participated in our first march in Vancouver. These marches, which took place in many parts of the world – one million in New York, one million at The Hague, three million in other parts of Europe – were effective forms of protest and played a large part in the desire of Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The world has changed dramatically since then; and the general lack of interest, and of concern, is truly worrying because the use of nuclear weapons – either by accident, inadvertent or deliberate use is higher than during the Cold War.

I imagine that it is easy to abstract ourselves from this reality because most of us in this room were born into a world already under the cloud of nuclear annihilation or, as President Kennedy, at the United Nations in 1961 so aptly stated, *in the age of mass extermination*.

The Cold War ended and the assumption, by many, was that nuclear weapons had been, or would be, eliminated. Concern about nuclear war disappeared, perhaps because Russia and the U.S. cut their arsenals dramatically over the years.

But, Russia and the United States did retain enough to destroy the world. In addition, India and Pakistan became nuclear weapons states, North Korea withdrew from the NPT with the technology made available through NPT membership and proceeded to develop nuclear weapons; and it became known that Israel had an arsenal of nuclear weapons. A number of states in the Middle East, Iraq, Libya and Iran all began illicit nuclear weapons development which, with the exception of Iran, were shut down.

The world has been sleepwalking through these many warning signs which have been consistently ignored. And we are now in the situation, of extreme danger, with Russia's President Putin continuing to raise the stakes with his ongoing allusions to, and inferred threats of, nuclear weapons use – the latest statement from the Kremlin on November 8th being of increased “ risk that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will be used” - though blame for this was attributed to the United States.

In addition, we are confronted with the ongoing and rapid development of technologies of mass destruction – artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons and cyber weapons - integrated and utilized as weapons of war. We are faced with the destruction of the life of all on this planet.

It is distressingly obvious from the Ukraine experience that though conventional weapons coupled with these new technologies are effective tools for destruction and death, **in actual fact** Russia's threat of nuclear weapon use has controlled the battlefield and *enabled* the war. Nuclear deterrence - the fear of nuclear war - was the shield protecting and allowing Russia to wield its sword. Nuclear weapons were the most dominant factor – the crucial element which allowed an unhampered invasion by Russia and is responsible for the war's longevity.

The outcome of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is increasing acceptance of nuclear weapons for global security and the heightened risk of nuclear use and of nuclear war.

Moreover, President Putin's contempt for the Budapest Memorandum, the Helsinki Accords, for International Humanitarian Law, the Geneva Protocols, the Genocide Conventions, the NPT and the tenets of the United Nations Charter itself – undermine and weaken the multilateral architecture of global governance leaving the United Nations hobbled and ineffective.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is in particular danger.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine - **a non-nuclear weapon state** - confirms and bolsters the legitimate security concerns of the NPT non-nuclear weapons states which conclude, from the Ukraine experience, that nuclear weapons are necessary for their security.

Finland and Sweden have sought security under the NATO nuclear umbrella. South Korea is now seeking US weapons based in South Korea and considering acquisition of its own nuclear weapons. North Korea, perhaps in response to South Korea, has formally announced that it is a nuclear weapon state and will use nuclear weapons if it is threatened.

Japan, feeling threatened by China, and North Korea, and now, by Russia - because of Japan's support for Ukraine - is reconsidering its military policies and, as well, seeking more security assurances - including nuclear - from the United States.

States are placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons in their national security policies and, the nuclear weapons states – the P5 - in defiance of their NPT Article VI obligations, are upgrading and adding to their arsenals of both nuclear and conventional weapons. And with new nuclear-sharing, nuclear weapons are becoming ubiquitous.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has jeopardized the traditional zone of peace environment in the Arctic - Canada's region. The Russian Northern Nuclear Fleet, based in the Kola Peninsula, intensified its military presence in the Arctic in 2017. And since Russia's invasion of Ukraine has increased military activity.

The expansion of the NATO nuclear umbrella to include Arctic states, Sweden and previously neutral Finland, further nuclearizes the Arctic and creates a security threat to the region and, particularly to Canada, because Russia and the United States - its two closest neighbours – are enemies, and have the largest nuclear arsenals.

Historically, Canada has been uneasy with NATO presence in the Arctic. Security measures have been predominantly non-military – governed under the auspices of the Arctic Council which was suspended at the time of Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea. If and when, the eight-member Arctic Council resumes, Russia will be facing seven NATO states – an unlikely scenario.

Russia's invasion of the Ukraine is also affecting the Indo-Pacific region which has been developing as a coherent economic and security community, in response to China's aggressive pursuit of its sphere of influence in East Asia, Taiwan, South Pacific Islands, and its repeated provocations for control of the South China Sea. The Aukus Agreement – a nuclear technology sharing arrangement between the U.S., the U.K. and Australia - a strategy to counter China's aggressive actions, added a further nuclear dimension to the existing Indo-Pacific arena of nuclear weapons states and their allies.

And the world, to its utter detriment, is dependent for its security on the theory of nuclear deterrence which – as far as security is concerned - is an illusion and a dangerous gamble – involving the potential mass murder of millions of innocent civilians.

Nuclear deterrence **means the threat – the intention to use nuclear weapons**, and because some states have nuclear weapons deployed and on high alert status **this is no empty threat**. Nuclear deterrence is an illusion, and a **camouflage** for the research, development, manufacture, and deployment of nuclear weapons; and **an excuse** for states to upgrade and multiply their nuclear weapons. A recent analysis by The Guardian and the organization, Responsible Statecraft, found deep ties between the US Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture and the weapons industry. Their report stated that nine of the twelve members of this Advisory Group to the United States Nuclear Posture Review, and as well, several U.S. think-tanks “have direct financial ties to” weapons manufacturers. ¹

Nuclear deterrence policy – known as MAD – the acronym for mutually assured deterrence - originated during the Cold War and involved two countries continually vying for dominance. But also these countries engaged in risk management practices which relied on knowledge of each other's forces, on rational calculations – on calculations of risk and of risk-taking; and as new technologies emerged, on a constant ever- increasing flow of risk reduction measures.

¹ “Buying Influence: top US nuclear board advisors are tied to arms business”, *The Guardian*, Nov 10,2023

Instead of two states there are now *nine* states with nuclear weapons, all with deterrence policies and dependent upon the security – *the invulnerability* - of *nine* Command and Control Systems and the arsenals. So much is dependent - for the safety of humanity - upon the *rationality of these nine* leaders who – we hope and pray - rather than competing for global supremacy, will adhere to the global rules-based order regulated by International Law

It is a rather frightening and an extremely negative environment for nuclear disarmament.

Twenty-five years ago, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Lloyd Axworthy introduced Human Security as a new foreign policy paradigm - the transformation from a state-focused security agenda with “war as a legitimate and inevitable instrument of national policy”² to a human-centred approach – a moral, ethical, human security political paradigm, shaped and strengthened by International Law.

The legacy of this Human Security agenda is the key role Canada played in the establishment of the International Criminal Court; the Mine Ban Treaty; the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and the United Nations mandated Responsibility to Protect for the prevention genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity - all issues so relevant to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the template – the inspiration – for the TPNW.

The Entry into Force of this Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on January 22nd, 2021, is the most significant event for **nuclear disarmament** since the Gorbachev/Reagan meeting in October 1986 when they proposed to **eliminate all nuclear weapons**.

The TPNW is the light at the end of the tunnel – a beacon of hope – its basis drawn from the success of the above treaties and which recognizes the catastrophic consequences to human being of nuclear weapons, nuclear war.

The devastating humanitarian consequences of over 2000 nuclear weapons tests, which have been known and documented since the bombing of Hiroshima have finally been recognized in this Treaty and the commitment made to remedy the harms to the affected people and to the environment and, most importantly, the commitment to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine is a potential setback to the furtherance to universality of the Treaty. It could drive nuclear escalation and nuclear proliferation which will pose greater challenges to the success of the TPNW. Or on the other hand, it could be a catalytic moment to advance nuclear disarmament – a wake-up call to the fallacy of nuclear deterrence policy and practice, and the very real danger we face; thus could spur action on nuclear disarmament and encourage more states to join the Treaty.

There is no doubt that the First Meeting of the States Parties in Vienna was a success with a much strengthened Treaty and the determination to push forward all aspects of the Action Plan.

² Geoffrey Robertson, “Crimes Against Humanity, 199

And we look forward to the second meeting in New York at the end of this month. Our task is to persuade Canada to participate as an Observer. We cannot accept Canada's unwillingness – using its NATO commitments as its excuse.

The Simons Foundation Canada and the Hiroshima Day Coalition, in 2021, retained Nanos Research to conduct a Canada-wide poll on nuclear disarmament. Eighty percent of Canadians polled stated that the world should work to eliminate nuclear weapons. Seventy-four percent supported Canada signing and ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Yet, since 2018, Canada has consistently voted against an annual UN General Assembly resolution that welcomes the adoption of the TPNW and, citing NATO commitments, has declined to participate - even as an Observer - at the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty, even though five other NATO member states and NATO applicant, Sweden attended the meeting.

A final word:

We cannot be wooed by talk of risk reduction

There is no way to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use. They can be de-alerted, de-coupled and stored, but until they are disposed of, the threat of use remains.

We must change the language and speak not of risk reduction but rather risk elimination.

We must eliminate the risk! As President Kennedy said at the UN in 1961:

“Every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness. The[se] weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.”

I encourage all of you present today **to put to use** your energies and abilities in order to bring forward new thinking for resolution of these issues **because you are the future**.

We have extremely dedicated Parliamentarians, working to change Canada's position, as co-hosts of this event. I call on you to work to build support in the public realm to further the efforts of these Members of Parliament to persuade the government of Canada to listen to its people and prioritize the safety and security of Canadians and embrace a humanitarian, global security policy of a world without nuclear weapons.

Thank you.

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