

***Welcome Remarks***

**Advancing Disarmament in a New Age of Insecurity  
Workshop**

*convened by  
The Simons Foundation Canada,  
Simon Fraser University School for International Studies,  
The University of British Columbia School for Public Policy and Global Affairs*

Vancouver, Canada  
April 11-12, 2025

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

*Indigenous Land Acknowledgement by Treena Chambers, First Nations representative*

Good Morning,

Thank you Treena! We are honoured to be on your lands and we will treat them with respect.

I would like to welcome you on behalf of The Simons Foundation Canada, on behalf of Megan McKenzie, Simon Fraser University Simons Chair in International Law and Human Security, M.V. Ramana, The University of British Columbia Simons Chair in Disarmament, Human and Global Security, and as well, Elaine Hynes, Programme Manager for The Simons Foundation Canada, with whom you have all been in contact.

I want to thank you for coming **so far** for a two-day meeting – several from distant parts of the world. I regret that two of our colleagues from the U.S. withdrew because of fears that they would not be re-admitted to the United States; and Joellen Pretorius from South Africa was forced to withdraw because her visa to enter Canada did not arrive in time.

We are here for these two days to work to combat **the demise of disarmament initiatives** - to reverse the trend of “**peace through strength**” to one of **peace through diplomacy** - an endeavour to develop global disarmament education infrastructure in universities around the world *as one measure* to advance disarmament in this new age of insecurity with its escalating threat of nuclear catastrophe.

We are drifting further from the idea **of nuclear disarmament and diplomatic solutions** than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

*Disarmament* and *peace through diplomacy* has become - like Latin - a dead language. The disarmament initiatives and actions that have taken place since the end of the Cold War have ceased. The response, since Russia’s 2014 invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, has been to arm up, to further weaponize the world.

Following Russia’s full invasion of Ukraine in 2022, nuclear weapons states have intensified reliance on the delusory security of nuclear deterrence. And two states joined NATO for protection under NATO’s nuclear umbrella.

Since the President of the United States allied himself with Russia, Poland, Japan and South Korea have been considering hosting nuclear weapons. And as well, Finland, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia announced withdrawal from the Landmine Treaty.

The United States isolationist rhetoric, critical of NATO and Europe, has resulted in the ramping up of the European defense industry and, as well, has revived discussions of Europeanizing France’s nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, there is the horror perpetrated on Gaza, and the danger of a larger war in the Middle East which could turn nuclear.

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 United Nations is increasingly weakened with the erosion of the U.N. Charter, the violation of International Law, as U.N. member state, Russia, invades Ukraine, and member state, Israel, commits genocide, ICC member states violate their commitments by not arresting the perpetrators.

Human lives are increasingly threatened by genocidal actions and in the current wars are written off as merely collateral damage.

The problems are immense and understanding the nuclear risks and the totality of it all is a huge challenge even for specialists in disarmament, to say nothing of the general public.

This understanding - this appreciation of the critical dangers – and the dissemination of this knowledge is our task.

The knowledge that universities can impart is a crucial element in influencing public opinion. And it is this influence on world leaders that, in the past, have led to the amelioration of the some of the nuclear weapons risks – for example, the mass mobilization of public opinion caused President Kennedy to ban atmospheric nuclear testing; and the 5 million people marches in Europe and the United States resulted in Presidents Gorbachev's and Reagan's statement that "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought" and their interest in the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The idea that we should undertake this task came from my participation the Physicists Coalition for Nuclear Threat Reduction which emerged from Princeton's Program in Global Security. Their mission gave me the idea that we should be developing an international coalition of universities teaching nuclear disarmament - steps in a broader plan of disarmament infrastructure development from parliaments to the people in all states. New Zealand has achieved this from the parliamentary level while our contribution is midway between the parliament and the people.

At this preliminary meeting I would like to see us lay the groundwork for a global network which we could commit to expanding within participating universities and bringing other universities into the network. I note that Agnes Nimark is a member of the European Nonproliferation and Disarmament consortium Network and that Rhys Crilley is co-director of the Nuclear Researchers Network in the United Kingdom, so we look to insights from them as we strategize on the development of an international network.

Thank you !

I will now pass over to the Megan and Ramana, the Simons Chairs who have created this excellent agenda and who are convening this workshop.