

*Third Meeting of States Parties to the
Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*
United Nations Headquarters

“Parliamentarians for the TPNW”

Co-Convened by
The Simons Foundation Canada
and
The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)

New York, NY
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Opening Remarks

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

I would like to thank you, Florian, for your excellent organization of this event. and for your management of ICAN's Parliamentarians project.

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

We are pleased to, again, co-convene this important assembly with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. I congratulate you and your team, Melissa, and wish you every success in your continuing contribution to a world without nuclear weapons.

We are honoured that Ambassador Rakhmetullin of Kazakhstan, President-Designate of the Third Meeting of the States Parties for the TPNW, and Ms. Masako Wada, of Nihon Hidankyo, recipient of 2024 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, will address us today.

When we met last year it was in an atmosphere of insecurity and concern. This year the dangerous situation has intensified.

The Doomsday Clock advanced to 89 seconds before midnight on January 28th of this year. And this was prior to President Trump's astonishing about-face, his call to President Putin and his alignment with Russia's position on Ukraine. This was before the Munich Security Conference where it was made clear that the United States was withdrawing from Europe and calling into question the viability of NATO's Article 5: the consequence of which is plans for new military buildup by European states in order to protect Ukraine and Europe.

This was before the chaos in the Trump Administration; before the firing of workers responsible for nuclear weapons and the White House rush to rehire them. These situations provide fertile ground for misunderstandings, miscalculations, accidental or deliberate launch of nuclear weapons or for a nuclear accident.

I fear we are facing the demise of the international rules-based order.

Even without these disturbing events, the current situation is exceedingly precarious and dangerous - and further exacerbated by the advancement of AI Technology: of cyber warfare - attacks on the nuclear command and control and early-warning systems; of spoofing - false information of enemy attacks - and also the development of increasingly destructive hypersonic precision-strike conventional weapons which, I understand can now attack nuclear weapon silos - all of which intensifies the vulnerability of the nuclear deterrence system. The US government - though - is taking this seriously and is moving to integrate nuclear and non-nuclear weapons into its nuclear deterrence capability, and is reflected in the Biden 2022 Nuclear Posture Review. ¹

¹ Tom Sauer, *the Potentially Revolutionary Impact of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies and Strategic Conventional Weapons on the Nuclear Deterrence Debate.*, EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Papers No. 91, December 2024

Because of conventional weaponry with the ability to *endanger* the nuclear deterrence system, this, perhaps, offers a glimmer of hope for the eventual phasing out of nuclear weapons as does Presidents Putin's and Trump's wishes to resume dialogue on further cuts to their nuclear arsenals.

Moreover, though Russian officials threatened nuclear strikes on Ukraine this did not happen when Ukraine, during the war, invaded the Kursk region in Russia. As well, though Israeli officials suggested using nuclear weapons against Gaza, Israel did not respond with nuclear weapons against, Hamas-supporter Iran's barrage of missiles into Israel.²

So we remain hopeful that nuclear weapons will never be used and will eventually be eliminated.

However, **hope is not a strategy.** And *today the threat is real* and the task is to advance disarmament in this new age of insecurity with its escalating threat of nuclear catastrophe. And in an age, because of Russia's invasion of the Ukraine, this war and the President of the United States' support of Russia, we seem to be drifting further from the idea of nuclear disarmament than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

Angela Kane, former United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, in a series of lectures in New Zealand in 2014, speaks of a "Disarmament taboo" – "the perception shared by many governments and civil society that disarmament is too difficult, controversial and impractical a goal to pursue."

She commends New Zealand harmonizing its domestic nuclear free policy so that it is consistent with its international commitments.³

New Zealand has a Ministry for Disarmament and Arms Control. A major component of this infrastructure is the Public Advisory Committee on Disarmament and Arms Control – a committee of experts, established by an Act of Parliament, that advises the Government on Disarmament and Arms Control. The Committee also advises the Prime Minister on the implementation of the Act. It publishes public reports about disarmament and arms control, advertises for applications and makes recommendation for grants to projects that promote public understanding of disarmament and arms control.⁴ In other words, the whole national spectrum is covered from parliament to the people.

States - both nuclear and non-nuclear - would do well to emulate New Zealand. There is a dearth of such disarmament infrastructure, not only in states with nuclear weapons states and their allies, but in most states.

NPT member states - in good faith, - have undertaken binding commitments to eliminate nuclear weapons - to nuclear disarmament. And have binding commitments to International Law including International Humanitarian Law – War Law, which would be violated in the event of nuclear weapon use.

² Sauer – *ibid* -

³ Angela Kane, *The Disarmament Taboo*, UNODA Occasional Paper 26, 2014

⁴ <https://qqq.mfat.govt.nz/en/peace-rights-and-security/disarmament/public-advisory-committee-on-disarmament-and-arms-control>

Yet how many states have incorporated these commitments into their domestic agendas? There are little in the way of “*institutional capabilities to ensure that disarmament and humanitarian norms receive the priority they deserve*” – no “*supportive organizational infrastructure deeply rooted in national security bureaucracies*”.⁵

As Parliamentarians committed to protect the people you represent, ***I call on you to summon the political will***, not only to introduce resolutions and motions to universalize the TPNW, but as well, to ensure that your country’s domestic laws, regulations, policies and actions ***reflect*** your country’s commitments to nuclear disarmament and to International law including International Humanitarian law.

Moreover I call on you to advocate for a Ministry of Disarmament in your governments, together with appropriate government-mandated infrastructure including government funds, to further the capacity and organizational backing for the development of institutional infrastructure - from the parliament to the public sector - for all norms governing nuclear disarmament, in order to advance disarmament education in universities and high schools, to inform and engage the general public on issues of disarmament and arms control.

In other words, to follow the example set by New Zealand.

Thank you!

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Founder and President,
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⁵ Randy Rydell, (2005) p.. Immense gratitude to Randy Rydell for enlightening me on the lack of disarmament infrastructure – see *A Strategic Plan for Nuclear Disarmament: Engineering a Perfect Political Storm*. Journal for Peace and Disarmament, Vol.1, 2018 , p. 377.