

Opening Remarks

**“Parliamentarians for the TPNW”
co-convened by
The Simons Foundation Canada and ICAN**

Second Meeting of States Parties to the
Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
United Nations
New York, NY
November 27, 2023

*Jennifer Allen Simons, C.M., Ph.D., LL.D.
Founder and President
The Simons Foundation Canada*

On behalf of The Simons Foundation Canada, I am delighted welcome you to this Conference for Parliamentarians on the occasion of the Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

I add my welcome to that of Melissa Parke, Executive Director of ICAN - the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons -and this gives me especial pleasure because I, like, Melissa am Australian and ICAN was initiated in 2006 in Melbourne, Australia by the Medical Association for the Prevention of War.

I have watched the organization grow and develop into a global coalition of 634 partner organizations and attest that ICAN truly deserved the Nobel Peace Prize for its remarkable efforts in achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and, in addition, as a driving force in bringing the Treaty to its Entry into Force.

We are here at the United Nations to further the universality of the TPNW - the final - and this time, hopefully successful undertaking to eliminate nuclear weapons. Nuclear Weapons have been condemned, continually, at the United Nations since its creation. In June 14th, 1946, ten months after the United States dropped its atomic bombs on Japan, Bernard Baruch, US Representative of the newly-formed, United Nations Atomic Energy Commission, called for the ban of atomic weapons and for atomic energy to be available only for peaceful uses.

No call has been successful. Much has been achieved, though always less than necessary - thwarted – obstructed – **always** by the states possessing nuclear weapons.

At the moment, it is an extremely negative environment for nuclear disarmament. Yet we have reached a time of crucial importance in which the world is in danger of a nuclear detonation leading to nuclear war – a critical moment of heightened global tensions and nuclear risk from Russia's invasion of Ukraine; with President Putin continuing to raise the stakes with his ongoing allusions to, and inferred threats of, nuclear weapons use – the latest being a statement, on November 8th, from the Kremlin of increased “ risk that nuclear, chemical and biological weapons will be used” though blame for this situation was attributed to the United States.

In addition, nuclear-armed Israel, is at war with Hamas – an organization backed by Iran and by nuclear-armed Russia - and thus has the potential to develop into a larger war in the Middle East which could become nuclear .

It is troubling that instead of calls for the elimination of nuclear weapons, the outcome of Russia's invasion in Ukraine is increasing acceptance for global security and the heightened risk of nuclear use and of nuclear war.

States are placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons in their national security policies and, as well, are upgrading and adding to their arsenals of both nuclear and conventional weapons. And with new nuclear-sharing, nuclear weapons are becoming ubiquitous – and the nuclear weapons states are *gambling with the fate of humankind*.

In addition, we are faced with the potential destruction of the rules-based global order which has governed and guided the conduct of states for almost two hundred years: with the erosion of International Law, the abandonment and breakdown of treaties, and a weakened and fragile Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, already in jeopardy because of failed 2015 and 2020 Review Conferences and Russia's invasion of *non-nuclear NPT member state*, Ukraine.

The NPT is further imperiled by the new nuclear-sharing arrangements as Finland and Sweden seek refuge under the NATO nuclear umbrella, and Russia's weapons are deployed in Belarus. In addition, 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.

If the NPT fails – if states leave the Treaty - the most important Convention governing nuclear weapons – because of its almost universality - there will be no treaty restricting nuclear proliferation, managing and controlling peaceful uses of power and purportedly aiming for nuclear disarmament.

With NPT Article VI commitments on disarmament ignored by the nuclear weapons states, with their new weapons, new uses and a new arms race – even if Russia does not resort to a nuclear attack - we are courting nuclear catastrophe which could culminate in nuclear war.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons - the TPNW - is the bright light at the end of a long tunnel – a beacon of hope.

We look to you, as members of Parliament - especially those of you who represent states *not party to the TPNW* to encourage your country to accept that these critical issues -specifically nuclear war and climate change - transcend national boundaries - that national security legislation is detrimental to the security of your country and the world, and to embrace a foreign policy grounded in human security.

Twenty-five years ago, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, introduced Human Security as a new foreign policy agenda - the transformation from a state-focused security approach with "war as a legitimate and inevitable instrument of national policy"¹ to a human-centred agenda – a moral, ethical, human security political paradigm, shaped and strengthened by International Law.

While this is no longer Canada's foreign policy, the Human Security policy agenda was responsible for the Canada's key role in the establishment the International Criminal Court; for the Mine Ban Treaty; for the Convention on Cluster Munitions; and the UN 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.

¹ Geoffrey Robertson, "*Crimes Against Humanity*, 199

Some of you represent states parties to the TPNW, but *those of you who do not* could use Canada's 1998 Human Security Foreign Policy as a template for promotion of a like policy in your countries - to advance nuclear disarmament – to recognize the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, condemn threats to use them, and be instrumental in furthering their elimination through the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

As members of Parliament, you are in a key position to promote nuclear disarmament and the Treaty On The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in your country, and *particularly if your country has not yet joined the Treaty* or if - *like my country* (I have dual citizenship), *Canada* - is actively opposing the treaty.

We look forward to this afternoon of discussion, strategy development and the consideration of concrete steps essential for nuclear disarmament in order to advance the TPNW in your respective countries.

I wish you every success.

Thank you!

Jennifer Allen Simons, C.M., Ph.D., LL.D.
Founder and President,
The Simons Foundation Canada

November 27, 2023