

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



2023 JOINT MEDIA PROJECT REPORT



CREDITS

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Cover: The "Good Defeats Evil" Sculpture at UNHQ depicts St. George slaying a dragon created from fragments of nuclear missiles.

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Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

CONTENTS

Preface	4
Foreword	5
Message	7
A Tripartite Deal That Could Trigger Proliferation of Nuclear Submarines	9
European Parliamentarians Call for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament	13
Towards Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Global Nuclear Disarmament	16
The NPT Review Cycle in Wartime	19
The Ukraine War Should Alert Us to The Need to Ban Nuclear Weapons	24
US Must Offer a Nuclear Deal That Iran Cannot Afford to Decline	28
The Decline & Fall of Nuclear Disarmament in 2022	31
UN Takes to New Ways to Promote Nuclear Disarmament	36
Is the Iran Nuclear Deal Dead or Alive?	39
The Dismal State of Nuclear Disarmament	42
The G20 & Beyond: Nuclear Threats vs. a Growing Norm Against Nukes	45
Nuclear Risks and Technological Proliferation	48
India Urged to Join the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty	52
A Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in Middle East Remains a Fantasy	55
Building Security in the Korean Peninsula	58
Religious & Civil Society Call for An End to Crisis in Korean Peninsula	62
Arms Control at Near-Standstill as Nuclear Threats Escalate	65
What If Russia Unleashes a Less Deadly Weapon on Ukraine?	69
The Era of Nuclear Blackmail Must End	72
Exhibition Educates Youth on Dangers of Nuclear Weapons	76
UN Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Declared a Failure	79
Risk of a Nuclear Attack has Risen to its Highest Level Since the Cold War	84
NPT Review Conference Urged to Seek "No First Use" of Nuclear Weapons	90
Nuclear Weapons Policies of Japan and South Korea Challenged	95
Let's Eliminate Nuclear Weapons, Before They Eliminate Us	97
A Side Event at TPNW Conference Focuses on Nuclear Weapons Victims	102
Second Comprehensive Study on NFWZs Is Needed	105
World Threatened with More Nuclear Arms as Modernization of Arsenals Continues	108
Nuclear Policies Violate Right to Life, Warn Civil Society Organisations	112
ICAN Successfully Promoting the Nuclear-Weapons Ban in Africa	115
North Korea Continues to Defy UN with 17 Missile Tests in 2022	118
Ukraine Proves UN Cannot Singlehandedly Usher in a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World	122
The End Of (Human) History?	126

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

PREFACE

By Ramesh Jaura

Director-General of the Non-profit International Press Syndicate Group and Editor-in-Chief of its Flagship Agency IDN-InDepthNews

This Report of the Joint Media Project of the Non-profit International Press Syndicate Group with IDN as the Flagship Agency in partnership with Soka Gakkai International, a Buddhist NGO in consultative status with ECOSOC, is a compilation of independent and in-depth news and analyses by IDN from April 2022 to March 2023.



The articles in this compilation appeared on www.indepthnews.net in the main category nuclear weapons and disarmament on the INPS Group's thematic Website 'Toward A Nuclear Free World'—www.nuclearabolition.net. These can be accessed free of charge 24 hours a day 365 days a year.

2022-2023 was the seventh year of the INPS-IDN media project with the SGI, a lay Buddhist organization with headquarters in Tokyo. But IDN has been a party to the joint project, first launched in 2009 in the wake of an agreement between the precursor of the International Press Syndicate (INPS) Japan and the SGI.

We are pleased that meanwhile we are in the eighth year of the INPS-IDN's joint media project with the SGI. This compilation comprises 33 articles analysing the developments related to proliferation and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons at multiple levels—governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental.

All articles have been translated into Japanese and several in other languages such as Arabic, Spanish, German, Turkish, Italian, Hindi, Norwegian, Portuguese, Swedish, Indonesian, Thai, Chinese, Korean, Russian, and French.

The backdrop to these articles is that nuclear weapon states have been fiercely opposing the Nuclear Ban Treaty (TPNW), which has meanwhile entered into force. The nuclear weapons states continue to argue that TPNW ignores the reality of vital security considerations. At the same time, a complete elimination of nuclear weapons is increasingly becoming a global collaborative effort calling for relentless commitment and robust solidarity between States, international organisations and the civil society.

I would like to avail of this opportunity to express my gratitude to the network of our correspondents around the world for their insightful contributions, the Project Director, and INPS Japan President Katsuhiro Asagiri for his liaison with SGI.

Our profound thanks to nuclear expert Tariq Rauf for taking time for the Foreword. We welcome the Message from Chie Sunada, Director of Peace and Human Rights, SGI.

FOREWORD

Nuclear Abolition: Role of the Media

By Tariq Rauf

An internationally respected authority on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues. Former Head of Verification and Security Policy, IAEA.



In these challenging times, traditional journalism is under threat from multiple fronts such as the “big five” tech companies, artificial intelligence, multinational corporations’ economic prowess, and the increasing power of information shaping by governments and big business. On the other hand, nuclear and climate dangers are on the increase, and the ‘Doomsday Clock’ is the closest to the midnight of a nuclear conflagration than it has ever been during the height of the Cold War.

Social media is eclipsing traditional media among the younger generations and these segments of the population consume news in ever changing ways, where attention spans are reduced and the space for investigative journalism seems to be waning. How then can the heightened dangers of nuclear weapons, the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear war, and the persistence of genetic damage in populations affected by the radiological contamination of nuclear-weapon test explosions in Kazakhstan and the South Pacific can be communicated to the general public?

The media continues to have a crucial role in raising awareness of nuclear weapon dangers by providing information, analysis, and fostering public debate on the subject.

The media has the important responsibility to inform on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, including the long-term health and environmental impacts of nuclear-weapons testing, the risks of accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, and the catastrophic devastation that invariably would be caused by the detonation of even a single modern nuclear weapon. Such media coverage can emphasize the urgency and importance of nuclear disarmament.

The media remains a primary source of information dissemination and analysis, reporting on nuclear weapon-related events, developments, and policy decisions. This includes informing the public on nuclear proliferation, arms control agreements, disarmament efforts, and continuing threats posed by nuclear weapons.

Investigative journalism while under threat of pressure of coverage breaking news and of current events nonetheless still has relevance in uncovering stories such as those concerning the safety and security of nuclear weapon arsenals, proliferation activities, arms races, security breaches, military expenditures and

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

the vulnerabilities of command and control systems for launch of nuclear weapons, and impact of nuclear weapons testing. Investigative reports uncover misdeeds, corruption, failures and conspiracies that contribute to ensuring accountability and to an enhanced understanding of the dangers associated with nuclear weapons.

The media often tells human stories to illustrate the impact of nuclear weapon dangers. By highlighting personal experiences, survivors of nuclear attacks, or individuals living near nuclear facilities, the media humanizes the issue and underscores the importance of preventing further proliferation and use of nuclear weapons.

Media outlets, through articles, documentaries and interviews, educate the public about the science, history, and consequences of nuclear weapons. They explain concepts such as nuclear deterrence, nuclear proliferation, and arms control to help the public comprehend complex issues surrounding nuclear weapons and the pressing need to reduce nuclear weapon stocks with a view to the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

In the event of a nuclear crisis or threat, such as the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, the Middle East war in 1973, or the ongoing war in Ukraine, the media play a critical role in disseminating real-time information, providing updates on the evolving situation, and helping the public understand the potential risks and necessary precautions. However, it should be noted, that there is a growing perception that media channels with global reach and coverage often resort to presenting national views and justifying national government policy, such as for example regarding the illegal war against Iraq in 2003 on the pretext of stocks of weapons of mass destruction.

Media platforms-such as IDN--provide space for experts, scholars, policymakers, and activists to express their views and engage in public debates about nuclear weapons. These discussions raise awareness, highlight different perspectives, and shape public opinion on nuclear weapon-related policies and actions.

Journalists play a critical role in holding governments accountable for their nuclear weapon policies. They investigate and report on issues such as arms control agreements and compliance with arms control and disarmament treaties, nuclear modernization plans, and economic costs of nuclear weapons.

Finally, the media has a critical role in increasing public awareness of nuclear weapon dangers, and importance of nuclear arms control and disarmament.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

MESSAGE

By Chie Sunada

Director of Peace and Human Rights, SGI



In May of this year, the G7 Summit was held in Hiroshima. The choice of venue, the city that experienced the first use of atomic weapons in war, heightened expectations among civil society actors that meaningful progress would be made on nuclear disarmament.

In March, the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), together with the G7 Research Group and other organizations, organized a conference, “Advancing Security and Sustainability at the G7 Hiroshima Summit,” which developed a series of recommendations for the G7 Hiroshima Summit based on expert view and input, submitting this recommendation to Japanese Government, as well as to high-level summit organizers in all G7 States.

The policy recommendations on nuclear abolition and non-proliferation emphasized the following points:

- Reinforce the G20’s declaration that the “use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible.”
- Adopt a policy of no-first use of nuclear weapons and encourage other states to do so.
- Work toward the elimination of nuclear weapons by reaffirming the goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons and initiating negotiations on a time-bound commitment to progressively reduce and ultimately eliminate nuclear arsenals.
- Recognize the complementary nature of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), create a forum between them, and cooperate on nuclear-related victim assistance, environmental remediation and the development of an effective verification system.

Like other civil society groups, the SGI regrets that these recommendations were not substantively reflected in the Summit process or the G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament and G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué.

At the same time, it was significant that leaders of G7 and invited countries visited Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum to encounter the reality of the atomic bombing and, above all, to hear testimony directly from hibakusha.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Observers in different countries have noted the potential impact on domestic public opinion of their national leaders visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and laying flowers at the Cenotaph for Atomic Bomb Victims.

The SGI also co-hosted the Hiroshima G7 Youth Summit, organized by ICAN, where youth from the G7 states, nuclear test-affected states, and other parts of the world, gathered and engaged in passionate discussions on what youth can do to promote the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In the final analysis, the lasting significance of G7 Hiroshima Summit might be the renewed public awareness about the possibilities of nuclear disarmament that it generated, especially among the youth not only of Japan but the entire world.

Earlier this year, in February, the Russian Federation announced suspension of its participation in the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), and the United States halted providing data on strategic nuclear weapons. The possibility that this last bilateral nuclear arms control treaty could loss effect has sparked growing concern about a new nuclear arms race.

In his statement on the G7 Hiroshima Summit, "The Ukraine Crisis and No First Use of Nuclear Weapon," Daisaku Ikeda, President of the SGI, called for pledges among the nuclear-armed states never to be the first to use these weapons, stating that this would reduce risks and help transform the challenging the security environment prevailing the world today.

He concluded his statement offering the following positive prospect: "Commitment to policies of No First Use is indeed a 'prescription for hope.' It can serve as the axle connecting the twin wheels of the NPT and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), speeding realization of a world free from nuclear weapons."

The First Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference is scheduled for the end of July, and the Second Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW for the end of November.

The SGI will make every effort to generate public support for the adoption of No First Use policies and for more states to sign and ratify the TPNW.

Our work with the INPS media projects, and our collaboration with other NGOs, will be central to these ongoing efforts.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



Propaganda Photo (left to right): Anthony Albanese, Joe Biden and Rishi Sunak during the AUKUS announcement at Naval Base Point Loma in San Diego on March 18. Photo Credit: Alex Ellinghausen

A Tripartite Deal That Could Trigger Proliferation of Nuclear Submarines

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS —The tripartite deal between the UK and the US to provide nuclear submarines (SSNs) to Australia—announced March 13—is threatening to have repercussions worldwide

A joint statement by the three countries (AUKUS) described it as a trilaterally-developed submarine based on the UK's next-generation design that incorporates technology from all three nations, including cutting-edge U.S. submarine technologies.

Australia and the UK will operate SSN-AUKUS as their submarine of the future, and both countries will begin work to build SSN-AUKUS in their domestic shipyards within this decade.

Tariq Rauf, former Head of Verification and Security Policy at the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)), told IDN the confirmation of the supply of SSNs by the UK and US to Australia, a non-nuclear-weapon State, without specification of robust non-proliferation and verification provisions, will open up a [Pandora's Box](#) of nuclear submarine proliferation that can encourage others to follow suit—such as Canada, Iran, Japan, and South Korea?

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“It is surprising that the IAEA seems to have been discouraged from developing safeguards approaches and technical objectives for naval nuclear propulsion in non-nuclear-weapon States such as Australia and Brazil, during the past 18 months after the AUKUS announcement in September 2021,” he added.

Also concerning, Rauf said, is that the IAEA Board of Governors seems intimidated to not call on the IAEA secretariat to work on developing the required safeguards approaches and technical objectives noted above or to have a serious examination of the safeguard issues.

“Furthermore, it seems that representatives of some States are more interested in cheap criticisms of independent commentators rather than promoting an honest technical discussion.”

“Not surprising in current times, (and) not to mention that we are on the cusp of the 20th anniversary of misleading information put out by some leaders to justify the illegal invasion of Iraq (in March 2003).”

Exempting naval nuclear propulsion from IAEA verification and monitoring may well lead to a future situation as in 1991, following the first Gulf War, when the world was surprised to discover an undetected nuclear-weapon development programme and undeclared nuclear activities, Rauf declared.

Beginning in 2023, the Australian military and civilian personnel will embed with the U.S. Navy, the Royal Navy, and in the United States and United Kingdom submarine industrial bases to accelerate the training of Australian personnel, according to AUKUS.

The United States plans to increase SSN port visits to Australia beginning in 2023, with Australian sailors joining U.S. crews for training and development; the United Kingdom will increase visits to Australia beginning in 2026.

As early as 2027, the United States and the United Kingdom plan to begin forward rotations of SSNs to Australia to accelerate the development of the Australian naval personnel, workforce, infrastructure and regulatory system necessary to establish a sovereign SSN capability.



Professor Clinton Fernandes.
Photo Credit: Wikimedia

Writing in the [*Sydney Morning Herald*](#) on March 18, Professor Clinton Fernandes, a former intelligence officer in the Australian army, warned that the AUKUS \$368 billion submarine deal sets Australia on a trajectory from which it will be very difficult to depart.

The deal, in which Australia purchases submarines from the US and UK, “means the future of those countries is now intertwined with ours for decades”.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“The danger is that our defence force winds up as a component of the US armed forces rather than a sovereign force,” he noted.

The key word here is interoperability: to operate inside the strategy of a superpower by contributing a well-chosen, niche capability to augment the larger force. AUKUS means that the Australian Defence Force will be interoperable, even interchangeable, with US and British forces, declared Fernandes.

“Interoperability is central to the Australian way of war, and its overriding importance has deep historical roots. Even before World War I, Australia rejected the Canadian Ross rifle in favour of the British Lee–Enfield as the standard weapon because of interoperability”.

The defence minister in 1909, George Pearce, was an unashamed advocate for Australian independence, but he recognised the need for interoperability. It made good sense then; Britain was the leading imperial power, and Australia was a self-governing dominion in that empire, noted Fernandes.

A sub-imperial consciousness is intrinsic to Australian conceptions of security and identity, and remains at the heart of AUKUS, taking precedence over other goals such as defence self-reliance and cost, said Fernandes, who is part of the University of NSW's Future Operations Research Group, which the threats, risks and opportunities that military forces will face in the future.

In a joint statement issued on March 13, justifying the decision, the three countries said the benefits of the AUKUS partnership will also extend across the Indo-Pacific region, which is home to more than half of the world's people and nearly two-thirds of the world's economy.

“It reinforces our collective strength by weaving our transatlantic and Indo-Pacific allies and partners closer together in support of the international system that underpins these objectives.”

“Australia's modernization of its submarine fleet will be a multi-decade undertaking binding our countries closer together as we actualize this opportunity side-by-side.”

The statement also said Australia's acquisition of conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines will be done in a manner that sets the highest nonproliferation standard and strengthens the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

“This partnership is possible because of Australia's longstanding and demonstrated commitment to nuclear nonproliferation.”

“Much of the history of the 21st century will be written in the Indo-Pacific, and we are proud to stand with our partners across the region to enhance economic prosperity, freedom, and the rule of law and to preserve the rights of each country to make sovereign decisions free from coercion.”

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“AUKUS will help advance our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific region for generations to come,” the statement added.

Addressing a press conference at the State Department, Anthony Wier, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nonproliferation Policy, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, told reporters on March 15: “I think it’s important at the outset to note that naval nuclear propulsion does not mean nuclear weapons.



Artist rendering of possible design for SSN-AUKUS submarines. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons v3.0

Naval nuclear propulsion means that the submarines are powered by nuclear reactors. That’s it. This technology is safe.”

For over 60 years, he said, the United States and the United Kingdom have travelled over 240 million kilometres. That’s the equivalent of over 300 trips to the Moon and back without adverse effect on human health or the quality of the environment.

“AUKUS is a defense partnership, but it’s about more than that. It is a concrete commitment of the United States and our partners and our allies to a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific by bringing together our sailors, our scientists, and our industries to maintain and expand our collective capacity to maintain peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.”

Wier said: “We support Australia’s decision to modernize its submarine fleet, obviously, but moreover, through AUKUS, the United States, Australia, and the UK intend to significantly deepen our longstanding cooperation on a range of security and defense capabilities. And in doing so, we are actively working to re-examine and streamline our processes for optimizing defense trade through any AUKUS context.”

“I think it’s important to make clear: Australia is a non-nuclear-weapon state under the [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty](#) and has made clear it does not and will not seek nuclear weapons. The longstanding and demonstrated commitment to nuclear nonproliferation by Australia has been essential to making this partnership possible. And all three partners remain compliant with and committed to maintaining their respective legal obligations and to nonproliferation,” he declared.

Meanwhile, the London *Guardian* quoted Rafael Mariano Grossi, the IAEA director general as saying the agency and the partners in the [Aukus nuclear sharing agreement](#) will hold further negotiations on how to make sure it does not conflict with their non-proliferation obligations.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

The AUKUs deal [exploits a loophole in the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation treaty](#) that allows nuclear fuel used for non-explosive military uses like naval propulsion to be exempted from IAEA inspections, the Guardian said.

"We have to check before it goes in the water and when it comes back," Grossi told reporters in Washington on March 14.

"This requires highly sophisticated technical methods because there will be welded units, [but] our inspectors will want to know what is inside and whether, when the boat comes back to port, everything is there and there has not been any loss. It's the first time something like this will be done," according to the Guardian report.

"We are going to be very demanding on what they are planning to do. So, the process starts now. And the proof of the pudding is in the tasting," Grossi said.

Grossi is due to report on progress on the non-proliferation agreements related to the [AUKUS](#) deal to the member states on the IAEA's board in June.

"We are going to put together a solid, watertight system to try to have all the guarantees. If we cannot do that, we would never agree," Grossi said. [IDN-InDepthNews]

[Published by IDN-In Depth News on 22 March 2023]



'ICAN Act on It Forum' in Oslo. Photo Credit: ICAN

European Parliamentarians Call for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament

By Jamshed Baruah

GENEVA — European parliamentarians have emphasized the need for taking "concrete steps" towards nuclear disarmament so that it becomes "a priority for the year 2023". This, they said, should be "complementary to stigmatising nuclear weapons and strengthening disarmament treaties such as the [TPNW](#)",

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons., which [entered into force](#) on 22 January 2021.

Seventeen parliamentarians from eight European countries—Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Scotland, Slovenia and Sweden—joined a conference on the occasion of the *ICAN Act on It Forum* on 9 and 10 March in Oslo, Norway, which underscored the crucial role of parliamentarians in advancing nuclear disarmament.

The conference co-hosts were the Norwegian Christian-Democratic Party, the Norwegian Liberal Party and the Socialist Left Party.

In a summary statement, the parliamentarians call on their "governments to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security strategies, to continuously condemn nuclear threats and to encourage our allied partners in the G7 to make the 2023 G7 summit (in May) in the symbolic city of Hiroshima the starting point for nuclear disarmament negotiations".

The parliamentarians' summary statement further explains that they had met to discuss promoting nuclear disarmament and the TPNW and their role as parliamentarians in "achieving a world without nuclear weapons". They explored their national situations and positions and exchanged ideas on encouraging bolder and more concrete actions towards nuclear disarmament.

The summary statement further pointed out that ten years after, Norway hosted the first conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. This treaty bans nuclear weapons under international law with 92 signatories and 68 state parties.

"The TPNW is an important reinforcement of the nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation regime in a time of heightened risks of nuclear use and the erosion of the nuclear taboo. The illegal and brutal war of aggression on Ukraine inflicted by the Russian regime's nuclear threats exposes the unbearable risks associated with nuclear weapons. We unequivocally condemn any and all nuclear threats and urge leaders and politicians to ensure that nuclear weapons will never be used again through complete global nuclear disarmament."

The parliamentarians' conference discussed the lack of transparency in nuclear policies, including on nuclear sharing arrangements. Complementary to the NPT, the TPNW is the most comprehensive legal tool for achieving this goal, they noted. And therefore, called upon all governments to promote the universalization of the Treaty and support its implementation and join the TPNW as soon as possible.

They welcomed the entry into force of the TPNW and the successful first meeting of state parties in June 2022. At this meeting, state parties set out an ambitious plan to strengthen the disarmament regime, complementing their efforts as parties of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ([NPT](#)).

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

As the only treaty to prohibit the threat of using nuclear weapons, and through the States Parties' strong condemnation of any and all nuclear threats, the TPNW has set an example for the international community on how to strengthen the decades-old taboo through continuous and consistent condemnation of nuclear threats, the parliamentarians declared.

They praised the constructive engagement of states that have participated as observers in the meeting of state parties to the TPNW. They encouraged all other non-signatories to observe the second meeting as an intermediate step towards the signature and ratification of the TPNW.

"We urge our governments to explore options to collaborate with states parties, particularly in the area of victim assistance and environmental remediation, as set out in [Article 6](#) and [Article 7](#) of the TPNW."

At the ICAN Act on It Forum in Oslo, experts, campaigners and friends from all around the world came together for two days to learn and exchange more about the arguments and tools that can be used to advocate for nuclear disarmament and the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in nuclear-weapons-implicates states.



ICAN is a broad, inclusive campaign, focused on mobilizing civil society around the world to support the specific objective of prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons. Photo Credit: ICAN

Nuclear-weapon-implicates states may not have their own nuclear weapons. Still, they are enablers of the status quo by pretending to favour nuclear disarmament while also actively supporting nuclear weapons in their national security policies. They are doing little to support the disarmament movement.

Five countries—Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey—all host US nuclear weapons. In addition, 29 countries (plus the five hosts) also "endorse" the possession and use of nuclear weapons by allowing the potential use of nuclear weapons on their behalf as part of defence alliances, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

All thirty-four countries (nuclear-complicity-weapon states) that endorse nuclear weapon usage are Albania, Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.

Against this grim backdrop, representatives of States, cities and civil society, parliamentarians, survivors and other experts and campaigners discussed at the Forum organized by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 2017, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ways and means of moving nuclear-complicity-states away from their antiquated and alarming stances.

They did so in the conviction that nuclear weapons are the most destructive, inhumane, and indiscriminate weapons ever created for which there is no humanitarian response. "The unacceptable risk demands that we take action," they declared.

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews 12 March 2023]

Towards Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Global Nuclear Disarmament?

By Neena Bhandari

SYDNEY — Australia and Indonesia have committed to strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and cooperating in building practical nuclear safeguard capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, even as concerns remain over Australia's push to acquire the nuclear-powered submarines.



Indonesian and Australian flags in the winds. Photo Credit: Invest Islands

An enhanced trilateral security pact, AUKUS, between Australia, the UK and the US signed in September 2021 will enable Australia to become the first non-nuclear country to have nuclear-powered submarines.

"These submarines set a terrible precedent, enabling transfer and/or acquisition of weapons grade highly enriched uranium by non-nuclear weapons states," says Dr Margaret Beavis, Co-Chair of [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\) Australia](#).

"Safeguards are almost impossible to enforce on a stealth platform such as a submarine," she adds.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Currently six countries—the US, UK, France, Russia, China and India—have nuclear-powered submarines, according to [The Military Balance 2021](#) of the [International Institute for Strategic Studies](#).

There are two kinds of submarines—diesel-electric or nuclear-powered—either type can hold nuclear warheads.



Australia's northern neighbours. Photo Credit: CIA website/Wikimedia Commons

Indonesia and Malaysia have expressed serious concerns about the nuclear proliferation risks of Australia's nuclear-powered submarine proposal in the region despite the Australian Government's insistence that the submarines will not carry nuclear weapons.

ICAN Australia's [Troubled Waters](#) report released last year noted that Australian acquisition of nuclear submarines would be "an unnecessary and retrograde step" and "it would set a precedent where other states would use the same logic to acquire nuclear material and sensitive technology utilising the Paragraph 14 loophole".

The [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#) (NPT) has three main pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy and technology, supporting human health, agriculture, food and water security, and the environment. Paragraph 14 of the treaty requires states to notify the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA) of their intention, the amount and composition of the nuclear material involved, and the estimated duration of their withdrawal from safeguards.

"While the compatibility of nuclear submarines with the NPT has been subject of debates, Indonesia submitted a paper in the NPT Review Conference in 2022, which in essence sees the development of Australia's nuclear submarine plan as worrying and therefore demands the plan to be subjected to safeguard monitoring and inspection by the IAEA," says Muhadi Sugiono, senior lecturer in the Department of International Relations in Yogyakarta of Indonesia's [Universitas Gadjah Mada](#).

"Indonesia, especially because of its position as a maritime country, has been very concerned with the Australian nuclear submarine plan. AUKUS has become a serious challenge for the region," Mr Sugiono tells IDN.

A [joint statement](#) issued by the Australia-Indonesia Foreign and Defence Ministers following their meeting on 9 February in Canberra (Australia) said

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Australia and Indonesia, which were founding members of the IAEA, "remain steadfast supporters of its vital role and mandate in upholding the NPT".

The four Ministers "highlighted the ambition for a world without nuclear weapons and their commitment to strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, including its cornerstone, the NPT". They also "welcomed cooperation in the context of the [Asia-Pacific Safeguards Network](#) (APSN) to build practical safeguards capabilities".

Australia and Indonesia, together with Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), had established the APSN in 2009 with the aim of building a regional network of nuclear safeguards capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Beavis tells IDN, "Indonesia has demonstrated its genuine commitment to nuclear disarmament by signing the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)). If Australia is serious about disarmament, it also needs to honour its election commitments by joining Indonesia and signing the treaty".

"Australia relies on the US 'nuclear umbrella', which endorses the use of nuclear weapons. It can remain an ally of the US and still reject these indiscriminate and catastrophic weapons—the worst of all the weapons of mass destruction. New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines have all signed the TPNW and remained allies of the US," she adds.

The TPNW, which entered into force on 22 January 2021, is the first treaty to establish a comprehensive ban on nuclear weapons, including their development, deployment, possession, use and threat of use. While civil society and many non-nuclear weapon states have welcomed the treaty, the nuclear weapon states and their allies view it as undermining the existing nuclear order based on the NPT.

Australia attended the TPNW First Meeting of States Parties in Vienna in June 2022 as an observer.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong wrote in an [Op-Ed](#) published on 23 January 2023, marking the 50th Anniversary of Australia's ratification of the NPT: "We also welcomed the more recent Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons coming into force two years ago. While we still need to ensure the TPNW contains the verification arrangements and achieves the universal support that has underpinned the NPT's success, and that it does not undermine the NPT, we share the TPNW's ambition for a world without nuclear weapons."



Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong. Photo Credit: Australian Government website

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

On 29 and 30 June 2022, the [Nuclear Threat Initiative \(NTI\)](#), in partnership with the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (APLN), convened a workshop in Jakarta. A [summary report](#) from the workshop says, participants shared concerns that "nuclear arsenals are being expanded and modernized, and new disruptive technologies—including dual-capable weapons systems—are proliferating in an increasingly unregulated international environment" and that the divide between nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states over the pace of disarmament mandated by the NPT is growing.

Abdul Kadir Jailani, Director General for Asian, Pacific and African Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia says, "Indonesia is committed to the prohibition of nuclear weapons. While the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will not eliminate nuclear weapons, it will contribute to further delegitimizing the use of nuclear weapons and strengthen international norms against their uses. To this end, Indonesia would expedite our ratification process of the Treaty at the earliest convenience".

"The Treaty will also safeguard the rights for all countries to use nuclear technology for peaceful uses, especially for developing countries", Mr Jailani tells IDN.

At the start of 2022, nine states—the US, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea)—possessed approximately 12,705 nuclear weapons, of which 9,440 were estimated to be in military stockpiles for potential use.

About 3,732 of these warheads were estimated to be deployed with operational forces, and around 2,000 of these were kept in a state of high operational alert, according to [Stockholm International Peace research Institute \(SIPRI\) Yearbook 2022](#).

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The NPT Review Cycle in Wartime

Viewpoint by Sergio Duarte

The writer is Ambassador and former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. President of [Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs](#).

"Recalling that States must refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State and that the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security are to be promoted with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources.." (From the Preamble of the NPT)

NEW YORK — As the war waged by Russia against Ukraine continues unabated, the Parties to the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons \(NPT\)](#) are

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

set to begin soon a new cycle of preparation for its 11th Review Conference, scheduled for 2026 in New York.



President of the 10th RevCon Gustavo Zlauvinen opening the Conference in the UN General Assembly Hall on August 1, 2022. Photo Credit: UN

All states directly or indirectly involved in that conflict are parties to the Treaty and several possess or house nuclear weapons in their territories. Reckless rhetoric rekindled the fear of the international community that these weapons may be used sooner or later in the war.

Given this terrifying prospect, it is useful to recall some aspects relating to the genesis, implementation and objectives of the NPT as well as the significance of the review process for the health of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime as well as for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Rivalry and mistrust between the two major powers prevented a United Nations Commission established in 1946 to make specific proposals for the elimination of such weapons from fulfilling its mandate. Subsequently, a large part of the international community became increasingly convinced that it was in the common interest to curb the expansion of the number of possessors of nuclear armament as an interim way to achieve their elimination.

Support for a non-proliferation treaty grew with the expectation that such an instrument would bring progress toward the common objective of nuclear disarmament.

Accordingly, Resolution 2028 (XX) of the General Assembly, adopted without a vote in 1965, requested the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) to negotiate such an instrument and defined its basic principles. The first three of those principles were that a) the treaty should not permit the proliferation of nuclear weapons, in any form, both by nuclear and non-nuclear states; b) it should embody an acceptable balance of mutual obligations between nuclear and non-nuclear states; and c) the treaty should be a step toward nuclear disarmament.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Between 1965 and 1968, the ENDC debated draft treaties submitted separately and later jointly by its two co-presidents, the representatives of the Soviet Union and the United States. In March 1968, in the absence of a consensus on a final text, the co-presidents introduced some changes to their draft and sent it on their own authority to the General Assembly.

Following further debate and further changes, the Assembly finally adopted the Treaty on June 12, 1968 (Resolution 2373) by 95 votes in favor, four against and 21 abstentions and opened it to the signature of States. Over the following couple of decades, the NPT became the most adhered-to instrument in the field of nuclear arms control. Today only four states are not a party to it. However, important divergences still remain after 52 years of the existence of the Treaty. Six among the ten Review Conferences held so far ended without consensus on a Final Document.

The NPT clearly reflects the strong interest of the nuclear weapon states to prevent others from following their example. Its main operative provisions are designed to prohibit any country that had not exploded a nuclear device prior to January 1, 1967, to acquire such devices or weapons by any means and established a system of verification of that obligation.

Nowhere in the Treaty can one find any explicit, clear commitment to nuclear disarmament. Under Article VI, all its Parties undertook “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control”.

Such negotiations have yet to take place. Over the decades, the two main nuclear powers—the United States and Russia—concluded between themselves a number of agreements to limit or reduce their nuclear forces, including a bilateral treaty by which the number of their warheads and launchers were drastically curtailed.

This instrument is in force until 2026, while all previous ones lapsed or were rescinded. France and the United Kingdom put in place unilateral limitations on the size of their own nuclear forces. Those agreements and decisions are not organically linked to the NPT and do not envisage the elimination of atomic arsenals.

None of the non-nuclear members of the NPT have acquired nuclear weapons[\[1\]](#). A few alleged attempts to circumvent that norm were thwarted by diplomatic or military pressure. Although some countries are considered to be in a state of “latency” and would be able to develop independent nuclear capability quite quickly, this would undoubtedly provoke a major international crisis with negative consequences for them and the discredit or possibly the demise of the non-proliferation regime.

In 1995 an NPT Review and Extension Conference decided that the Treaty would remain in force indefinitely. This decision froze the division of the world in two

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

immutable categories of states: five that are recognized by the NPT as “nuclear weapon states” and the remainder of the international community.

Those five are the same permanent members of the United Nations Security Council that enjoy the power of veto over its decisions. The four countries not parties of the NPT that acquired nuclear weapons are usually considered *de facto* nuclear states. The temporal limit established by Article IX.3 makes it impossible to alter that situation. Any initiative to amend the Treaty would not prosper due to the conflicting interests of several Parties.

The near universalization of the NPT over the first three decades of its existence significantly reduced the risk of “horizontal” proliferation, that is, the increase in the number of states that possess them. Besides the perceived advantages of membership in the NPT, other reasons explain the fact that the majority of the international community opted for accepting a legal obligation not to obtain such weapons.



This is a nuclear explosion at Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954. It spread radioactive contamination as far as Australia, Japan, the United States, Europe and India and helped prompt a treaty banning atmospheric testing of thermonuclear devices, signed in 1963. If a nuclear war happened today, it would devastate Earth's oceans and cause what researchers are calling a *Nuclear Little Ice Age*. Photo Credit: US Department of Defense/ Wikimedia Commons

A large number of countries do not have the required economic, financial, industrial and technological resources and lack security challenges that might lead them to an effort to produce atomic explosives and sustain associated delivery systems. Medium powers that might nurture aspirations in that direction seem to believe that their defense and security needs are better served by other means.

In the current world panorama, the acquisition of nuclear armament by any non-nuclear state party to the NPT would undoubtedly spur undesirable and dangerous regional competition. In a few states, however, motivations and pressure to seek independent nuclear capability still linger in some sectors of public opinion.

Article III of the NPT provides the legal basis for effective systems designed to verify compliance with the obligations accepted by its non-nuclear Parties. No similar provisions exist for the verification of compliance by nuclear weapon states with their own commitments. Article VI contains the only mention to possible action toward nuclear disarmament but does not set specific measures or time frames, let alone deadlines for the achievement of that result. The lack of

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

clear obligations regarding nuclear disarmament renders more difficult the construction of multilateral consensuses in that direction.

Strongly advocated by the nuclear weapon Parties and their allies, the indefinite extension of the instrument achieved in 1995 brought the expectation that a strengthened review process based on agreed specific principles and objectives would make progress possible. Accordingly, at the next Review Conference in 2000, important agreements on action were reached, particularly the “13 Practical Steps for non-proliferation and disarmament”.

That hope, however, was short-lived. During the preparatory cycle for the next Review Conference, to take place in 2005, the relationship between the major powers deteriorated sharply, and the will to seek further constructive decisions waned as previous political commitments were abandoned or negated. Parties could not even agree on recognizing understandings reached only five years before.

The Conference was unable to start meaningful work until too late in the time allotted to it and could not produce a substantive outcome document. A determined effort to avoid two failures in a row was made five years later at the 2010 Review Conference, which earnestly debated the most relevant issues. It finally agreed on a Final Document that contains a long list of proposed actions reflecting widely diverging priorities and did not have any practical follow-up.

Its most important achievement was the recognition of the “catastrophic consequences” of nuclear detonations, which provided the basis for the negotiation and adoption in 2017 of the [Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, leading to their elimination \(TPNW\)](#). Despite the fierce opposition of the nuclear weapon states and many of their allies, this treaty entered into force in 2021. Its relevance and appeal are undeniable, and the growth of its membership reflects the rejection of nuclear weapons by the international community.

While the failure of some of the Review Conferences held prior to 1995 can, to a large extent, be ascribed to the inability to agree on follow-up measures, from that year onwards, the fate of such Conferences seemed to hinge more on the state of relations between the nuclear-weapon states than on the perceived defects of the Treaty, among which the built-in imbalance between non-proliferation and disarmament commitments.

It is fair to recognize that over the five decades of the existence of the NPT, its Parties have shown a consistent allegiance to the instrument and a willingness to continue working together under its framework. One can recall, in this connection, that the language of the draft Final Documents proposed by the respective Presidents of in 2015 and 2022 would have been accepted by the overwhelming majority, even if it was considered by a large number of Parties a retrogression with respect to previous instances. Objections raised in both cases by nuclear-weapon states prevented the adoption of those drafts by consensus. Clearly, their objections had more to do with specific interests linked with geopolitical realities than with the review of the Treaty.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

The war in Ukraine will certainly have a negative impact on the preparations for the 2026 Review Conference. An end to the conflict within the next few months seems very doubtful at this point. Although it is, of course, impossible to detach the performance of the NPT from the overall political realities, it is crucial to prevent the review process—and the authority of the Treaty itself – from becoming another casualty of the war. This involves a vigorous effort during the forthcoming review cycle to address the shortcomings of the current nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime with a view to its improvement.

Sooner or later—hopefully, sooner rather than later—this senseless and disastrous conflict will come to an end. If we are lucky, its aftermath will not mean the assured mutual destruction of the belligerents together with a large part of human civilization but will instead bring new opportunities for a sensible, inclusive, just and productive reorganization of international relations and for a renewal of faith in multilateral agreements.

The necessary construction of a new and more just and inclusive security paradigm requires less self-centered attitudes from all parties and a clear-sighted recognition that an effective and lasting system of international security is not compatible with the continued existence of nuclear weapons. No nation can feel secure unless all nations feel secure.

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The "Good Defeats Evil" sculpture, located at UN Headquarters in New York, depicts an allegorical St. George slaying a double-headed dragon—symbolic of a nuclear war vanquished by historic treaties between the Soviet Union and the United States. UN/Ingrid Kasper

The Ukraine War Should Alert Us to The Need to Ban Nuclear Weapons

Viewpoint by Jonathan Power

LUND, Sweden — In the year 2000, President Vladimir Putin, having just won his first election, made his own contribution to solving the nuclear weapons imbroglio. He said in a speech that Moscow was prepared to drastically reduce its stockpile of nuclear missiles. Putin's call was not just for further cuts than the

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

US suggested ceiling of 2,500 for each side but for reductions far below Moscow's previous target of 1,500. (At present, Russia has around 6,000 warheads and the US 5,400.)

Indeed, from the way Putin put it and the terms and phrases he used, commentators at the time suggested that Putin may well have had in mind the same kind of deal that Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan hatched at their summit in Reykjavik back in 1986—a stockpile approaching zero.

That momentous unconsummated plan at Reykjavik was Reagan's brainchild—he foresaw a world with perfect missile defences (the so-called Star Wars concept), side by side with the abolition of nuclear weapons by the superpowers.

But the moment Reagan's advisors got wind of what he was spontaneously hatching with Gorbachev, they moved to squelch it, arguing its lack of feasibility and rubbishing its practicality, as they did- and still do—regularly with any creative proposal that has wound its way through the labyrinth of inter-agency review.



Official portrait of President George Bush

The only time a major initiative of a unilateral nature did win through was when President George Bush, very strongly placed after the demise of the Cold War, secretly hatched a plan to take US nuclear bombers off alert and remove tactical nuclear weapons from service. No one in the bureaucracy or the Senate had time to try and outmanoeuvre him.

According to George Perkovich, writing in an issue of *Foreign Affairs*, 1961 was the last time that the US government—led then by John F. Kennedy—took nuclear disarmament seriously enough to explore how to make it feasible.

Although the Clinton Administration called for a "fundamental re-examination" of nuclear doctrine, the initiative suffered from presidential inattention and Clinton's "reluctance to challenge Washington's odd couple of Pentagon bureaucrats and myopic and doctrinaire senators". Indeed, Clinton went the other way by provocatively initiating the expansion of NATO towards Russia's boundaries.

It is not entirely the Pentagon's fault. The web of civilian experts that stretches from inside the bureaucracy to the Senate to the universities to the specialist think tanks to the arms manufacturers to the leading news media produces a hardened force of opinion, almost immune to any counterstrike.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

As General Eugene Habiger, a retired commander in chief of all US strategic nuclear forces, put it, "We have reached the point where the senior military generals responsible for nuclear forces are advocating more vocally, more vehemently, than our politicians to get down to lower and lower weapons".

His predecessor General George Lee Butler has gone even further both in wanting to totally eliminate nuclear weapons and in highlighting the savage tactics used by the pro-nuclear lobby to publicly destroy the image and credibility of any high-profile anti-nuclear campaigner.

Public opinion throughout the western world appears to be in a state of serendipity when it comes to nuclear weapons. Something will come along from somewhere and make the world safe from nuclear war. But the reality is far different. Russian nuclear weapons are being flaunted by Putin. There is always the chance of an unauthorised or mistaken launch. There have been well-documented, unchallenged cases of near launches.

The Chinese-Taiwan situation could sometime in the next few years erupt into a major military crisis, pushing the U.S. to confront China, a situation that could lead to two nuclear-armed powers firing missiles at each other.

Nuclear proliferation is becoming more and more likely, and Kashmir and the Middle East remain nuclear tinderboxes. The president of South Korea has already talked about his country building tactical nuclear weapons. (US tactical nuclear weapons were removed from South Korea by President Jimmy Carter.) As for North Korea, the regime continues to push forward, testing ever more sophisticated rockets.

Beyond that is the creeping hostility that much of the rest of the world feels as Washington presses its superfluous nuclear advantage. By making no effort to deliver on what it has publicly and solemnly promised several times, initiating serious nuclear disarmament, it encourages other states to resist American foreign policy goals, given half a chance.

Even good friends such as Canada, France, Germany and Sweden get gripped with this anti-American angst from time to time. It doesn't augur well for long-term American interests if the country's leadership is regarded as arrogant and needlessly militaristic.

In 2000, President Putin rightly seized his moment. Tragically, the US did not respond. At Reykjavik, it was Soviet reticence (as well as the pushing of Reagan's advisors) that took what looked like a real deal that would have got rid of all superpower nuclear weapons off the table. It would be a welcome sign that the Russians are still in touch with reality if Putin stopped talking about their possible use and returned to the language of his speech in 2000. It would be more than an olive branch if President Joe Biden interrupted the Ukraine militaristic chatter with a major speech containing an offer to Moscow to re-engage in nuclear disarmament.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

During every minute of 2021, the world spent \$156,841 on nuclear weapons, according to the *International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)*. In just one year, nine nuclear-armed nations—China, the US, Russia, the UK, North Korea, India, Pakistan, Israel and France- spent a total of \$82.4 billion on upgrading and maintaining their estimated total of around 13,000 nuclear weapons. (Russia and the US hold 90%.)

The world, by and large, is not short of money. It is a question of how it spends it. With a different outlook, money could easily be found to fund what is needed for climate control, aid for Africa's development, malaria eradication, medical research for cancer, diabetes and dementia and poverty elimination wherever it is needed. Why should we be investing in weapons that are too dangerous to use?

There is no rational argument for their possession apart from some vaguely thought-out military philosophy about the benign use of deterrence. Frankly, we don't know if deterrence works. It only works until the moment it doesn't. As Putin, the erstwhile nuclear bomb cutter, has reminded us, they can be used by Russia if NATO missteps in Ukraine. Moreover, we are as much beholden to mistakes and accidents as we have always been, and the longer things go on, the likelier it is that a mistake or accident *will* happen.

Somewhere, deep in Putin's brain, he knows this. So does Biden, who knows he could not avoid the testing teachings of his Catholic faith if his military and national security staff were putting him on the spot by advising him to use them.

So, what is the point of pushing things to that point?

Presidents George W. Bush and Donald Trump did a terrible job in pulling the US out of important nuclear arms control agreements. Putin, when Biden was elected, quickly moved his and the now more forward-thinking American side to renew the big arms-cutting initiative of the Obama and Medvedev years. The cuts took the two sides' long-range intercontinental warheads down to 1,550 each.

Maybe the messy Ukrainian war will go on for months more, even years. But there is nothing to stop the two biggest nuclear powers from initiating some bold steps towards to elimination of nuclear weapons right now. Otherwise, the unthinkable might happen because we have not been thinking.

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** Jonathan Power was for 17 years a foreign affairs columnist and commentator for the International Herald Tribune, now the New York Times. He has also written dozens of columns for the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Boston Globe and the Los Angeles Times. He is the European who has appeared most on the opinion pages of these papers.*

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



The foreign affairs ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, Germany, France, China, the European Union and Iran (Lausanne, March 30, 2015). Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

US Must Offer a Nuclear Deal That Iran Cannot Afford to Decline

Viewpoint by Jonathan Power

LUND, Sweden — The policies of Iran's government are not set in stone, as critics interminably suggest. In early December Iran's prosecutor-general was reported as saying that the morality police were being disbanded. Clearly, two months of demonstrations, led mainly by women, and now with open support by Iran's football World Cup team while competing in Qatar, have made some in the government have a big think about its long-term policies.

Boiled down, this means asking itself if it wants to remain an outcast and or does it want to get on with the job, emulating its neighbours, of becoming a prosperous and wholesome, unsuppressed society. Nevertheless, the hard-liners still have the upper hand, much of the time, witness the recent executions of arrested protestors.

Dealing with its home-grown social grievances is one thing, dealing with the US is another. This too demands a big re-think. Is it prepared to go back to the terms of the nuclear deal negotiated with President Barack Obama which was based in part on a degree of mutual trust or does it assume since President Donald Trump tore it up no future US president can be trusted?

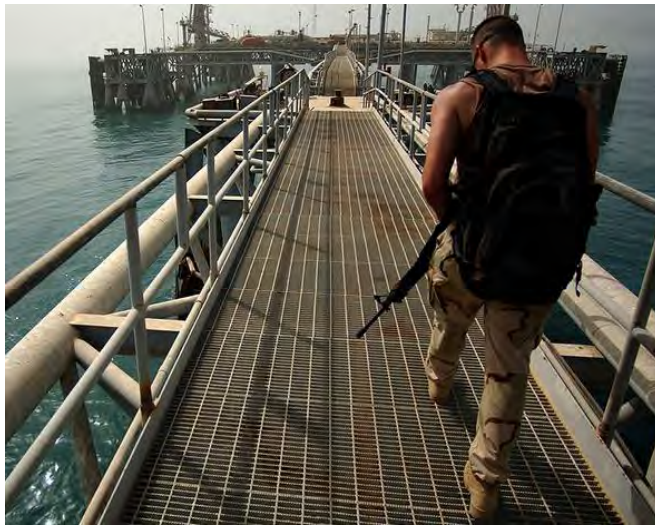
Of all the present foes of America it is Iran which has consistently been over time the number one. Since its Islamic Revolution in 1979 that overthrew the secular-minded Shah and supplanted him with a militant, sometimes warlike, Islamic theocracy, it has been America's Great Satan. (But for Europe rather less so, although no country has broken ranks with Washington.)

In the November 2019 edition of Foreign Affairs two professors, Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, wrote, "Imagine historians 100 years from now trying to decide which foreign power the US feared most in the decades from the late Cold

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

War...They would see Russia first as an archenemy, then as a friend, and finally as a challenging nuisance. They would see China become a great power rival. North Korea would appear as sideshow. Only one country would be depicted as a persistent and implacable foe: Iran."

As in its early years the regime has been profoundly irritating the US. It has returned to enriching uranium towards a level that could mean, if it wanted to, it could one day build a nuclear bomb quite quickly. (An effective delivery system is another matter.) It has been long supporting Bashar al-Assad in Syria and provoking Israel via its surrogate, Hezbollah, in Lebanon and giving help to the rebelling Shi'ites in Iraq. In Yemen it has given modest support to the Houthi uprising.



Iranian oil platform in the Persian Gulf. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

One fifth of the world's exported oil flows through the Persian Gulf on which Iran has a long shoreline. None of the oil goes to the US but interruption can affect the price of oil. Ironically, much of it goes to China, a supporter of Iran. But, contrary to some panicky voices in Washington the Straits of Hormuz at the Gulf's head cannot be closed. It's too wide for that.

In balance of power terms Washington's obsession with Iran is absurd. Its economy is barely 2 percent as large. The US and its allies in the Middle East—Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates—together spend about 50 times more than Iran. It has missiles but as yet they don't go very far. Its (presumed) bombing attack on Saudi Arabia's oil storage complex with drones that flew below the radar was done with relatively elementary technology.

President Barack Obama did take this inequality on board and, backed up by Russia and the EU, he did forge an agreement with Tehran that rolled back Iran's nuclear research and removed the threat of it developing weapons (which it probably had no plans to do anyway—at least that is the way the CIA has long seen it).

The 2015 agreement was meant to be the entry door to engaging in negotiations with the regime to limit Iran's provocative interventions in the Middle East. But Obama also missed his opportunities. Early in his tenure Iran offered him an olive branch and he spurned it. He came to push for the anti-nuclear negotiations too late in the day. Trump, with his perverse urge to sabotage everything that

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Obama had accomplished, pulled the plug on the deal before it had the time to set itself in concrete.

After 40 years of alienation from and persecution by the US and its allies why should anyone be surprised that Iran has attempted to push back, especially where it can do damage in its backyard. Its constant hostility towards Israel is because it fears that Israel is working for the downfall of its regime. In Iraq there would be no Iranian presence if there hadn't been the US-led war of 2003. Saddam Hussein was helped by the US and the UK in his war against Iran.

Saudi Arabia has an urge to bring down the regime in Tehran, for reasons part political and part religious. This is why Iran via the Houthis is attempting to bleed the Saudis dry. But who gets kudos from supporting the Saudi tactics which have spared neither women, children or hospitals? Iran's relationship with Syria is principally a marriage of convenience by two Shi'ite states which feel threatened by the Middle East's majority of Sunnis. It does not threaten US essential interests.

Iran and the US have never been further apart. The EU tries to be a moderating force but is cowed by the reach of American economic sanctions. Yet if the US undermined Iran to the point of destabilizing its economy and its government it would be shooting itself in the foot, unleashing further instability in the Middle East, not least another massive refugee crisis.

Iran can be belligerent, but it doesn't help to constantly confront it. Obama showed the way with EU and Russian support. The sooner the US can return to that path the sooner can the Middle East become much more peaceful.

This year we may see some Iranian woman walking the streets of Teheran without wearing the hijab. Needless to say, such a step forward relates little to foreign policy, but it does indicate some influential members of the regime, when they choose, can be flexible. Washington must seize its moment—make an offer on the nuclear deal that the Iranian government cannot afford to pass up. The two sides are already very close. To close that gap should not be too difficult to do.

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 12 January 2023]



Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

The Decline & Fall of Nuclear Disarmament in 2022

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — As a politically and militarily tense 2022 came to an inglorious end, nuclear threats kept hitting the front pages of newspapers with monotonous regularity last year.

The rising tensions were triggered primarily by threats from Russia, the continuous military rhetoric spilling out of North Korea and Iran's unwillingness to give up its nuclear option - and its increasingly close relationship with two of the world's major nuclear powers, Russia and China.

US President Joe Biden sparked further fears when he blurted out, perhaps unintentionally, that Iran's nuclear deal was "dead".

But the more important question was: Is it dead, or is it dead - and buried?

Still, there are other politically-loaded questions on the horizon: Will 2023 be free of nuclear threats? Or will tensions continue to rise in the new year, with no hopeful signs of nuclear deterrence?

But the state of nuclear disarmament last year was characterized mostly by negative signs—regress more than progress.

"It is hard to come up with something positive to report on nuclear disarmament for 2022, except for the first meeting of the parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons," said Professor M.V. Ramana, Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security, Graduate Program Director, at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

At the same time, he told IDN the continued and persistent nuclear threats in various parts of the world should remind people everywhere that the risk of nuclear weapons use is still very much with us.

"Although some people need no such reminders, the majority of the population might need this reminder since the media seldom talks about nuclear weapons".



Professor M.V. Ramana, Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. Photo Credit: The Simons Foundation Canada

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

"The challenge for those interested in nuclear disarmament is how to convert this heightened awareness into concern, and that concern into action towards concrete steps forward," Professor Ramana declared.

A report published December 15 by PAX and ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, says fewer long-term investments were made in the companies behind the nuclear weapons industry last year.

The total value of investments in 24 named nuclear weapon producers was higher than previously, but this is partly attributed to share price variances through a turbulent year in the defence sector.

However, data from the *Don't Bank on the Bomb* report shows a \$45.9 billion drop in 2022 in long-term investments, including loans and underwriting.

"This could signal that a growing number of long-term investors do not see nuclear weapon production as a sustainable growth market and regard companies involved in it as a risk to be avoided".

The report provides an overview of investments in 24 companies heavily involved in the production of nuclear weapons for the arsenals of China, France, India, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Overall, the report finds that 306 financial institutions made over \$746 billion available to these companies in loans, underwriting, shares or bonds. US-based Vanguard remains the biggest investor, with \$68.18 million invested in the nuclear weapon industry.

Alejandra Muñoz, from the No Nukes project at PAX, said: "Banks, pension funds and other financial institutions that keep investing in nuclear weapon producers enable these companies to continue their involvement in the development and production of weapons of mass destruction. The financial sector can and should play a role in ongoing efforts to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in society."

The Executive Director of ICAN, Beatrice Fihn, said the long-term trend shows the growing stigma attached to nuclear weapons is having an effect: "The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons - the TPNW - that came into force in 2021 has made these weapons of mass destruction illegal under international law.

Involvement in producing nuclear weapons is bad for business, she noted, and the long-term impact on human rights and the environment of these companies' activities is making them a riskier investment.

Tariq Rauf, former Head of Verification and Security Policy at the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told IDN 2022 has been a fateful year for heightened nuclear dangers, including the possible use of nuclear weapons, nuclear power plants being shelled in a region of active hostilities, and an absence of civilized discourse on nuclear arms limitation and risk reduction.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

At year's end, only one nuclear arms reduction treaty, New START, remains in force between Russia and the United States. It will expire on 4 February 2026, in about 1100 days.

Under New START that entered into force on 5 February 2011, each side is limited to 1550 nuclear warheads on 700 deployed intercontinental and sea-launched ballistic missiles and on long-range bombers.



US President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev, after signing the "New START" in Prague, the only arms control agreement still surviving. Credit: Kremlin.ru

"While onsite inspections were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, fortunately, the two sides continued data exchanges," he noted.

According to the latest data, the US has 1420 nuclear warheads deployed on 659 delivery systems; and Russia's 1549 nuclear warheads on 540 deployed long-range ballistic missiles and bombers.

The strategic stability dialogue (SSD) started after the June 2021 meeting in Geneva between Presidents Biden and Putin, Rauf pointed out, was suspended after three rounds following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February.

While belatedly recently, the US has proposed a meeting of the New START Bilateral Consultative Commission, as well as resuming talks on a follow-on treaty and onsite inspections, Russia unwisely has rebuffed these overtures citing that the time is not propitious, he declared.

A new publication from the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy (LCNP), on "Climate Protection and Nuclear Abolition", released December 21, warns that the challenges posed by climate change and nuclear weapons have only grown more formidable in the ensuing years.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“Nuclear weapon possessors are modernizing their arsenals, and in some cases, increasing them. US-Russian nuclear arms control negotiations have stalled, and multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations are non-existent.”

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the strong international reaction against it has severely disrupted already tenuous cooperation among major powers on matters of peace and disarmament, the report said.

“And climate change has grown impossible to ignore. A recent IPCC report cites an all-but-unavoidable increase in global temperatures, sparking worldwide climate disasters we are already seeing: raging fires, harsher hurricanes, flash flooding, and more.”

Elaborating further, Rauf told IDN it is imperative that despite the continuing proxy war in Ukraine, Moscow and Washington should find the space to resume dialogue on:

- (1) further cuts in nuclear weapons resulting in an executive agreement that can be implemented without Senate and Duma ratification in February 2026 after the expiry of New START;
- (2) strengthening strategic stability;
- (3) reducing risks of nuclear war through changes in nuclear doctrines and deployments
- (4) supporting the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), the treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons (TPNW), and nuclear test-ban treaty (CTBT); and
- (5) resurrecting the Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA).

Another looming threat emanates from the AUKUS plan to supply Australia with nuclear-powered submarines that will exempt up to 2000 kilogrammes of weapon-grade highly-enriched uranium fuel from mandatory IAEA/NPT safeguards, said Rauf.

Should this come to pass, the IAEA/NPT nuclear verification (safeguards) system shall be fatally weakened.

He said three individuals deserve plaudits for their efforts in 2022 to make the world a safer place from nuclear dangers (in alphabetical order):

- (1) IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi for his valiant and untiring efforts to reduce the risks to nuclear power plants in Ukraine;
- (2) Ambassador Alexander Kmentt of Austria for successfully hosting in the June conferences on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and on the TPNW; and

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

(3) Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen of Argentina for his professional leadership at the NPT review conference in August that, despite his best efforts, failed to agree on an action plan due to some States prioritizing the Ukraine war over the core business of the NPT.

Meanwhile, the past ten months have seen an increase in declared and actual nuclear threats arising from the Russia/Ukraine war, nuclear missile testing by North Korea, tensions between China and Taiwan/USA and the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan, according to Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND).

“It was reassuring, therefore, to see the leaders of the G20, which includes six nuclear-armed states (China, France, India, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) affirming in the Declaration that *“The threat of use or use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible.”*

The Declaration, released November 16, indicated a breakthrough in nuclear risk-reduction and disarmament, consolidates a general practice against nuclear weapons use and elevates this to a norm which is now accepted, at least on paper, by the nuclear weapon states.

In its year-end statement, the Washington-based Arms Control Association (ACA) said last month that for five decades, US and Russian leaders have understood that verifiable cuts in their nuclear arsenals are in their national security interests and those of the global community.

“But as we close out 2022, talks on nuclear arms control matters remain on hold as Vladimir Putin’s illegal and disastrous war on Ukraine rages on.”

The last remaining treaty regulating the world’s two largest nuclear arsenals, New START, will expire in 1,140 days.

Unless Washington and Moscow begin serious negotiations on a new nuclear arms control framework, Russian and US nuclear arsenals will be left unconstrained for the first time since 1972.

The dangers of an all-out nuclear arms race with Russia (and China) will grow, the ACA warned.

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 04 January 2023]

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

UN Takes to New Ways to Promote Nuclear Disarmament

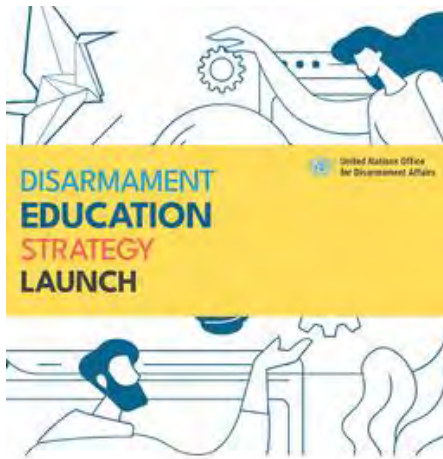
By Jaya Ramachandran

GENEVA — UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced on 24 May 2018 his Agenda for Disarmament, which outlines a set of practical measures across the entire range of disarmament issues, including weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and future weapon technologies.

Action 1 for "[Securing Our Common Future](#)," the title of the Agenda, aims to "facilitate dialogue for nuclear disarmament". It underlines that disarmament and non-proliferation remain indispensable tools for the creation of a secure environment favourable to human development, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Disarmament education is an important tool to further the cause of nuclear disarmament. Hence, a key priority for the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs ([UNODA](#)) is cooperating with many educational activities which have been carried out across its different organizational branches.

The strategy represents an effort to strengthen the sustainability and impact of UNODA's work and respond to the pressing need for authoritative, far-reaching, and inclusive disarmament education amidst the increasingly challenging disarmament and international security landscape.



With this in view, UNODA Vienna Office announced the publication of its first-ever [Disarmament Education Strategy](#) in a "soft launch" event held in Vienna on 5 December 2022. The global launch of the strategy is planned for the first half of 2023.

The strategy outlines the four key outcome areas that the Office will strive to advance in the coming years in its disarmament education work. Ms Rebecca Jovin, Chief of the UNODA Vienna Office, presented these key goals at the launch event, underscoring UNODA's comparative advantages in the field of disarmament education due to its unique expertise and impartiality, as well as its convening and connecting power.

She highlighted that UNODA would work along numerous education tracks concurrently, integrating disarmament dimensions into broader educational initiatives, both within and beyond the United Nations, and reinforcing an understanding of disarmament's relevance for peace and security, development, human rights, and gender equality.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



(From left to right) Ambassador Mr Alexander Kmentt, Ms Rebecca Jovin and Ms Elena Sokova address the audience about the key role of disarmament education in advancing international peace and security and the indispensability of partnerships in these efforts. Photo Credit: UNICEF/UN0579998/Lateef

Ms Jovin further stressed the central role of partnerships and UNODA's commitment to continue to generate, connect and bridge relevant networks in the disarmament education field moving forward.

She was joined by Ambassador Mr Alexander Kmentt, Director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Department of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, as well as Ms Elena Sokova, Executive Director of the [Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation \(VCDNP\)](#).

Mr. Kmentt highlighted the essential role of disarmament education, especially in the current turbulent international security environment, and reaffirmed his country's strong support for disarmament education as a long-standing political priority and a great investment in our future. He also announced Austria's financial support to the UNODA Vienna Office to carry forward this work and called for broad donor support in disarmament education.

Ms. Sokova followed by expressing her Center's commitment to contribute to implementing the strategy and collaborating with UNODA and other key partners in enhancing disarmament and non-proliferation goals.

She highlighted the importance of adopting a community approach, bringing together different audiences, methodologies and capacities to successfully address international security challenges, especially by engaging more extensively with constituencies outside the traditional disarmament field and tailoring resources and approaches to specific audiences and contexts.

The launch event also provided an occasion to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the [UNODA Vienna Office](#). Ambassador Kmentt recalled the

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

On that occasion, the idea for the hosting of a UNODA Office in Vienna (and the establishment of the VCDNP) was initiated by former Austrian Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger in order to enhance focus and expertise in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation, foster closer collaboration with other UNODA offices, and strengthen capacity-building efforts in the Austrian capital.

The year 2022 also witnessed UNODA and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute ([SIPRI](#)) jointly carrying out their first global project on the responsible innovation of AI for disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

The importance of this cooperation lies in the fact that responsible AI is a young and evolving field of research and practice. While it is widely being discussed as a fitting approach to AI governance, experts believe that more work needs to be done to understand how it can be put into practice across critical sectors, how to coordinate the many different approaches, and—crucially—how it relates to disarmament, peace and security challenges, including risks of misuse or diversion of civilian technologies.

To address this gap, the UNODA-SIPRI project has aimed to promote responsible innovation as an “upstream” contributor to disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation efforts and support greater engagement of young civilian AI practitioners. In 2022, the project led to three key and interconnected activities.

First, [young post-graduate AI practitioners from around the world joined for a week of online workshops](#). Through interactive and scenario-based sessions, the diverse group of post-graduates were introduced to core disarmament concepts, encouraged to critically assess both the potentially beneficial and the potentially harmful repercussions of AI for disarmament, and challenged to think about the roles of other stakeholders involved with and affected by AI development, as well as the responsibilities of individuals and organizations.

Second, UNODA and SIPRI published an article on [peace and security as a blind spot for the AI community](#) in IEEE Spectrum, the magazine of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the world’s largest technical professional organization and a key forum for AI practitioners. In the piece, the authors sought to connect existing civilian-focused responsible AI efforts with peace and security, disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation concerns and build on the work of the workshops in modelling possible approaches.

Third, the project developed and trialled supporting educational materials with young practitioners before building them out into a multi-format suite of factsheets, slide decks and animated presentations, now available to all on the UNODA disarmament education [website](#).

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 04 January 2023]

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Is the Iran Nuclear Deal Dead or Alive?

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — U.S. President Joe Biden's off-the-cuff remark, describing the nuclear deal with Iran as "dead", has led to widespread speculation about the future of the landmark agreement—and of the potential emergence of new nuclear powers in the horizon.

"It is dead, but we're not going to announce it," Biden said before adding, "long story".

Biden's quote was on a video circulating on social media filmed during an election event in November = and disclosed in December.

The White House did not dispute the authenticity of the video but refused to comment—as did the State Department, leaving in doubt the future of Iran's nuclear agreement known as the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action \(JCPOA\)](#).

The agreement, which was reached in Vienna in July 2015, included Iran, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely, the U.S., UK, France, China and Russia, plus Germany, together with the European Union (EU).

The 159-page document, with five annexes, also lifted some of the crippling sanctions on the Iranian economy in exchange for limitations on Tehran's nuclear programme.



The then U.S. President Trump announced withdrawal from Iran nuclear deal in May 2018.
Credit: The White House Flickr.

In May 2018, the United States withdrew from JCPOA as President Donald Trump announced he would negotiate a better deal. But that never happened.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

If Iran eventually ends up going nuclear, it is most likely that Saudi Arabia, its political rival in the Middle East, would stake its claim to go nuclear as well, perhaps followed by Egypt.

Currently, Israel is the only undeclared nuclear power in the Middle East.

A lingering question remains: Will Iran eventually emerge as the world's 10th nuclear power, along with the existing nine, namely, the UK, U.S., Russia, China and France—the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—plus India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

Asked about the future of the JCPOA, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told reporters on December 19: "I have always believed that the JCPOA was a remarkable diplomatic achievement".

"I was very frustrated when the JCPOA was put into question, and we will do everything we can, in the context of our limited sphere of competence, to make sure that the JCPOA is not lost, recognising that we are, at the present moment, in a serious risk of losing the JCPOA, which in my opinion, would be a very negative factor for peace and stability in the region and further afield," declared Guterres.

Joseph Gerson, *President of the [Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security](#) and Co-Convener of the [Peace & Planet International Network](#)*, told IDN the "death" of the JCPOA brings the world face to face with the possible end of the [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#) regime, vastly increasing the dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation, and nuclear war itself.

"With the Biden Administration's announcement of the death of the JCPOA process, we are confronted by the dangers and enormity of Donald Trump's ignorant and reckless withdrawal of the U.S. from the critically important JCPOA and the failures of the nuclear weapons states to fulfil their Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty obligation to engage in good faith diplomacy to eliminate their nuclear arsenals," he said.

Gerson said that former IAEA head and Nobel Peace Laureate Mohamed ElBaradei decried the dangerous hypocrisy and double standard of the nuclear weapons states.

And [Joseph Rotblat, the Nobel Peace laureate](#) who earlier quit the Manhattan Project, warned that the failure to eliminate the world's nuclear arsenals would



Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

lead to global proliferation. No nation, he observed, would long tolerate what it experiences as an unjust imbalance of power/terror.

"This in no way exempts the Iranian government from condemnation for its nuclear program that has brought it to the brink of nuclear weapons production and the threats implicit in the program," said Gerson.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters on December 22 that Iran is engaging in destabilizing activities, dangerous activities, support for terrorist groups and destabilizing actions throughout the region.

"We've been focused and engaged. That also does not take away from the proposition that it is profoundly in our interest that Iran not acquire a nuclear weapon. And President Biden is committed to ensuring that Iran not acquire a nuclear weapon. We've continued to believe that the most effective way, the most durable way to do that was through diplomacy."

And when the JCPOA, the Iran nuclear deal, was actually enforced, said Blinken, it did exactly what it was designed to do.

"It put Iran's nuclear program in a box. It was verified not only by international inspectors, it was verified by our own people, Iran's compliance with that, including by the previous administration."

"And in our judgment, it was a grievous mistake to pull out of that agreement and to let Iran's nuclear program out of the box. But that's the reality that we inherited and that we've had to deal with."

"So, on the diplomacy, again, as I said, we think that's the best solution. But despite the efforts that we've made, even as we've been pushing back against Iran's other egregious actions, despite the efforts that we've made and our partners in Europe have made, Iran has not been willing or able to do what's necessary to come back into compliance with the agreement."

"So, we will continue to look and act on ways to make sure that, one way or another, Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon."

Elaborating further, Gerson told IDN that the new crisis, created by the inability of U.S. and Iranian negotiators to find common ground to restore the Agreement, must be understood in its deeper contexts, beginning with the injustices of decades of coercive U.S. hegemony across Southwest Asia, as well as the Iranian government's ambitions to replace the Western hegemon.

"These include the 1953 Anglo-American overthrow of the Mosaddegh government, backing of the Shah's brutal dictatorship, support for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iran to overthrow an "Islamic" government, and repeated U.S. threats and preparations to initiate nuclear war to reinforce its hegemony."

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

He also pointed out that Israel's nuclear arsenal and the double standard practised by the U.S. and other nations turning a hypocritical blind eye to Israel's nuclear arsenal are also significant factors.

"It is increasingly expected that if and when Iran becomes a nuclear weapons state that it will follow the Israeli model, not publicly acknowledging its arsenal while wielding its nuclear weapons as a coercive and potentially genocidal force."

This, in turn, will likely lead Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to develop nuclear arsenals of their own, he predicted.

"We also face the possibility that, with or without explicit U.S. backing, before or soon after Iran produces its first nuclear weapon, its nuclear infrastructure will be attacked by Israel. This, in turn, will generate a wider regional war with devastating consequences for all involved."

It is thus imperative that despite their differences, all governments that can exercise diplomatic leverage to save the JCPOA. Gerson declared that it is near the top of our urgent and common interests.

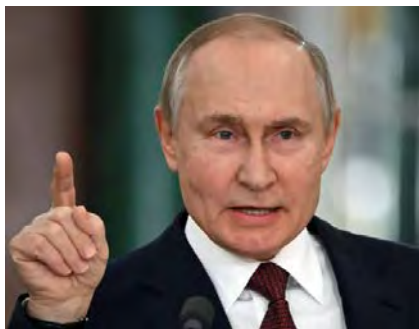
[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 30 December 2022]

The Dismal State of Nuclear Disarmament

Viewpoint by Jacqueline Cabasso

The writer is the Executive Director of the [Western States Legal Foundation](#).

OAKLAND, California — The year 2022 has been a nightmare for nuclear disarmament. The year started out with a mildly reassuring Joint Statement by the five original nuclear-armed states, issued on January 3, 2022, declaring: "The People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America consider the avoidance of war between Nuclear-Weapon States and the reduction of strategic risks as our foremost responsibilities. We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."



President Vladimir Putin. Photo
Credit: Sputnik

But less than two months later, Russia launched a brutal war of aggression on Ukraine, accompanied by a series of veiled and no-so-veiled nuclear threats, raising concerns about the dangers of nuclear war to their highest level since the darkest days of the Cold War. And prospects for progress on nuclear disarmament went down from there.

The January 3 Joint Statement also avowed:

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“We remain committed to our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ([NPT](#)) obligations, including our Article VI obligation ‘to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament...’.”

However, more than 50 years after the NPT entered into force, their behaviour points in the opposite direction. All of the nuclear-armed states, including the four outside the NPT (India, Israel, Pakistan, and North Korea) are engaged in costly programs to qualitatively upgrade and, in some cases, quantitatively increase their nuclear arsenals.

The [10th NPT Review Conference](#), which took place in August, was an abject failure, not because it couldn’t agree on a final outcome document, but because the nuclear-armed states haven’t made good on their fundamental nuclear disarmament obligation under Article VI of the Treaty, nor on the promises and commitments to action items that would lead to nuclear disarmament they agreed to in connection with the indefinite extension of the Treaty in 1995 and in the 2000 and 2010 final documents.

Despite the reassuring-sounding words in the Joint Statement, “We intend to continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and confidence, and prevent an arms race that would benefit none and endanger all,” the reality is that a new nuclear arms race is already underway—compounded by offensive cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, developing hypersonic capacities, a return to intermediate-range delivery systems, and the production of delivery systems capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear payloads.

In September and October, while our attention was focused on the U.S. midterm election results and Russia’s continuing nuclear threats in Ukraine, alarming developments were taking place on the Korean peninsula, where North Korea conducted a flurry of missile tests.



Photo Source: You Tube

According to North Korea's state news agency, these tests simulated showering South Korea with tactical nuclear weapons, as a warning in response to large-scale navy drills by South Korean and U.S. forces.

As the year wore on, negotiations on reviving the

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Iran nuclear deal stalled. And as Iran increased its uranium enrichment, the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia declared, "If Iran gets an operational nuclear weapon, all bets are off."

Against this volatile backdrop, ten months into the Russian war in Ukraine, the Biden administration released the unclassified version of its Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which doubles down on the centrality of nuclear deterrence—the threatened use of nuclear weapons—in U.S. national security policy.

The NPR could be read as pouring gas on the fire, naming Russia and China as strategic competitors and potential adversaries and identifying North Korea and Iran as lesser potential threats. While giving lip service to "a renewed emphasis on arms control", it declares, "For the foreseeable future, nuclear weapons will continue to provide unique deterrence effects that no other element of U.S. military power can replace. ..." To this end, "The United States is committed to modernizing its nuclear forces, nuclear command, control, and communications (NC3) system, and production and support infrastructure. ..."

This commitment is fully funded in the obscene \$858 Billion National Defense Authorization Act passed by the Senate on December 15, which includes \$50 Billion for nuclear weapons – more than was requested in the NPR.

The current state of nuclear disarmament affairs might be exemplified by the public unveiling of the B-21 Raider on December 3, with great fanfare, at contractor Northrup Grumman's California headquarters. The B-21, a "sixth generation" aircraft, is the first new strategic bomber in more than three decades, designed to deliver both nuclear and conventional munitions.

It deploys the latest stealth technology and has a global reach. Earlier plans included an unmanned option. The B-21 will replace the B-1B and B-2A bombers, and the number of strategic bomber bases in the U.S. that can store nuclear weapons will be increased from two at present to five by the mid-2030s. And so, it goes.

The Doomsday clock is ticking. By doubling down on the concept of national security through military might, at any cost, the governments of the nuclear-armed states and their allies are putting humanity on the road to Armageddon.



People everywhere, together, need to rise up non-violently and demand the implementation of a different concept of security, one based on cooperation among governments to make meeting human needs and protecting the environment their highest priority.

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Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



Screenshot of YouTube video 'Hundreds Could Launch Within Minutes'. Photo Credit: UN

The G20 & Beyond: Nuclear Threats vs. a Growing Norm Against Nukes

By Alyn Ware

The writer is the Director of the Basel Peace Office, Global Coordinator of the [Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament](#), and Peace and Disarmament Program Director of the [World Future Council](#).

PRAGUE | WELLINGTON — In January 2022, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists set the Doomsday Clock to [100 Seconds to Midnight](#), indicating the high level of existential risk to humanity from climate change, nuclear policies, rising nationalism and international tensions that could erupt into armed conflict.

One month later, Russia launched a "special military operation" (an illegal invasion) against Ukraine and has repeatedly warned the West that interference in Russia's ongoing 'operation' (war against Ukraine) could face a nuclear response.

This has elevated the risk of nuclear war and graphically demonstrated the use of 'nuclear coercion' in international relations. Nuclear threats have also arisen in East Asia through the conflict between China and the USA over Taiwan and with further nuclear weapons and missile developments of North Korea.

However, on November 17, leaders of the G20 countries, which include six nuclear-armed states (China, France, India, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), adopted a statement which included the surprising affirmation that "*The threat of use or use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible*".

This phrase appears in paragraph 4 of the [G20 Bali Leaders Statement](#), which also affirms "*all the Purposes and Principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations*" as well as "*international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and infrastructure in armed conflicts*" and obligations relating to the "*peaceful resolution of conflicts, efforts to address crises, as well as diplomacy and dialogue*".

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

This statement indicates a breakthrough in nuclear risk reduction and disarmament. It consolidates a general practice against the use of nuclear weapons and elevates this to a norm that is now accepted by the nuclear weapon states, at least on paper.

It is much stronger than the [January 3 statement by the leaders of the P5](#) (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) affirming the Reagan/Gorbachev dictum that "*A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought*", as it condemns both the threat and use of nuclear weapons and provides unequivocal opposition to the escalation of armed conflict to the use of nuclear weapons.



President Ronald Reagan and President Mikhail Gorbachev during an Oval Office meeting in Washington in 1987. Photo Credit: White House collection/Wikimedia Commons

The Bali Leaders Statement demonstrates the Reagan/Gorbachev dictum still holds and that the norm against nuclear weapons threat or use has not been eroded by the Russia/Ukraine War. Indeed, it infers the opposite, that the norm is even stronger as a result of the war. One of the possible factors for this is the nuclear de-escalation approach of the United States to Russian nuclear threats.

The United States did not respond to the Russian threats by threatening a nuclear attack in response but instead warned Russia that there would be catastrophic consequences if Russia broke the nuclear taboo, hinting that a US response would be devastating but non-nuclear.

Another possible factor in the norm consolidation is that consideration of the threat or use of nuclear weapons moved from the hypothetical to actual scenarios. In each of the scenarios in which Russia might consider using nuclear weapons in this conflict, it became evident that Russia would not gain anything from it but would most likely be worse off.

Using nuclear weapons against Ukraine would not be able to reverse the military gains being made by Ukraine nor dissuade NATO from supporting Ukraine. So far, USA and NATO are not fighting in the war—only providing military equipment to Ukraine.

If Russia used nuclear weapons, it would most likely result in USA and NATO joining the war and launching military attacks against Russia. It could also result

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

in Russia losing its allies China and India, both of whom currently support Russia but strongly oppose any use of nuclear weapons in the conflict.

A third factor could be the growing legal and political norm against nuclear weapons use as demonstrated by the 1996 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion, 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, [2018 UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 36 affirming that the threat or use of nuclear weapons violates the Right to Life](#) (Article VI of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of which all nuclear-armed states are members) and the NPT Review Conferences including the 10th NPT Review Conference in August this year.

Although the NPT Review Conference in 2022 did not result in a final agreed document, the four weeks of deliberations and the draft final document demonstrated a very strong normative opposition to the threat or use of nuclear weapons (See [Opportunities to advance nuclear risk reduction, including no-first-use, in the wake of the 'failed' NPT Review Conference](#)).

In a follow-up to the breakthrough at the G20 Summit, NoFirstUse Global released a discussion/briefing paper on December 12 entitled *Nuclear weapons non-use BREAKTHROUGH! From taboo since 1945 to normative law as of 2022*. The paper suggests ways in which this normative law prohibiting nuclear weapons can be implemented in national policy and further strengthened globally to eliminate the risk of nuclear war and pave the way to eliminating nuclear weapons. In particular, the [NoFirstUse Global briefing paper](#) calls on specific actions to:

- Align policy and practice with this norm, including the adoption of no-first-use policies;
- Codify this norm into a binding international treaty or through a UN Security Council resolution;
- Gain universal adherence, including through the provision of security assurances to facilitate such adherence.

The Basel Peace Office has also released a briefing paper titled [The Doomsday Clock and Switzerland as a neutral country](#), following up on the G20 Summit and exploring ways in which Switzerland (where Basel Peace Office is based) and other non-nuclear countries can advance nuclear risk-reduction and disarmament over the next 2-3 years, building on the G20 statement, UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 36, TPNW and other developments.

The Basel Peace Office Paper highlights opportunities provided by the upcoming UN Summit of the Future to advance nuclear risk reduction and disarmament and makes some specific policy proposals that are substantive, significant and feasible. These include moving the nuclear-armed and allied states (through the UN General Assembly, NPT process, UN Security Council and/or UN Summit of the Future) to agree to the following:

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

1. Implement the agreed dictum that '*a nuclear war cannot be won and so must never be fought*' by supporting/adopting no-first-use policies, removing all nuclear weapons systems from launch-on-warning (see [No-first-use of nuclear weapons: An Exploration of Unilateral, Bilateral and Plurilateral Approaches and their Security, Risk-reduction and Disarmament Implications](#), a working paper submitted to the 10th NPT Review Conference);
2. Undertake concrete work to establish the framework for a nuclear-weapon-free world either by adopting protocols to the TPNW that would enable their ratification of the treaty, agreeing on a framework convention for the global elimination of nuclear weapons (similar to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change), or commence negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention (For details on these options see [Frameworks for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World](#), a working paper submitted to the 10th NPT Review Conference by Abolition 2000, the global civil society network for the elimination of nuclear weapons);
3. Commit to achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons no later than 2045, the 75th anniversary of the NPT and the 100th anniversary of the United Nations.

These calls have also been made in [Protect People and the Planet](#), an Appeal for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World, which has been [endorsed](#) and [promoted](#) by over 1000 influential civil society representatives from around the world, and which was [presented](#) to the United Nations on October 26 this year during the [UN Disarmament Week](#).

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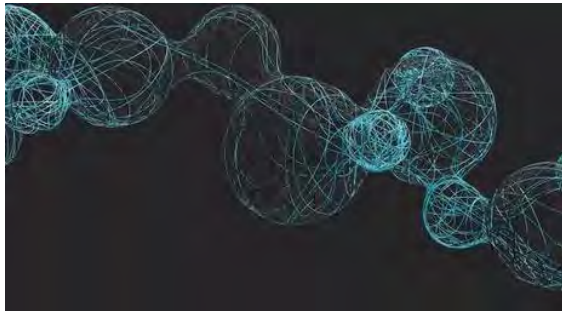


Photo Credit: Kings College London

Nuclear Risks and Technological Proliferation

Viewpoint by Sergio Duarte

The writer is a former High Representative of the United Nations for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and President of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

NEW YORK — 60 years after the Cuban missile crisis, the spectre of the imminent use of nuclear weapons once again haunts humankind. On that occasion, however, the crisis lasted for just 13 days until John Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, in direct contact, arrived at the agreement that made possible the withdrawal of the Soviet weapons from the Caribbean Island in exchange for the non-stationing of American nuclear arms in Turkey.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations had an active role in helping to solve the crisis. An atomic war, however, was averted by sheer luck when the

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

commander of a nuclear-armed Soviet submarine, without communication with Moscow, decided not to fire its missiles in view of what seemed to be the start of hostilities between the two superpowers.

In current times a major confrontation that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons has been raging for many months without a sign of a peaceful solution. Unlike the 1962 crisis, today, there is no agile communication between the top leaders of the main powers. Modern media has increased hostility and mistrust between the belligerents, and the existing international political and legal instruments seem incapable of dealing with the situation.

A few days ago, the whole world held its breath for a few hours until the responsibility of Ukraine, and not of Russia, for the launching of a missile that reached Polish territory, causing two deaths and some destruction, was ascertained. This incident raised the level of fear that an accident or miscalculation by any of the countries involved in the war between Russia and Ukraine might trigger an escalation with unpredictable consequences.

The risk of the use of nuclear weapons in that war remains high ever since Russian President Vladimir Putin declared his willingness to use all means at his disposal against what is deemed a threat to the security of his country. Russia's indirect adversary, the Atlantic military alliance (the [NATO](#)-the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), reacted in a less strident but equally sharp tone.

The nuclear doctrines of both Russia and the Western countries that possess such weapons contemplate their first use, as well as in circumstances that they consider such use necessary. In the current delicate situation, a spark would be enough to set off a catastrophic fire, with dire consequences not limited to the parties in conflict.

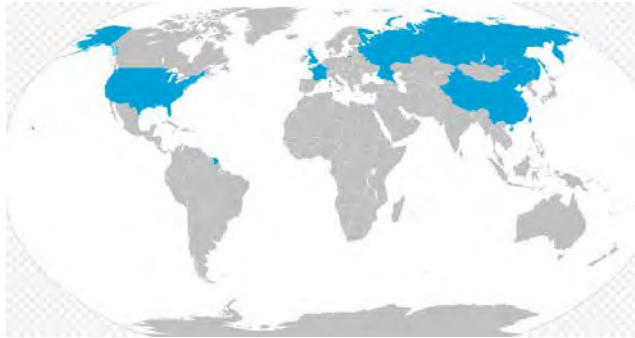
Among the five nuclear-armed states recognized by the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ([NPT](#)), China is the only one to have pledged not to be the first to use such weapons. Many analysts and civil society organizations advocate the adoption of this stance by all nuclear countries. As usually articulated, the "no first use" (NFU) doctrine does not foresee the elimination of atomic arms and thus could also be used to justify the maintenance of the arsenals for the purpose of deterring or countering potential aggression, either nuclear or otherwise.

If adopted by all the current nuclear weapon states and accepted by the international community without a clear commitment and effective follow-up action to disarm, it may reduce, but not eliminate, the risk of use. It would moreover provide a rationale for the perpetuation of the possession of nuclear weapons—hence, the risk they pose would also be perpetuated.

The fierce negative reaction of the nuclear weapon states to the advent of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) made clear that those countries are not interested in making use of the opportunity brought by the adoption of that instrument to foster tangible progress in nuclear disarmament.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Not only they refused to participate in the preliminary work and in the actual negotiation of the TPNW, but also formally repudiated it by claiming, among other tautological and self-serving reasons, that it would not bring about disarmament.



Evidently, in the absence of participation by those that possess such weapons, it will not be possible to take forward effective measures leading to the eradication of their nuclear arsenals. Nevertheless, even in the face of active opposition, the new treaty, rooted in international humanitarian law, has already become an important legal and moral barrier against the indefinite possession of nuclear weapons.

The unrepresented global community - blue represents UN Security Council veto-wielding members. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

In spite of the strong campaign of intimidation and coercion by the nuclear states to prevent new countries from signing and/or ratifying the TPNW, almost half the members of the United Nations have already become signatories, and the number of ratifiers is gradually increasing. Public opinion polls show a high degree of support for the Treaty, including among the populations of some of the nuclear-weapon States and of several of their allies.

It might seem paradoxical that notwithstanding the reduction of the total number of nuclear weapons in the world, estimated today at around 13,000, the risk of their use has increased, which means everyone's security has actually diminished. Possessing the largest number of warheads or those with the greatest explosive power is no longer seen as a decisive advantage, as was the case at the time of the Cold War.

Today, the search for such elusive military supremacy lies in the quest for constant technological improvement. The nuclear-weapon States, particularly the two largest ones, which own 95% of the total, continue to develop cutting-edge war technologies such as hypersonic missiles, launching and guidance systems by satellite, low-yield "tactical" nuclear weapons, artificial intelligence, and swarms of unmanned vehicles.

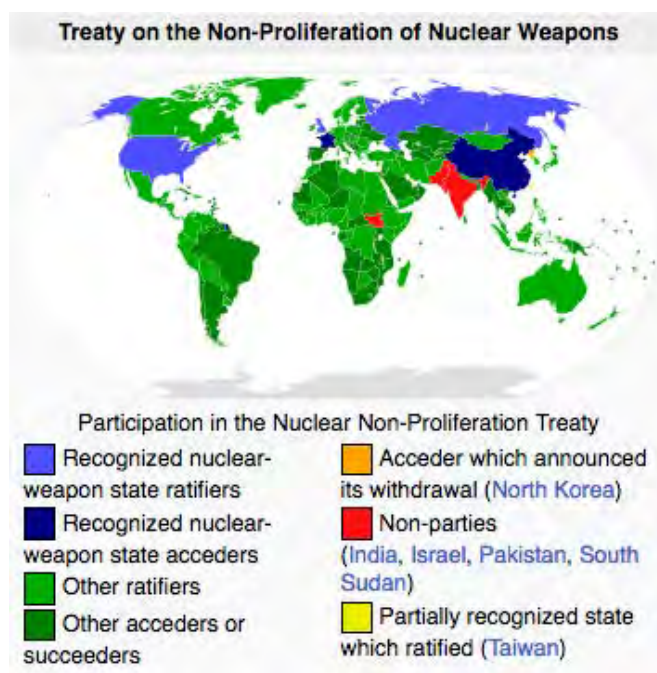
Innovations of this kind make existing atomic arsenals in fact, more effectively lethal. In some cases, the existence of such advanced weapons is even used to spread the notion that their use would be more "acceptable", supposedly because their effects would be less blunt.

The nuclear weapon states seem to believe that this never-ending renovation of their armament guarantees their security. Yet, each new improvement by a potential adversary leads to an imbalance that its rival finds necessary to compensate by looking for new capabilities, leading to recurrent escalations in

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

reciprocal threats. Far from generating security, this situation brings assured insecurity both for those involved in the competition and for everyone else.

Doubtless, any increase in the number of possessors of nuclear weapons—the so-called “horizontal” proliferation—would make the world more insecure. The world has at its disposal effective instruments to prevent this, such as the NPT and other multilateral or regional agreements, as well as sanctions that may be imposed unilaterally or by the United Nations Security Council.



Map of NPT signatories of 1 July 1968. Phot Credit: Wikipadea

Since the advent of the NPT 52 years ago, only four countries besides the five nations identified in that Treaty have acquired nuclear weapons. Any new aspiring member of this club will have to face strong pushback from the international community. A few attempts in that direction have been thwarted by diplomatic pressure or by the threat or actual use of force.

Recently, however, sectors of public opinion in a few technologically advanced countries, including some under Western countries' nuclear “umbrella”, have

come to the fore in favour of the acquisition of independent nuclear capability. In other states that decided to relinquish arsenals, they once possessed, voices were quick to express regret in the face of real or perceived threats. It is necessary to remain vigilant by means of the existing international instruments of control through the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) and regional arrangements.

Despite the growing general concern with the risk represented by the very existence of nuclear weapons, the efforts of their possessors have not been directed towards reducing reliance on them. Rather, these countries strive, on the one hand, to prevent horizontal proliferation by creating as many formal and clandestine hindrances as possible to the development of civilian nuclear technology in other nations and, on the other, to justify and legitimize the exclusive possession of their own armament for as long as they see fit.

In nuclear weapon states and their allies, there are no governmental plans, structures or institutions turned to the eventual elimination of those arms. Their overriding focus is on the risk of proliferation, a term understood by them as

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

applying only to the search for or the actual acquisition by other nations of nuclear advancement that may lead to military applications but never to the increase or improvement of their own arsenals. They remain engaged in a veritable proliferation of lethal nuclear technology supported by vast human and financial resources that goes on unchecked, while nuclear disarmament is portrayed as a distant and difficult objective, the attainment of which they invariably link to various ill-defined conditionalities.

Over half a century ago, the Brazilian diplomat João Augusto de Araújo Castro accurately identified the dominant attitude among the nuclear weapon states and their allies. In a speech at the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1970, the year the NPT entered into force, he stated:

"The cult of power and the reverential fear of force have become so respectable that they now inspire some of the basic documents about human relations. Take, for instance, the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is based on a theory of differentiation between adult, responsible nations and non-adult ones. The fundamental premise of this document is that, contrary to historic experience, power generates moderation and moderation brings responsibility. [...] The general assumption is that the danger comes from unarmed countries and not from the vast and always increasing arsenals of the superpowers. Danger is now a mark of the weak and not an attribute of the strong. By bestowing powers and special privileges on nations that reached an adult status in the nuclear age, this treaty may accelerate the race for power instead of preventing it. In the world of nations, as in the world of men, all may from now on strive to become powerful, strong and successful in spite of all difficulties. The treaty anoints power and represents the undisguised institutionalization of inequality among states."

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 05 December 2022]

India Urged to Join the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty

By Ramesh Jaura



India's Agni-V ballistic missile at Republic Day parade in January 2013. Source: Ministry of Defence, Government of India.

BERLIN | NEW DELHI — India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi is confronted with an increasing demand to join landmark

[Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#), which

was adopted in January 2021 by 122 members of

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

the UN General Assembly—a clear majority. The Treaty entered into force after ratification by 50 member-States of the UN. The number of signatories has since risen to 91. The TPNW bans the use, possession, testing, and transfer of nuclear weapons under international law.

The importance of the call on Mr Modi is underlined by the fact that India is one of the world's nine nuclear-armed states. Together they possess an estimated total of roughly 13,000 nuclear weapons, most of which are many times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima seventy-seven years ago.

The five permanent (P5) members of the UN Security Council—Russia, the United States, China, France, and the United Kingdom—have the largest chunk of the atomic arsenal. But the bombs of Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea are no less dangerous.

Next to Pakistan, which, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute ([SIPRI](#)) Yearbook 2021, holds 165 nukes, is India with 156 A-weapons. Then follow Israel (90) and North Korea (40-50). None of the nine nuclear-armed states has yet joined the landmark [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#).

"Were India to resume its traditional vanguard role in matters relating to ridding the world of the(se) awful weapons, we would be the first de facto nuclear weapon state to argue for the elimination of these highly dangerous weapons," says Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, held in high regard as a former diplomat.

Meanwhile, we have an international law in TPNW with binding force—adopted in January 2021 by a clear majority of 122 members of the UN General Assembly. The Treaty entered into force after its ratification by 50 member-States of the UN. The number of signatories has since risen to 91. Consequently, any threat or use of nuclear weapons is now a clear violation of international law.

In a contribution to the eminent *Indian Express* newspaper, Mr C. Raja Mohan—Indian academic, journalist and foreign policy analyst—argues that India premised its strategy on building 'credible minimum deterrence'. The time has come to reflect on what is 'credible' and redefine what 'minimum' might be.

"India ... ought to be paying a lot more attention to the international nuclear discourse that is acquiring new dimensions and taking a fresh look at its own civilian and military nuclear programmes," he adds.

A Senior Fellow with the [Asia Society Policy Institute \(ASPI\)](#)—a division of the Asia Society India Centre, Mumbai—he points out that after the nuclear tests in 1998, India's focus shifted to managing the consequences of that decision—including global economic sanctions.

The historic India-US civil nuclear initiative of July 2005 finally produced a framework that brought to an end Delhi's extended conflict with [the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons \(NPT\)](#) system, which it has not signed.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

At the heart of the deal was the separation of India's civil and military nuclear programmes. The consummation of the India-US nuclear deal a few years later gave Delhi the freedom to develop its nuclear arsenal and resume civilian nuclear cooperation with the rest of the world, which was blocked since India's first nuclear test in May 1974.



Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visits the site of India's first nuclear test at Pokhran in Rajasthan, in 1974.
Photo Credit: HT File Photo/ Wikimedia Commons

There was a fierce political debate—often slipping into the “headless chicken” mode—in Delhi on the terms of the nuclear engagement with the US, notes Mr Mohan.

"Many in Delhi argued that India was sacrificing the autonomy of its nuclear programme and its foreign policy... India has not bought a single reactor from the US.

Nor has it become a much-feared 'junior partner' to the US. India's independent foreign policy appears to be thriving. Ironically, as India's atomic isolation eased after 2008, India's nuclear debate lost much of its urgency."

He adds: The failure of the [Tenth NPT Review Conference in August 2022](#), however, does reveal many of the new challenges facing the global nuclear order today and their implications for India.

Mr Mani Shankar Aiyar, a former Indian government minister, notes that not only India did not vote in favour of the TPNW, but also that since the last eight years, "our country has shown no inclination to champion the cause of universal nuclear disarmament".

This, he adds, is in sharp contrast to the vocal opposition that Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi (both Prime Ministers) expressed to the possession, threat and use of nuclear weapons. They were followed by (the then Prime Minister) Rajiv Gandhi who presented to the UN in 1988 a detailed action plan on how to arrive in stages at a nuclear-weapons-free and nonviolent world order within a timeline of 22 years, that is, by 2010.

When that deadline was approaching with no attempt at implementing the proposed action plan, the then Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee proposed in the UN in 2006 a summary of the main objectives of the action plan as a working paper.

"But since the emergence of the [Bharatiya Janata Party] BJP-led government [headed by Mr Modi] in 2014, India appears to have disavowed both the action plan and the working paper. It is significant that [former Foreign Minister] Mukherjee's working paper followed, and did not precede, India becoming a de facto nuclear weapon state nearly a decade earlier," asserts Mr Aiyar.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Whereas the 1988 action plan and working paper had few takers, there has now emerged a majority of non-nuclear states who seek a world without these and other weapons of mass destruction.

Mr Aiyar stresses: "A precedent exists in the UN convention that outlaws the use or threat of use of chemical weapons. The TPNW reflects many of the key provisions of the chemical weapons prohibition treaty. If chemical weapons can be banned by UN decision, why not nuclear weapons?"

It remains to be seen whether the Indian Prime Minister take the necessary steps.

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews – 01 December 2022]

A Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone in Middle East Remains a Fantasy

By Thalif Deen



Visual illustration of the nuclear-weapon-free zones. Photo Credit: United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

UNITED NATIONS — A longstanding proposal for a nuclear-weapons-free-zone (NWFZ) in the politically and militarily volatile Middle East has been kicked around the corridors—and committee rooms—of the UN since the 1960s.

A joint declaration by Egypt and Iran in 1974 resulted in a General Assembly resolution. But it never reached the stage of political reality.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres looked at a brighter side of the proposal when he welcomed "the successful conclusion" of the Third Session of the

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Conference on the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons, which took place from November 14–18 November 2022 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Guterres congratulated the participating States of the Conference under the Presidency of Lebanon “on their constructive engagement towards the elaboration of a future treaty”.

And he encouraged them to continue their work during the intersessional period, and supports their “continuing efforts to pursue, in an open and inclusive manner, the establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear-Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction”.

Currently, there are nine nuclear powers, including the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, namely the US, UK, France, China and Russia, along with India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

Israel is the only nuclear power in the Middle East, with Iran close behind, while Saudi Arabia and Egypt have indicated, off and on, an interest in going nuclear.



Prominent Palestinian writer Dr Ramzy Baroud. Photo Credit: Palestine Chronicle

Dr Ramzy Baroud, author and editor of the Palestine Chronicle, told IDN “while one welcomes any initiative by the United Nations to establish a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons, history teaches us that such gestures are at best symbolic”.

Worse, the US-led international community has politicized the issue of nuclear proliferation to the extent that countries such as Iran are being sanctioned in advance for allegedly aspiring to develop its nuclear capabilities, while a country like Israel is known to have already developed nuclear heads, estimated at anywhere between 90 and 400, he pointed out.

In the October 31 UN General Assembly (UNGA) vote, the US and Canada were among only five countries—including Israel itself—that voted against a resolution that calls on Israel to dispose of its nuclear weapons and to place its nuclear facilities under the monitoring of IAEA.

“Alas, we know that this will not happen anytime soon, thanks to the US-western backing of Tel Aviv.”

“So, calling for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the region remains a hollow call considering that the US is only interested in curtailing the nuclear ambitions of countries that are considered enemies of Israel. This cannot be a starting point of an ethical conversation about weapons of mass destruction, and cannot possibly succeed,” declared Dr Baroud.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Dr Alon Ben-Meir, *a retired professor of international relations at the Center for Global Affairs at New York University (NYU)*, told IDN the efforts by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to implement a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East have failed time and again for several reasons.

To begin with, the focus has always been on Israel, which is believed to be the only Middle Eastern country in possession of nuclear weapons but is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty ([NPT](#)).

From the Israeli perspective, as Israeli deputy ambassador to the UN Michal Maayan said, the NPT is only as relevant as the level of compliance and offers no solution to the “unique security challenges” of the Middle East, said Dr Ben-Meir, who *taught courses on international negotiation and Middle Eastern studies for over 20 years*.

These unique security challenges as the Israelis see them are first, that Israel is not recognized by the majority of the states in the region, and several of them have been declared enemies of the State of Israel, he noted.

Second, Iran, which ironically is a signatory to the NPT, is pursuing nuclear weapons and is in possession of large quantities of highly enriched uranium. From the Israelis’ perspective, Tehran poses an existential threat to their country. There also still exists undeclared nuclear activities in Syria, which is of great concern to the Israelis, he said.

Finally, Israel’s concerns over its national security both from the Jews’ historical experience and Israel’s contemporary security perspective is of paramount importance.

“Although it is an open secret that Israel is in possession of nuclear weapons, it has consistently assumed nuclear ambiguity, namely neither confirming nor denying the possession of nuclear weapons in order to discourage other countries in the region from acquiring nuclear weapons,” said Dr Ben-Meir.

“It has further refused to be a signatory to the NPT and certainly has and continues to refuse to dispose of all its nuclear weapons and place its nuclear sites under the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) as the UNGA is demanding.”

Thus, as long as these conditions continue to exist, and there is no comprehensive peace agreement between Israel and all the states in the region *including Iran*, the prospect of establishing a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction will remain an illusion, he declared.

One other extremely important move *that can help* accelerate the process of making the Middle East free of nuclear weapons is for the US to *guarantee by treaty* the security of its friends and allies in the region by providing them with a nuclear umbrella.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Such a measure could dissuade Iran and other countries who aspire to acquire nuclear weapons from pursuing such a dangerous path, he added.

According to the United Nations, there are currently five Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones ([NWFZs](#)), covering territories in most of the Southern Hemisphere and in Central Asia. Antarctica and Mongolia have a special nuclear-weapon-free status as well.

“Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones are an important regional approach to strengthening global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidating international efforts towards peace and security”.

Within the respective territories of the zones, the Treaties establishing NWFZs prohibit the acquisition, possession, placement, testing and use of such weapons.

In addition, States Parties to the Treaties establishing NWFZs are exerting efforts to formalize [legally binding agreements](#) that would prevent nuclear-weapon States from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against any countries that are part of the zones.

As described by the Secretary-General in his [Disarmament Agenda](#), “Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones are 'landmark instruments' that represent an excellent example of the synergy between regional and global efforts towards a world free of nuclear weapons”.

“Although Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones should not be considered ends in themselves, each of these regional agreements adds significant value to the collective efforts to achieve a more peaceful and stable world”, according to the UN.

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Building Security in the Korean Peninsula

Pursue Fresh Diplomatic Approaches, Not Military-Nuclear Posturing

Viewpoint by Dr Rebecca Johnson

LONDON — Nuclear fears have been increasing in North-East Asia in recent months. From early November, North Korea ratcheted up its usual sabre rattling with more direct threats, [‘tactical nuclear drills’](#), apparent preparations for more nuclear tests, and by firing around 25 different missiles towards South Korea and Japan.

Some of Pyongyang’s missiles reportedly landed much closer than usual to South Korea (around 25-60 km), provoking fear and anger. What is the context and what steps could dial down the tensions and stop nuclear weapons being used?

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



A Group of 'Women Cross Demilitarised Zone (DMZ)'

North Korea made clear that its missiles were launched in reaction to the [Vigilant Storm](#) military exercises planned and conducted by the United States and South Korea from October 31. Taking place over six days, these large-scale military exercises included over 1,600 sorties involving 240 warplanes, including nuclear-capable B-1B and F-35 stealth bombers near North Korea.

Unsurprisingly, Pyongyang objected, declaring that such “military rashness and provocation can be no longer tolerated”. Using similar language, South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff objected to Pyongyang’s missile firings, saying [“Our military can never tolerate North Korea’s provocative act and will sternly respond to it in close cooperation with the US”](#).

Accusing North Korea of having “unilaterally escalated its persistent provocations”, Japan’s defence minister Yasukazu Hamada said: “North Korea’s actions threaten the peace and security of our country, the region, and the international community, and are absolutely unacceptable.”

The rhetoric should not obscure the context. The legacies of Japan’s brutal occupation from 1910-45, the terrible impacts of the nuclear bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the 1950s Korean war need to be recognised. US Senators lobbied Washington to use further nuclear weapons on Kim Il-sung’s North Korean troops.

The current leader, Kim Jong-un, is an insecure grandson of the dynasty, trying to control North Korea’s people through fear, patriotic appeals, nuclear myths and false promises. He was just twenty in 2002, when US President George W Bush’s ‘State of the Union’ speech lumped North Korea in with Iran and Iraq as an ‘axis of evil’—and then invaded non-nuclear Iraq, causing devastating humanitarian impacts that persist today.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

For weak leaders, nuclear weapons appear attractive for power projection, freedom of action and regime survival. But nuclear weapons cannot feed people, unite divided families, or bring security.

The Korean War ended with forced separation and an uneasy armistice between the United States and North Korea. Separated by the 'Demilitarized Zone' (DMZ) along the 38th parallel, the Korean Peninsula got locked into a '[forever war](#)', in which nuclear weapons became a growing part of the political deadlock between Washington and the Kim dynasty.

In May 2018, after the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was negotiated and adopted by the United Nations in 2017, I was honoured to participate with Korean women, activists and Nobel laureates in '[Women Cross DMZ](#)' peace demonstrations in Seoul.

While we were there, Donald Trump petulantly pulled out of his planned meetings with Kim Jong-un in Singapore. Over 6,000 of us walked across the 'Reunification Bridge on May 24 and ate together with North Korean women.

Our main calls were for a genuine peace treaty for the Korean peninsula that recognised shared interests in building security and peace, along with development aid for the North and the lifting of political-military barriers to enable divided families to become reconnected. On re-entering South Korea, we heard on the news that South Korea's President Moon Jae-in had met Kim Jong-un just a few miles from us in the DMZ.

The optimism generated by their peace talks was unfortunately short lived. Kim wanted the US president's flattering attention more than serious talks with the North-Korean born South Korean president. Lessons can be learned, however.

For all Donald Trump's many flaws, his transactional approach offered an innovative way to engage Kim Jong-un. Within months, Trump got offended about some real or imagined slight and the two inadequate US-North Korean leaders resumed trading 'mine is bigger than yours' nuclear threats, with Kim Jong-un, doing his mini-me macho best to compete.

A major obstacle to the sensible proposals from women on all sides is the long-standing, intransigent and—let's be honest—*failed* US mantra of 'complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization' (CVID in diplomatic jargon). The pious US insistence on the CVID dogma had stalemated years of 'Six Party Talks' involving North and South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia.

Of course, getting rid of nuclear weapons is essential for sustainable security for the whole world—that's why most UN member states now support the TPNW, which entered into international legal force in 2021. To move forward in Korea, something else needs to happen first.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Denuclearizing North Korea cannot be just a finger-pointing exercise; it has to be done in the context of negotiations to demilitarize and denuclearize the whole Korean Peninsula and its surrounding islands and seas.

Kim's toolbox has little to offer, as relations between Russia, China and the United States fluctuate uneasily. Pyongyang is reportedly selling [artillery and shells](#) to replenish depleted Kremlin stocks as Russia becomes increasingly bogged down in Ukraine.

Nonetheless Kim, like Putin, is capable of escalating nuclear threats into attacks. And let's be clear, there is no such thing as a tactical nuclear attack: Any nuclear use would be strategically intended, and have appalling strategic consequences.

As first steps, pay attention to the demands and experience of Korean women from North and South. All sides need to engage more constructively in regional negotiations on peace and denuclearization without preconditions.

Utilizing the TPNW's growing tools for implementing nuclear disarmament and verification will also open up ways for the governments and people to rethink national security and start denuclearizing all of the threatening regimes and arsenals.

**Dr Rebecca Johnson is a nuclear analyst and peace activist who participated in negotiations on the [1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty](#) and the [2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#), becoming first president of the [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#) in 2010.*

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 15 November 2022]



Looking into North Korea from the South Korean side of the DMZ. Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Religious & Civil Society Call for An End to Crisis in Korean Peninsula

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — A coalition of over 700 religious and civil society organizations (CSOs) is making a collective appeal to end the crisis in the Korean peninsula and avoid "military action provoking war".

In a recently released statement, the coalition says: "We are here today in a great sense of crisis. The word 'war' feels closer than ever. Tensions are rising like never before as the military exercises of South Korea, the US, and North Korea continue for days."

The primary signatories include the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK), the Korea Peace Appeal Campaign and the South Korean Committee for the Implementation of June 15 Joint Declaration.



The Korean War Memorial in Pyongyang, North Korea, with the pyramidal Ryugyong Hotel in the background. Photo Credit: C BY-SA 3.0

The campaign, launched October 27, is calling on all governments involved in the ongoing conflict on the Korean Peninsula to immediately cease all hostile actions and return to solving the conflict through dialogue and mutual trust-building.

The appeal includes the establishment of a peace agreement; a Korean Peninsula—and a world—free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threats; and resolving the conflict with dialogue and cooperation instead of sanctions and pressure; and breaking from the vicious cycle of the arms race and invest in human security and environmental sustainability.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

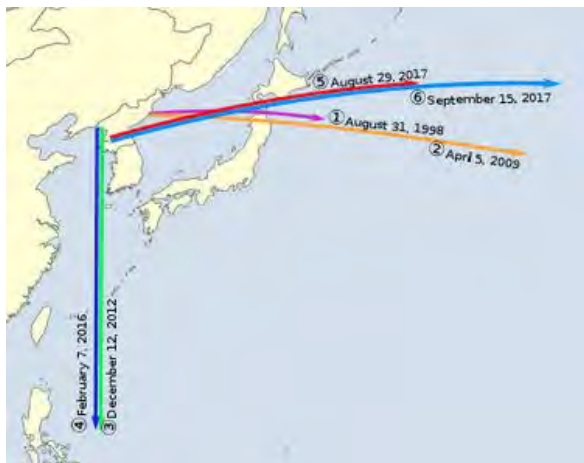
The collected signatures were to be delivered to the UN and to the governments of the countries involved in the Korean crisis, including the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States, and the People's Republic of China.

The coalition also warns that dangerous force operations have been repeated, keeping the safety of all lives on this land as collateral, but there is no exit in sight.

"At this rate, an unexpected armed conflict might occur due to a momentary lapse and war becomes a reality. If the military crisis and unstable situation continue, it will significantly affect society and the economy at large."

"Amid the chaotic international order and an intensifying arms race, diagnosed as the New Cold War, it is difficult to predict what risks the crisis on the Korean Peninsula will lead to. The most urgent thing now is to escape from a flashpoint."

Meanwhile the appeal for a peaceful resolution came at a time when North Korea continued to flex its nuclear muscles and launched a rash of ballistic missiles threatening both its neighbour South Korea and its longstanding nemesis, the United States.



North Korean missile launches over Japan. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The *New York Times* reported on November 14 that North Korea has launched as many as 86 missiles this year "more than in any previous year", including 23 fired last week.

The Times said North Korea was also "rehearsing to fire a nuclear missile at ROK".

"It not only tested a new intercontinental ballistic missile, under development, but also fired a flurry of short-range

missiles to counter the US and South Korea as the allies stepped up joint military drills."

The scores of missiles fired also triggers the rhetorical question: when will North Korea run out of missiles?

"The rising tensions in North Korea have to be understood in context," said Dr Rebecca Johnson, a nuclear analyst and first president of the [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons](#), who participated in negotiations on the [1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty](#) and the [2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#).

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

She told IDN that denuclearizing North Korea cannot be just a finger-pointing exercise; it has to be done in the context of negotiations to demilitarize and denuclearize the whole Korean Peninsula and its surrounding islands and seas.

The United States, China, North and South Korea, Japan and Russia—the governments that participated in the ‘Six Party Talks’ of previous decades—need to respond to the heightened nuclear threats of recent years by engaging more constructively in regional negotiations on peace and denuclearization without preconditions.

"If they do this, they can open up better ways to prevent nuclear weapons production, threats and use. Utilizing the new multilateral tools for TPNW implementation and verification will also open up ways for the governments and people to rethink national security, enabling negotiations to go forwards on denuclearizing threatening regimes in flashpoint regions," declared Johnson.

According to North Korea's state news agency, KCNA, the flurry of missile tests in October was carried out in response to large-scale navy drills by South Korean and US forces. Designed as a dramatic warning display, the tests simulate showering South Korea with tactical nuclear weapons.

Asked about the threat of "counter-retaliation" by a North Korean military commander, US State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters on November 7: "Our response is what you've heard from us throughout this series of provocations: our commitment to the defense and to the security of our treaty allies, Japan and the ROK in this case, is ironclad."

"We have taken a number of steps when to increase our defense and our deterrence posture, and we'll continue to calibrate our approach and our activities appropriately," he said.

Price also pointed out that there has been no change to US policy.

"Our DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) policy remains the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and we continue to be open to diplomacy with the DPRK. The complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula has been our objective since the conclusion of our DPRK policy review last year. That has not changed. I don't foresee that changing going forward."

UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters in October that Secretary-General António Guterres was deeply concerned about the adoption [on September 8] of the Law "On the DPRK's Policy on the Nuclear Forces" by the Supreme People's Assembly. Increasing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in security doctrines is contrary to decades of efforts by the international community to reduce and eliminate nuclear risks.

"The DPRK, by pursuing its nuclear weapons programme, including its development of missiles using ballistic missile technology, continues to

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

disregard the resolutions of the Security Council to cease such activities," said Dujarric, citing the UN Chief.

The Secretary-General has been calling on the DPRK to resume dialogue with the key parties concerned with a view to achieving sustainable peace and the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Meanwhile, the twenty-first iteration of the Republic of Korea–United Nations Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues took place in Seoul, from November 3 and 4.

The event, organized by the Government of the Republic of Korea and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs ([UNODA](https://www.unoda.org/)), focused on "exploring contemporary disarmament-related topics through candid discussions on issues of importance to regional and international security".

The conference brought together a variety of national and international participants, including government officials, UN officials and representatives from civil society organizations including think-tanks and academia.

The participants included Park Yong-min, Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, along with more than 50 representatives of Governments and intergovernmental organizations, research institutes and think-tanks, according to the UN.

Titled "Assessing the future disarmament landscape: space security and missile development," the conference looked at the future—and addressed topics unfolding in the face of new and emerging challenges in the field of international security.

According to the UN, a growing range of threats to space systems and risks for miscalculations have raised concerns for the international community on the possibility of a new arms race in outer space and has further highlighted the need to develop norms, rules and principles to respond to these threats.

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 15 November 2022]

Arms Control at Near-Standstill as Nuclear Threats Escalate

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — Amid growing nuclear threats from Russia and North Korea, the United Nations commemorated Disarmament Week beginning October 24, warning that weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, continue to be of



Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

primary concern, owing to their destructive power and the threat that they pose to humanity.

But so far, they have been either empty threats or sabre rattling—described as a flamboyant display of military power or aggressive blustering.

The UN's latest [2021 Disarmament Yearbook](#), released recently, lists some of the "progress" made by the international community on nuclear disarmament in 2021.

The year's landmark developments included, on January 22, the entry into force of the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#).

"That seminal accomplishment was followed, in early February, by a five-year extension of the Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms ([New START Treaty](#))."

The decision of the United States and the Russian Federation to extend their only bilateral, legally binding agreement on nuclear arms control within days of its scheduled expiration further highlighted the need to expeditiously lay the foundation for the next generation of arms control, the Yearbook said.

But what about all the stalled progress in the field of nuclear disarmament in 2021-2022? Do these outweigh the progress achieved?

Tariq Rauf, former Head of Verification & Security Policy at the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told IDN: "In my view, the disarmament deficit increased in 2020-2021".

"We see stasis in arms control, complete lack of progress in getting entry into force of the [CTBT](#); four NPT States are holding out on ratification—China, Egypt, Iran and US—while India, Pakistan and North Korea refuse to sign and Israel to ratify."

He pointed out that the years 2020-2021 also saw a collapse in nuclear arms control, with the only bright spot being the TPNW reaching the threshold of 50 ratifications to trigger entry into force despite opposition by the US, among others.

There are currently 91 signatories and 68 states parties of the TPNW.

Since 1976, the annual flagship publication of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs ([UNODA](#)) says, it has provided comprehensive, objective information for diplomats and the interested public on multilateral efforts to advance the cause of peace through the regulation, control and elimination of weapons.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

In 2021, those efforts continued to face significant headwinds from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Beyond significantly limiting the ability of intergovernmental forums to tackle pressing concerns related to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control in formal, in-person meetings, the pandemic complicated the delivery of humanitarian aid to conflict-scarred communities while eroding gains made in recent years towards greater economic and gender equality”, the Yearbook notes.

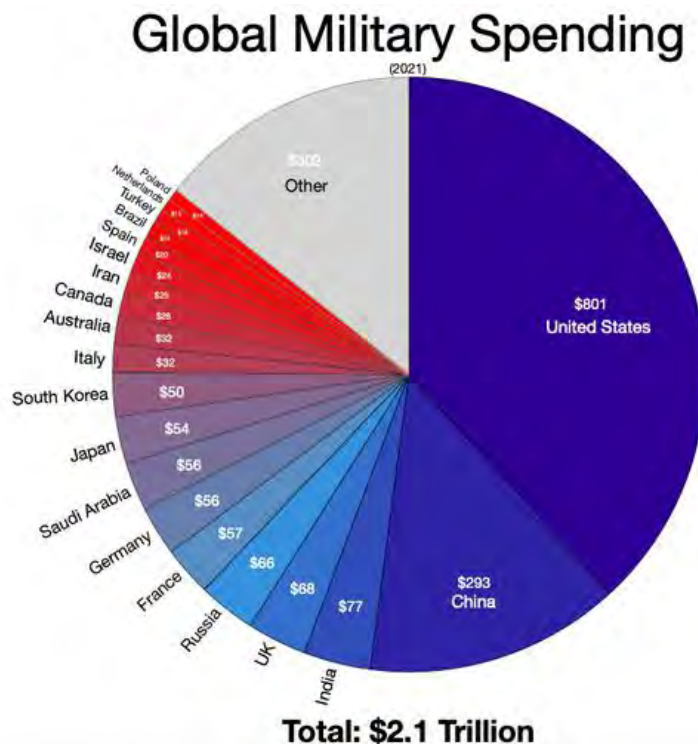


Photo Credit: Reddit.com

“Furthermore, even as COVID-19 underscored the urgent need for societies around the world to direct additional public resources into critical sectors such as public health, global military expenditures surged to a new, record-breaking high while armed clashes persisted.”

Dr M.V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security, Graduate Program Director, [MPPGA](#),

School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, told IDN that looking at the listed achievements of 2021 from the vantage point of 2022 definitely makes it clear how easily progress in nuclear disarmament can be overwhelmed by actions of nuclear weapon states—primarily Russia in this case.

“With the possibility of nuclear war closer in 2022 than any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis, it is easy to lose perspective of what a tremendous achievement the entry into force of the Ban Treaty (TPNW) has been.”

In fact, said Dr Ramana, the fact that nuclear threats have been regularly bandied about should remind us of the importance of the very first article of the TPNW that prohibits, inter alia, the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

The current state of affairs should also remind one of Article 12 that calls upon each State Party to “encourage States not party to this Treaty to sign, ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Treaty, with the goal of universal adherence of all States to the Treaty”.

“Of course, the likelihood of any nuclear weapon state acceding to the treaty seems close to zero at this point. But one should remember that some of the most impactful nuclear arms control treaties, which probably saved us from nuclear war during the Cold War, were signed in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis,” he noted.

The UN, while commemorating Disarmament Week, says “the excessive accumulation and illicit trade in conventional weapons jeopardize international peace and security and sustainable development, while the use of heavy conventional weapons in populated areas is seriously endangering civilians”.

New and emerging weapon technologies, such as autonomous weapons, imperil global security and have received increased attention from the international community in recent years, the UN warns.

As Disarmament Week seeks to promote awareness and better understanding of disarmament issues and their cross-cutting importance, the week-long observance, coincides with the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. according to the Final Document of the General Assembly’s 1978 special session on disarmament ([resolution S-10/2](#)).

In 1995, the General Assembly invited governments, as well as NGOs, to continue taking an active part in Disarmament Week ([resolution 50/72 B](#), 12 December 1995) in order to promote a better understanding among the public of disarmament issues.

“Throughout history, countries have pursued disarmament to build a safer, more secure world and to protect people from harm. Since the foundation of the United Nations, disarmament and arms control have played a critical role in preventing and ending crises and armed conflict. Heightened tensions and dangers are better resolved through serious political dialogue and negotiation—not by more arms.”

The UN also points out that measures for disarmament are pursued for many reasons, including to maintain international peace and security, uphold the principles of humanity, protect civilians, promote sustainable development, foster confidence and trust among States, and prevent and end armed conflict.

Disarmament and arms control measures help ensure international and human security in the 21st Century and therefore must be an integral part of a credible and effective collective security system.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“The United Nations continues to celebrate the efforts and involvement of a range of actors contributing to a safer, more peaceful common future through disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation efforts.”

In a world threatened by weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms and emerging cyberwarfare, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres presented a [new agenda for disarmament](#) to save humanity, save lives and secure our common future.

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews — 27 October 2022]



A tactical nuclear weapon. Photo Credit: Modern War Institute.

What If Russia Unleashes a Less Deadly Weapon on Ukraine?

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — Russia's military setbacks in Ukraine have triggered widespread speculation in the US that Russian President Vladimir Putin may unleash his stockpile of "tactical nuclear weapons", which may be less devastating than the deadly US weapons that destroyed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki back in August 1945.

In the face of battlefield losses in eastern Ukraine, Putin has warned that he "will make use of all the weapon systems available to us" if our territorial integrity is threatened.

Putin realizes that using nuclear weapons will result in worldwide condemnation and further degrade Russia's status as an "international pariah".

There is also speculation that the use of nuclear weapons could result in a blowback of radiation into Russian territory.

The most likely scenario is the use of "tactical nuclear weapons", which are reportedly not governed by international treaties.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Citing American officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, the New York Times reported on October 4 that this may be a last-ditch attempt by Putin to "halt the Ukrainian counter-offensive by threatening to make parts of Ukraine uninhabitable."

Hans M. Kristensen, Director of the Nuclear Information Project and Associate Senior Fellow of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Program at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), told IDN a tactical nuclear weapon is any nuclear weapon that doesn't have an intercontinental range and is not covered by the New START Treaty.

The term, he pointed out, dates back to the Cold War when the Soviet Union, United States, France and Britain developed nuclear weapons intended for use in a local battle or limited regional scenario.

"Tactical nuclear weapons were sometimes intended to be used before strategic weapons to deescalate the nuclear war and stop it before it escalated to all-out strategic nuclear annihilation."

Today, he pointed out that tactical nuclear weapons exist in many types, from torpedoes and landmines to bombs, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, and anti-air and missile-defence interceptors¹.

Russia has the largest inventory (up to 1,912), the US has about 200, and Pakistan has perhaps a couple of dozen tactical nuclear warheads, said Kristensen, who is also Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS).

All nuclear weapons are deadly, he argued, but tactical nuclear weapons generally have lower yield options than strategic weapons.

"But many tactical weapons also have yield options that are 10-20 times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. The yield generally is determined by the kind of targets they are intended to destroy," he declared.

In a statement released October 5, Lt Col Bill Astore, who served in the US Air Force for 20 years, said "Tactical" versus "strategic" nuclear weapons is just wordplay².

"All nuclear weapons are entirely devastating and potentially escalatory to a full-scale nuclear war," he said.

Were Russia to use "tactical" nuclear weapons, the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would likely respond in kind, he warned.

¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00963402.2019.1654273?needAccess=true>

² A link to the most updated nuclear arsenal information follows: <https://fas.org/issues/nuclear-weapons/status-world-nuclear-forces/>

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

"Even if a major nuclear war could be avoided, resulting political disruptions would likely aggravate economic dislocation, triggering a serious global recession, even a Great Depression, further feeding the growth of fascism and authoritarianism," said Astore, who is also a professor of history who has written numerous articles focusing on military history as well as the history of science, technology, and religion.

Asked if there are any comments from the Secretary-General on reports that Russia was planning to use tactical nuclear weapons—specifically, a torpedo—UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told reporters on October 3: "We have no way of having any details to those claims."

"What we are very concerned about is any escalation of the conflict and especially the use of nuclear weapons, which I think the Secretary-General has been very clear about ... there is no justification in any way, shape or form in any theatre to use those kinds of weapons."

Initially, tactical nuclear weapons were simply another weapon in the US arsenal, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, a nonprofit science advocacy organization based in the United States.

Dozens of types were designed, and tens of thousands were produced, some with very low yields designed to be fired by one soldier.

Over time, as Soviet conventional forces expanded, US-aligned nations in NATO began to view nuclear weapons as an equalizer, allowing the alliance to compensate for numerical disadvantages in tanks and artillery.

"As both sides developed a range of nuclear weapons, some theorists perceived a need to meet an adversary with equivalent force at every level. Their concern was that if a country only had strategic nuclear weapons, it might hesitate to use them to retaliate against a lower-level tactical nuclear attack because the response would be disproportionate and could lead to an all-out nuclear war."

"According to this flawed and dangerous model, the United States needed a vast array of weapons to match every step in the so-called "escalation ladder."

"An even more troubling model relies on the idea of "escalation dominance." This requires seeking such superior capability at any possible level that rivals are deterred because they see any battle as hopeless. This dangerous theory envisions the possibility of "winning" a nuclear war."

However, as US President Ronald Reagan first declared in 1984 and the United States, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom recently reaffirmed, "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, the United States has about 200 tactical nuclear gravity bombs with explosive yields adjustable between 0.3 and 170 kilotons. (The yield of the Hiroshima bomb was 15 kilotons.)

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

The Pentagon deploys about 100 of those bombs, called the B61, in five European countries: Italy, Germany, Turkey, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

Meanwhile, Russia has nearly 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons with a broad range of yields, from very low to over 100 kilotons. These can be delivered by air, ship, and ground-based systems, some of which also deliver conventional weapons. For example, some of the missiles Russia has used against Ukraine can also carry nuclear warheads.

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The USS South Dakota sails up the Thames River in Connecticut during a homecoming event at Naval Submarine Base New London in Groton, CT, on December 18, 2022. The submarine returned from a five-month deployment. Photo Credit: Navy Chief Petty Officer Joshua Karsten, image courtesy US Department of Defense

The Era of Nuclear Blackmail Must End

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — When the United Nations commemorated the annual [International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#) on September 26, the President of the General Assembly (GA) Csaba Kőrösi reminded *delegates of the* statue of Saint—"found in the ruins of Nagasaki, charred and mottled from the atomic blast"—and which now stands at the centre of UN's permanent collection of memorable anti-nuclear artefacts in the Secretariat building.

"She is there to remind us of a past that must never be repeated. For my part, I will heed her grim warning. I will do whatever I can to bring us closer to our dream: a world that is safe from the scourge of war," he added.

The International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons has been observed annually since 2014. The General Assembly declared the International Day in December 2013, in its resolution [68/32](#), as a follow-up to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament held on 26 September 2013 in New York.

The United States detonated two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively. The two bombings killed between 129,000 and 226,000 people, mostly civilians. But that bombing still remains as the only use of nuclear weapons in an armed conflict.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

In the first days of this year, the GA president pointed out that the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states—the US, UK, France, Russia and China—jointly affirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

The other four nuclear powers include India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

"Only nine months later, tensions between world powers are reaching new highs. And we are again, permanently 100 to 110 seconds away from launching a nuclear strike to be followed by responses."

The war in Ukraine has raised credible risks of global nuclear disaster, and, as the [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) warned, there are certain circles are "playing with fire".

"I am particularly appalled by the recurring, thinly veiled threats of nuclear strikes. Tactical strikes, it is often added, but we all know that such a conflict would never stay at the tactical level."

On the Korean Peninsula, he reminded delegates the nuclear threat continues to pose an unacceptable risk to the region and the world.

Meanwhile, arsenals across the world are filled with more than 13,000 warheads. Investments in these weapons continue to increase while too many people struggle to buy food, educate their children, and keep warm, the GA President declared.

Still, Kazakhstan is cited as a country that took a pioneering role in giving up its weapons and shutting down its nuclear test site.

Between 1949 to 1989, an estimated 456 Soviet nuclear tests, including 116 atmospheric tests, were carried out at the Semipalatinsk test site, with devastating long-term consequences for human health and the environment.



The "Good Defeats Evil" sculpture, located at UN Headquarters in New York, depicts an allegorical St. George slaying a double-headed dragon. The dragon is created from fragments of Soviet SS-20 and United States Pershing nuclear missiles. Photo Credit: UN Photo/Milton Grant

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

After the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, Kazakhstan inherited approximately 1,400 Soviet nuclear warheads, which it subsequently relinquished, recognising that its security was best achieved through disarmament.

Former Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev was the first among newly independent former Soviet states to call for the elimination of nuclear weapons and the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Central Asian region.

Kazakhstan volunteered to return all nuclear weapons to Russia, signed the [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#), and entered the world as a non-nuclear state.

In an interview with IDN, Joseph Gerson, *President of the [Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security](#) and Vice-President of the [International Peace Bureau](#)*, said, "one wants to weep, to scream, at the contradiction between the vision, hopes and ceremonies embedded in the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and the reality that humanity is now hostage to the most dangerous nuclear confrontation since Cuban Missile Crisis".

In August, on the eve of the [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference](#), Secretary-General António Guterres warned that humanity was "just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation". In these circumstances, our first and urgent priority must be preventing a nuclear war.

Gerson said Russian, and US leaders are playing with nuclear fire that could consume us all as they move eyeball to eyeball in the spiralling escalation of the Ukrainian war.

As Russian President Vladimir Putin moves to annex more of Ukraine, ostensibly making them part of Russia, he threatens to use nuclear weapons to "protect" Russia and warns that he is not bluffing, he noted.

"Backed by the US and NATO, President Zelensky repeats his commitment to win back all of the territories conquered by Russia. We thus face the danger of an endless war that bleeds Russian resources or a decisive defeat of Russian forces, each of which would make Putin's rule vulnerable and raise the possibility of Russia launching tactical nuclear weapons to terrorize Kyiv into bowing to Moscow's demands," Gerson warned.

In response to Putin's nuclear sabre rattling, the Biden Administration responds that it will "respond decisively", which implies possible nuclear retaliation. But given political and nationalist forces in each of the superpowers, it will be more than difficult for either leader to accept the appearance of defeat".

"And thus, the fate of humanity hangs in the balance," he declared.

The UN meeting on the total elimination of nuclear weapons took place amid a *Global Appeal to "end the nuclear threat, abolish nuclear weapons and shift the*

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

weapons budgets and investments to support public health, COVID-19 recovery, the climate and sustainable development".

The appeal came from Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), a global network of legislators working on a range of initiatives to prevent nuclear proliferation and to achieve a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Addressing delegates, the UN Chief said in an era of "nuclear blackmail", countries should step back from the threat of potential global catastrophe and recommit to peace.

"Nuclear weapons are the most destructive power ever created. They offer no security—just carnage and chaos. Their elimination would be the greatest gift we could bestow on future generations," he [said](#).

Guterres recalled that the Cold War had brought humanity "within minutes of annihilation". Yet decades after it ended, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, "we can hear once again the rattling of nuclear sabres". he said.

"Let me be clear. The era of nuclear blackmail must end. The idea that any country could fight and win a nuclear war is deranged. Any use of a nuclear weapon would incite a humanitarian Armageddon. We need to step back."

The Secretary-General also spoke of his disappointment after countries failed to reach consensus at a conference last month to review the landmark Non-Proliferation Treaty ([NPT](#)), the only binding commitment to the goal of disarmament by States which officially stockpile nuclear weapons.

Following four weeks of intense negotiations at UN Headquarters, delegations left without an outcome document because Russia objected to the text about its control over Ukrainian nuclear facilities.

The UN Chief pledged not to give up and urged countries "to use every avenue of dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation to ease tensions, reduce risk and eliminate the nuclear threat."

Meanwhile, Gerson also pointed out that the US-Chinese confrontation over Taiwan, Indian-Pakistani confrontations over Kashmir, and the nine nuclear powers' nuclear arms races all carry the same danger of nuclear Armageddon.

"The International Day for the Complete Elimination of Nuclear Weapons provided an opportunity to refocus our attention on the imminent and long-term nuclear dangers. Our first priority must be preventing nuclear war."

This dictates the urgency of winning an immediate ceasefire and negotiated compromise settlement to the Ukraine War and an end to the US and Chinese provocative military manoeuvres near Taiwan and in the South China Sea.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

"As we face new Cold Wars with no shared assumptions or guardrails to contain tensions and to prevent catastrophic miscalculations, the US and Russia and the US and China must reengage in the process of re-establishing strategic stability. It can serve as the foundation for negotiation of meaningful arms control and disarmament agreements," warned Gerson.

Without such steps, despite the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#), the vision and urgent need for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons—which is the only way to prevent nuclear war ultimately—will remain beyond our reach.

"If there is one truism that we must remember and act upon on this international day and tomorrow, it is the Hibakusha's (nuclear weapons victims) admonition that 'Human beings and nuclear weapons cannot coexist,' he declared.

**A Fulbright scholar with a Master's Degree (MSc) in Journalism from Columbia University, New York, Thalif Deen is co-author of the 1981 book "How to Survive a Nuclear Disaster" and author of the 2021 book on the United Nations titled "No Comment – and Don't Quote me on That." The link to Amazon via the author's website follows: <https://www.rodericgrigson.com/no-comment-by-thalif-deen/>*

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Exhibition Educates Youth on Dangers of Nuclear Weapons

By Kalinga Seneviratne



SGI Director General for Peace and Global Issues Hirotsugu Terasaki (left) opening the exhibition. Photo Credit: Katsuhiro Asagiri

NUR-SULTAN, Kazakhstan — An exhibition that opened at Keruen Mall, an upmarket shopping centre here on September 16 and continues until the end of the month, uses a novel method to reach out to young people with the message of the dangers of nuclear weapons.

The exhibition depicts over 70 years of nuclear history from the Hiroshima

explosion through to today, using photographs, illustrations, and graphs that show the devastating effects of nuclear weaponry on communities.

[Soka Gakkai International \(SGI\)](#), a Japanese Buddhist non-governmental organization (NGO) that promotes peace, culture, and education, organized the exhibition along with the Nobel laureate [International Campaign to Abolish](#)

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

[Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\)](#), and local NGO, the Kazakh [Center for International Security and Policy](#).

The exhibition was first shown in Hiroshima, Japan in 2012 and has since been travelled to more than 90 cities in 21 countries around the globe.

“Kazakhstan was home to nuclear test sites, including the [Semipalatinsk Test Site](#) under the Soviet Union, and it is a country of many people who suffered greatly from consequences of nuclear weapon tests,” SGI Director General for Peace and Global Issues Hirotsugu Terasaki told IDN.

“In view of the situation surrounding nuclear weapons today, many people in Kazakhstan share the same strong desire for nuclear disarmament like many of Japanese people who experienced atomic bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”

In a welcoming speech at the opening ceremony, Deputy Director of the Department for International Security of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arman Baisuanov, said Kazakhstan had suffered the impact of some 450 nuclear tests on its soil during the Soviet era between 1949 to 1989. These tests were conducted underground and, in the air, affecting about 1.5 million people.

“A world free of nuclear weapons is central to our foreign policy,” he said, pointing out that in 2019 Kazakhstan had ratified the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#). “Kazakhstan is leading a global coalition to build a movement to ban nuclear weapons.”

Presented on some 20 panels with colourful, eye-catching graphics, under the theme ‘*Everything You Treasure – For a World Free From Nuclear Weapons*’, the exhibition is designed to educate the youth in particular to get them out of their apathy on the issue. The exhibition panels answer questions on whether nuclear weapons really protect what we hold dear, what are the problems caused by nuclear weapons—humanitarian, environmental, medical, and economic—as well as what we want our future to be. “Younger Kazakhstanis haven’t experienced these nuclear testing sites. We are learning from this type of exhibition that nuclear testing and nuclear weapons are not tolerable,” Madiyar Aiyp, a young Kazakhstani who attended the opening ceremony, told IDN. “We should all work together as a joint human population so that we can resolve any problems without going through to nuke each other.”



Young people studying the exhibits. Photo Credit: Kalinga Seneviratne

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

A special guest at the opening was Bolatbek Baltabek, a 63-year-old second-generation victim of nuclear tests who is now an international anti-nuclear movement activist. He spoke about the tragic consequences the nuclear tests had on him and his family.



Mr Baltabek making a presentation at the launch of the exhibition. Photo Credit: Katsuhiko Asagiri

Mr Baltabek was a child when the Soviet Union tested the atomic bomb near his home village Sarzhal in eastern Kazakhstan, in what came to be known as Semey polygon. He related that during the summer, his father and mother lived in one room, and the rest of the rooms were occupied by Soviet military personnel who came to conduct the nuclear tests.

“When we were children, when the helicopters came, we used to run happily saying ‘now there will be a test’. At that time, we did not know the tests were dangerous,” Mr Baltabek said.

“Later, when we grew up, the death of our friends, relatives and acquaintances from unknown diseases used to instil fear in our childhood hearts. If we asked our elders, they will simply say ‘disease of the landfill’, and we

could understand looking at their sad eyes that this topic should not be discussed,” he added.

Mr Baltabek narrated how the Soviet government took them in groups to the city of Semipalatinsk and conducted tests for ten days. They did not give any information on the test results, but he thinks their community became the object of an experiment. However, the government never gave any special assistance to those impacted by the testing.

“Currently, the diseases caused by the tests are beginning to be seen in our children and grandchildren, who did not see the landfill explosions,” notes Mr Baltabek, adding that his granddaughter is sick with blood disease and is now on the disability register. “I’m asking participants of this forum, including those from Japan, to help my granddaughter recover from this illness.”

Foreign policy analyst Iskander Akylbayev argued that, though the polygon was closed at the end of the Soviet Union, problems have not come to an end. The impact of nuclear tests “can be passed from one generation to another”. He added: “They are suffering from socio-economic consequences such as (contaminated) drinking water, (lack of) health facilities or have to travel to cities for treatment. So, we must put emphasis on social-economic issues as well,” he told IDN.

Mr Akylbayev feels that this exhibition needs to be taken across the country because “we are in a dangerous time where the Cold War thinking is coming back

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

and the chance of using nuclear weapons is on the agenda as well. It is very important to learn from past mistakes”.

“The exhibition has taken place in more than 20 countries around the world, and we would like to continue to hold it in other regions translating (the panels) in many languages,” Mr Terasaki said. “This exhibition is different from ordinary exhibitions calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The key point is that the exhibition offers various perspectives on nuclear weapons.”

Japanese language teacher Shigenobu Masujima, who has lived in Kazakhstan for 15 years, argued that since both Japan and Kazakhstan have experienced the horrors of nuclear weapons, “unless we as the atom-bombed nations, convey the horror of nuclear weapons to the world, people will not understand. Therefore, we must take the initiative in this regard”.

“Many people do not have a clear image of nuclear weapons because they do not exist close to us,” noted Mr Terasaki. “For this reason, the issue of nuclear weapons tends to be hidden from our daily lives. We try to show our audience that nuclear weapons are not something irrelevant to us, but rather they deeply influence our lives and ways of living.”

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews – 25 September 2022]

UN Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Declared a Failure

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — The alarm bells have been ringing right across Europe as the Russian invasion of Ukraine has not only triggered nuclear threats by one of the world's major nuclear powers but also set off emergency drills outside a nuclear power plant in Zaporizhzhia which has come under fire.

Against this distressing backdrop, a four-week [Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#) concluded on August 26 on a note of abject disappointment.

Despite multiple closed-door meetings and a wide range of open discussions, the meeting failed to agree on a final "outcome document".

The hundreds of delegates and anti-nuclear activists left virtually empty-handed—a rare occurrence at a long-drawn-out international gathering.

The [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\)](#), a coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in over a hundred countries promoting adherence to and implementation of the nuclear weapon ban treaty, *blamed* Russia for "blocking a final agreement".

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen (left) presiding over the four-week long NPT Review Conference, which concluded August 26. Photo Credit: ACA-Arms Control Association

The conference was held amid sharply rising international tensions and increasing risks of the use of nuclear weapons following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its associated threats to use nuclear weapons, said ICAN.

During the conference, many of the 191 state parties to the NPT spoke of the need to take decisive action to reduce nuclear risks, condemn nuclear threats, stop the expansion and modernization of nuclear arsenals, and make progress on carrying out the nuclear disarmament obligations of the treaty.

"This result is terminally unserious, and a total abdication of responsibility in the face of an unacceptably dangerous global situation," ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Fihn said.

"At a time when an NPT nuclear-weapon state is using its nuclear weapons to facilitate an illegal invasion when the nuclear-armed states have not only failed to make progress on their disarmament obligations but have spent over \$82 billion on maintaining and upgrading their arsenals when the risk of use of nuclear weapons is higher than ever, the failure of the review conference to take any action is inexcusable," she declared.

Tariq Rauf, former Head of Verification and Security Policy, and former Alternate Head of the NPT delegation at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) told IDN "It is not at all surprising that the Tenth NPT Review Conference ended without agreement on recommendations and actions to strengthen implementation of the NPT and of the measures and actions agreed at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 review conferences".

Though this review conference failed over the matter of Russia's attack on Ukraine and armed hostilities at the Zaporizhzhia and Chernobyl nuclear power plants; there was a lot of dissatisfaction with the lack of agreement on any timelines, benchmarks and accountability for nuclear disarmament.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

While unexpectedly, Rauf said, Egypt signed off on a very weak and essentially useless text on setting up a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East that lacked any call on Israel to give up its nuclear weapons.

He said many other Arab States were privately incensed at this sellout by Egypt to the US.

"Attending my seventh NPT Review Conference as an official delegate, I was disappointed at the lack of ambition on nuclear disarmament by the five nuclear-weapon States and their dependent allies, as well as their unified thwarting of all efforts to recognize the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as complementary to the NPT."

Rauf said risk-reduction was the priority for the cabal of nuclear dependent States, not reductions in nuclear weapons.

This is not the first time that an NPT meeting has failed due to opposition by one of more States—the 1990, 1998, 2005, 2007 and 2015 NPT meetings ended in disagreement due to inflexibility by the US (supported by Canada and the UK in 2015).

"The 2003, 2005 and 2015 stalemates also involved Egypt, 2007 also Iran, and now 2022 it is Russia. The danger of nuclear conflagration is increasing, but the nuclear-armed and nuclear-reliant Neros are fiddling away as the skies darken under nuclear threats," Rauf warned.

Under the Presidency of Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen of Argentina, the Tenth NPT Review Conference was the best organized, he pointed out, but the Conference President could not pull a rabbit out of his hat at the conclusion on August 26 evening, as there was no rabbit to be found in the President's hat—the NPT States had ensured there would be no rabbit [final declaration].

Dr Rebecca Johnson, NPT expert and author on nuclear issues for over forty years, told IDN "amid heightened nuclear threats, proliferation and war, this most recent NPT Review Conference failure is dangerous but not surprising".

"Long before Russia vetoed over references to the endangered Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine, the draft NPT outcome document had already been fatally weakened on disarmament, nonproliferation and the necessity to prevent nuclear use, war and accidents," she pointed out.

"Without in any way downplaying the globally serious humanitarian and environmental dangers when military threats combine with nuclear facilities, let's face the fact that Russia and other nuclear-armed NPT members had spent four weeks criticising each other but colluding to block meaningful recommendations and actions on nuclear disarmament and nuclear dangers that would have impact on existing nuclear arsenals."

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Despite the rhetoric, she said, they help each other to keep nuclear weapons and ignore or belittle nuclear disarmament initiatives, including the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#).

"France had shamefully insisted on deleting practically every reference to the TPNW, including the basic fact that the first meeting of TPNW states in Vienna this year had adopted a declaration and programme of action. Ignoring reality is foolish as well as dangerous."

Johnson said the TPNW outcome documents are clear and concrete, and cover preventing nuclear use, verifiably eliminating nuclear arsenals, and assisting and remediating nuclear-impacted communities and environments.

"The NPT failure is because the nuclear-armed governments are busy expanding nuclear reliance and enhancing nuclear weapon capabilities. They think nuclear weapons give them deterrence and freedom of military action in countless ways. They are wrong."

She added: "How can they present themselves as responsible NPT members as they promote and sell nuclear technologies to the highest bidder as if this trade could be safe, secure or environmentally friendly?"

Aukus 'going against' Pacific nuclear free treaty – Cook Islands leader

By AFP editor - March 28, 2023



Photo Credit: Screenshot of Asia Pacific Report (Auckland)

NPT members who want to achieve actual progress on nuclear disarmament to join the TPNW."

At the NPT Conference the US, UK and China wrangled about Australia's nuclear submarine plans (AUKUS) while ignoring concerns and opposition from numerous Pacific countries. No wonder NPT conferences keep failing, Johnson said.

"Having worked for nuclear safety, disarmament and security at every NPT meeting from 1994, I have seen few successes, many failures and much political posturing. In the General Assembly Hall late Friday night (August 26), we heard expressions of anger, disappointment, hope and determination. Austria called on all

The Vienna meeting of States Parties showed what needs to be done and laid foundations for more collective, inclusive and practical steps to achieve nuclear disarmament and security in the real world.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Building on that, "we all need to embrace the promise and commitment enshrined in Mexico's joint statement on behalf of many nuclear-free nations and peoples: 'We will not rest until the last state has joined the TPNW, the last warhead has been irreversibly dismantled and destroyed, and nuclear weapons have been totally eliminated from the Earth'."

UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed disappointment over the inability of the Conference to reach consensus on a substantive outcome and to capitalize on this opportunity to strengthen the NPT and advance its goals.

While he welcomed "the sincere and meaningful engagement by NPT parties and the fact that the Conference recognized the Treaty as the 'cornerstone' of the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime," he regretted that it was unable to address the pressing challenges that are threatening collective security.

"The fraught international environment and the heightened risk of nuclear weapons being used, by accident or through miscalculation, demand urgent and resolute action," he said, while appealing to all member states to use every avenue of dialogue, diplomacy, and negotiation to ease tensions, reduce nuclear risk and eliminate the nuclear threat once and for all.

A world free of nuclear weapons remains the United Nations' highest disarmament priority and a goal to which Guterres remains firmly committed.

The Secretary-General expressed his sincere appreciation to Ambassador Zlauvinen, President of the Review Conference, for his vigorous efforts to facilitate agreement on an outcome document.

Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Washington-based [Arms Control Association \(ACA\)](#), which has tracked the progress of treaty implementation since the first NPT review conference in 1975, said the NPT is often called the cornerstone of global nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, but the debate and results of this meeting reveal there are cracks in the foundation of the treaty and deep divisions between nuclear-armed states.

"Even if Russia had been more flexible on how the NPT Review Conference should address the Zaporizhzhia nuclear crisis, the draft text that emerged from the conference negotiations illustrates there is general support for the treaty, but a deficit of leadership—and concrete action—on disarmament goals and objectives," Kimball said.

"This NPT conference represents a missed opportunity to strengthen the treaty and global security by agreeing to specific action plan with benchmarks and timeframes that is essential to effectively address the growing dangers of nuclear arms racing and nuclear weapons use," he said.

"There was one important item on the list of disarmament measures that was agreed to in the draft conference document that does set forth a specific,

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

unconditional action step within a set timeframe," Kimball noted. In paragraph 187.17, the document says:

"The Russian Federation and the United States commit to the full implementation of the New START Treaty and to pursue negotiations in good faith on a successor framework to New START before its expiration in 2026, in order to achieve deeper, irreversible, and verifiable reductions in their nuclear arsenals."

Mohamed ElBaradei, a former Director General of the [International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) and a Nobel Peace laureate, wrote on Twitter: "The ugly truth, no matter how we wrap it is that all nine nuclear weapon states have no intention to disarm; quite to the contrary the trajectory is towards more sophisticated 'usable' weapons and delivery systems. The emperor has no clothes ...".

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews – 30 August 2022]

The Risk of a Nuclear Attack has Risen to its Highest Level Since the Cold War

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — Speaking during a ceremony marking the 77th anniversary of the devastating atomic bombing of Hiroshima, UN Secretary-General António Guterres remarked on August 6 that it is totally unacceptable for states in possession of nuclear weapons to admit the possibility of nuclear war.



Hirotugu Terasaki, Director General of Peace and Global Issues, Soka Gakkai International. Photo Credit: Seikyo Shimbun.

"The elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee that the atrocities of Hiroshima will never be repeated," he declared.

The recent nuclear threats from Russia and North Korea have underlined the significance of the four-week-long Tenth Review Conference on the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), where one of the issues under discussion was "No First Use" of nuclear weapons.

The conference is scheduled to conclude on August 26.

In an interview with IDN, Hirotugu Terasaki, Director General of Peace and Global Issues at Soka Gakkai International (SGI), said the risk that nuclear weapons will actually be used has risen to the highest level since the end of the Cold War.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“The future of humankind rests on disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons. This is a matter that concerns all people everywhere. That is why I firmly believe we cannot leave this to the political, diplomatic and military experts.”

“That’s not to say that expert debate doesn’t play a vital part in the process”, he argued, “but there is the risk of remaining deadlocked should discussions take place within these circles alone”, said Terasaki, whose SGI represents a diverse Buddhist community of 12 million people that promotes peace, culture and education, and is also an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations.

Excerpts from the interview:

Q: Last February, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda highlighted the fact that there are more than 13,000 nuclear warheads in current stockpiles while the modernization of nuclear arsenals continues with no end in sight. In view of recent nuclear threats from Russia and North Korea, do you think the situation could get worse before it gets better?

A: Unfortunately, as you point out, there is a possibility the situation could get worse. European experts I have exchanged views with, on the recent developments in Ukraine, have expressed a real sense of urgency and concern regarding nuclear weapons in this context. At the ongoing NPT Review Conference, many states have also expressed deep concern regarding North Korea. The modernization of nuclear arsenals, spurred by rapid technological development, has resulted in expansion into new spheres such as cyberspace and outer space, which are as yet insufficiently regulated. It is urgent that these concerns be integrated into multilateral discussions.

We face the very real danger that the progress humankind has made in nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation could be reversed. I believe that, at times like these, solidarity of the international community is all the more important. The voices and actions of civil society carry a special significance when diplomatic negotiations have stalled.

What is essential is to find a way to prevent further escalation of tensions.

It is for this reason that SGI President Daisaku Ikeda issued an emergency proposal immediately before the opening of the NPT Review Conference. In it, he strongly called for the Final Document to include commitments to a policy of “No First Use” by the nuclear-weapon states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China—and support for this principle by all states parties.

Needless to say, the ultimate goal of the NPT is a world without nuclear weapons. To that end, we must do whatever we can to resolve the current crisis and scale back risks. To preclude the possibility that mutual suspicion will cause confrontation to escalate to the level of the unthinkable, we must secure lines of communication that will provide time and space to talk and de-escalate. Adopting policies of “No First Use” would be instrumental in this regard.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



An illustrative picture of an atomic explosion. Photo
Credit: FEMA News Photo/Wikimedia Commons

We must resolutely open the way to fulfil the vow in the preamble of the NPT: to make every effort to avert the danger of a nuclear war and the devastation it would visit upon all humankind.

Q: Speaking during the opening day of the NPT Review Conference, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said humanity was “just one misunderstanding,

one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation.” The growing crisis extends from the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula, he warned, to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. How can we make it a reality to obliterate the threat of nuclear weapons?

A: The risk that nuclear weapons will actually be used has risen to the highest level since the end of the Cold War. In light of this, in his address to the NPT Review Conference, UN Secretary-General António Guterres proposed action in the following five areas:

1. To reinforce and reaffirm the 77-year-old norm against the use of nuclear weapons.
2. To reinvigorate our multilateral agreements and frameworks around disarmament and nonproliferation toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.
3. To redouble our support for dialogue and negotiation to ease the simmering tensions in the Middle East and Asia and forge new bonds of trust.
4. To promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology as a catalyst to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including for medical and other uses.
5. To fulfill all outstanding commitments in the NPT itself, and keep it fit-for-purpose in these trying times.

Good faith efforts to implement these action areas are crucial, and we trust that states parties will deliver on these commitments. Reaching consensus will be an arduous and complex process, and will require tenacious negotiation. Relentless perseverance and the courage to never give up will be indispensable. The darker the night, the closer the dawn: this is the lesson of history.

It is also extremely vital to embark upon a fresh round of diplomatic negotiations toward medium- and long-term goals. At the panel discussion, that the SGI co-sponsored with the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the UN and other organizations during the NPT Review Conference, Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Washington-based Arms Control Association, said:

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“It is important for the conference to be pointing to steps that nuclear-armed states, particularly the US, NATO and Russia, can take to maintain direct lines of communication—military and political and diplomatic—to resume the US-Russian dialogue on strategic stability issues and on the negotiation of follow-on agreements to the only remaining treaty (New START)”.

We reveal our true strength as human beings when we go beyond simply resolving the immediate crisis and use that experience to create something entirely new. As an Eastern maxim states: “A person who falls to the ground rises back up by pushing against that very ground.”

We are standing at a crucial juncture: Do we progress toward the original purpose of the NPT, or do we regress? We must make this the starting point for a paradigm shift to new security stances in which the role of nuclear weapons is reduced. I believe that a keen awareness of the real dangers we face can serve as a springboard for this kind of transition from the nuclear arms race to nuclear disarmament.

On August 6, the 77th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Secretary-General Guterres stated in Hiroshima: “It is totally unacceptable for states in possession of nuclear weapons to admit the possibility of nuclear war.” He asserted that the elimination of nuclear weapons is the only guarantee that the atrocities of Hiroshima will never be repeated.

As a member of civil society, the SGI will continue to promote the message that nuclear weapons are inhumane, an absolute evil that violates humankind’s right to live; they can never ensure the peace and stability of the world.

Q: How effective is the global campaign by religious and faith-based organizations—and by anti-nuclear activists—in raising public awareness of the threat of an impending nuclear disaster? What are the SGI’s plans in this regard?

A: The future of humankind rests on disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons. This is a matter that concerns all people everywhere. That is why I firmly believe we cannot leave this to the political, diplomatic and military experts. That’s not to say that expert debate doesn’t play a vital part in the process, but there is the risk of remaining deadlocked should discussions take place within these circles alone.

When we do find ourselves at an impasse, it is important to return to our starting point. What is that starting point, that initial point of departure, when it comes to the issue of nuclear abolition? Surely it is the lived reality of a nuclear catastrophe as experienced by hibakusha in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and throughout the world, and the human spirit that enables us to empathize with the suffering they have endured. There is a danger that if deliberations are conducted without this acute awareness they will come to a standstill or become irrelevant.

The educational community, the media and civil society must use all tools available to communicate just how inhumane nuclear weapons are, ensuring this

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

understanding is transmitted to future generations. While the effects of such efforts may not be immediately apparent, I am confident that raising public awareness on this issue, especially now, at a time when there is a heightened risk that nuclear weapons will actually be used, will, in the long run serve as a powerful driving force for progress.

Proof of this can be found in the path to realizing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), in which the Humanitarian Initiative worked to focus attention on the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, thus helping to shift global public opinion and ultimately leading to the adoption of the treaty at the United Nations in 2017.

Following the TPNW's entry into force in January 2021, the First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW was held this June and produced a powerful declaration and action plan that provides a clear roadmap for nuclear abolition.

I believe the meeting was also significant in that it reaffirmed the complementarity of the TPNW with the NPT and outlined concrete steps for international cooperation to address the human and environmental harm caused by nuclear weapons through victim assistance and environmental remediation.

Solidarity can be a great strength, especially in times of global crisis. If civil society and faith communities continue to unite their voices toward the achievement of a grand objective, they can be an unstoppable force for change in the world.

On the occasion of the current NPT Review Conference, the SGI joined more than 100 organizations—Faith Communities Concerned about Nuclear Weapons—in issuing a joint statement which was read at the session allocated for NGO presentations. Allow me to introduce a portion of it here, which lays out, in plain language, the approach taken by civil society and faith communities:

As people of faith, we are here to remind you, delegates of the NPT Review Conference, of our shared humanity. . . . We know that nuclear weapons, whether used by design or accident, will destroy the world as we know it and cause tremendous suffering of many people, as testified by the hibakusha and those from affected communities. Nuclear weapons are incompatible with our fundamental values of respect for human dignity; their continued role in so-called national security should not be tolerated.

All of us, as leaders, delegates, civil society, and faith communities, share the moral and ethical responsibility of realizing a world without nuclear weapons, knowing that the possibility lies in our hands. It is up to each of us to enact this mission, and history will surely show that we took the right course.

This year marks 65 years since second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda (1900–58) made a declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons, entrusting this task to the youth of the time and to subsequent generations.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

In the spirit of making this year, this moment now, a crucial milestone toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons, we are committed to redoubling our efforts to promote grassroots educational activities, broaden networks of solidarity and bring the voices of civil society to the United Nations. We want to ensure that members of the next generation throughout the world inherit the vow for nuclear abolition.

To that end, we are engaging in various initiatives including: promoting digital tools to advance the universalization of the TPNW, holding exhibitions to expand solidarity of action for a nuclear-weapon-free-world, organizing venues for hibakusha testimonies and peace lectures, arranging online film showings and raising awareness among younger generations through social media.

Q: Do you think the United Nations has played an effective role in averting a nuclear war since the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

While I can't answer that question with an unqualified yes, the UN has played an important role in averting a nuclear war. Nevertheless, more must be done, including reform of the Security Council system, which is often paralyzed and prevented from taking meaningful action.

The horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bear testament to the fact that humankind was unable to avert the catastrophe of World War II and its dire humanitarian consequences. The United Nations emerged from a process of profound reflection and remorse regarding this history. It was established with the aim of preventing the scourge of war, maintaining global peace and security and realizing international cooperation in such spheres as economics, society and culture.

History has shown that there will inevitably be conflicts among the national interests of states. The UN was conceived and created as a multilateral system for harmonizing the actions and interests of states. Toward this aim, it is vital that we make use of and further strengthen the various bodies that comprise the UN.

I strongly feel that the times increasingly require a UN which reflects the voices of civil society, which enjoys the backing of civil society and in which civil society plays an active role. Civil society participation—especially the engagement of youth, women, indigenous peoples and those in more vulnerable positions who have been denied the opportunity to be heard—is more important than ever. It is the power of diversity that will surely galvanize international opinion and help steer intergovernmental interactions in the right direction.

The world's hibakusha—victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as those affected by the production and testing of nuclear weapons throughout the globe—have more to say. There are realities they want people everywhere to know about. Many had their lives taken from them before they had a chance to speak their truth, while others who did survive were unable to speak of the bombings or the harm that was caused because of social stigma or other factors.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

This is also an aspect of how the inhumane nature of these weapons continues to impact people to this day.

In the hearts of hibakusha who are now in their 70s and 80s and who have finally been able to share their stories and release some of the weight they have been carrying is the determination that future generations never suffer the horrific tragedy, the living hell, that they themselves experienced. And it is here that education can make a significant contribution.

In his Agenda for Disarmament, Secretary-General Guterres stresses the important role of younger generations in the disarmament process and the need to enhance disarmament and nonproliferation education in order to provide more opportunities for them to participate. Peace and disarmament education can also play a key role in advancing the SDGs.

This June, I had the opportunity to attend the ICAN Nuclear Ban Forum, which took place in advance of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW in Vienna. It was inspiring and moving to witness the active engagement of the young people, women and victims of nuclear testing from various regions who had gathered. I felt the same way during the session allocated for NGO presentations at the current NPT Review Conference.

Creating opportunities at various venues for members of the younger generations to interact at the international level, deepening mutual understanding and envisioning peace together, is a vital investment in the future. I truly hope the UN will redouble its efforts and exercise leadership toward this endeavor.

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NPT Review Conference Urged to Seek "No First Use" of Nuclear Weapons

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — When academics, anti-nuclear peace activists and civil society organisations (CSOs) met at the United Nations earlier this month to discuss the growing threats of a nuclear war worldwide, one of the underlying themes was captured in the title: "Avoiding Nuclear War: What Short-Term Steps Can be Taken?"

The discussion included a call on the world's five major nuclear powers—the UK, US, France, Russia and China, all permanent members of the UN Security Council—to commit "No First Use" of nuclear weapons.

The other four nuclear powers—India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea—were expected to follow suit.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



Academics, anti-nuclear peace activists and civil society organisations meeting at the United Nations. Photo Credit: Katsuhiko Asagiri. IDN-INPS Multimedia Director

Professor Alexander Harang, [International Peace and Understanding, Peace Research Institute, Oslo](#), said since March this year, he has devoted most of his time to address the need for "No First Use" policies.

"It's an old theme, but the times we're living in have made No First Use more relevant than ever before," he said.

"As we've heard from almost every state throughout this week of General Debate here at the [NPT Review Conference](#), we are living in dangerous times. The threshold for actual use of nuclear weapons has been dramatically lowered over the last months".

"If we fail in addressing this problem effectively, all our other efforts for peace and disarmament may be in vain," he warned.

Professor Harang also pointed out that declaring "No First Use" policies by the nuclear-armed states may also prove to be the most effective way to re-establish trust within the UN disarmament machinery and regain momentum for multilateral disarmament.

"We should also understand No First Use as something that is actually possible to agree upon in the times we are living. This is something achievable. And these are the main reasons why we need to focus on No First Use right now," he declared.

The "side event", which took place August 4 in the margins of the three-week-long Tenth Review Conference on the Treaty on the [Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons \(NPT\)](#), scheduled to conclude August 26, was co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the UN, [Soka Gakkai International \(SGI\)](#), [Arms Control Association](#), [the Council on Strategic Risks](#), [the](#)

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

[Institute of World Economics and Politics](#) and [the International Peace and Understanding Project](#).

The tone was set by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, a Buddhist philosopher, who in a statement ahead of the conference, called on the five major nuclear-weapon states to declare they will never be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict: the principle of "No First Use".

"Today the risk that nuclear weapons will be used is at its highest level since the Cold War," he said.

A passionate campaigner for nuclear abolition for over 60 years, he urged the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China—to give substance to a joint statement made by their leaders on January 3, 2022, that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought," by declaring policies of "No First Use".



SGI President Daisaku Ikeda. Photo Credit: SGI

Adoption of a policy of "No First Use" can significantly enhance the global security climate, he argued.

To cite an example, he pointed out, that when China and India engaged in border clashes in June 2020, that resulted in dozens of casualties, their standing commitments to "No First Use" helped contain tensions and acted as a brake on escalation.

As more states adopt this principle of "No First Use", the norm that nuclear weapons are weapons that must never be used will be further strengthened, reducing the incentive to build up nuclear arsenals, he noted.

Further, this could help disrupt the vicious cycles of nuclear proliferation in which heightened nuclear threats induce more states to seek their own nuclear weapons, said Dr Ikeda, whose organisation represents a diverse Buddhist community of 12 million people that promotes peace, culture and education, and is also an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations.

Nor would the positive feedback generated by adopting "No First Use" be limited to the security realm. Defusing the system of interlocking nuclear threats that have exacerbated tensions and divisions globally would free the resources currently expended on the nuclear competition so they could be used to protect

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

the lives, livelihoods and dignity of all against such threats as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

"I strongly call on all states parties to seize the opportunity of this NPT Review Conference to include in the Final Document commitments to a policy of No First Use by the nuclear-weapon states, support for this principle by all states parties and the extending of negative security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon states, thereby promoting the transition to a new security paradigm."

At a press conference in Hiroshima on August 6, UN Secretary-General António Guterres pursued the same theme when he told reporters that countries with nuclear weapons "must commit to the no first use of those weapons because if nobody is the first to use, there would simply be no nuclear confrontation".

Especially today, he said, when nuclear risk is once again growing around the world.

"When stockpiles are being upgraded. And when almost 13,000 of these doomsday weapons still exist. The lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are clear."

Nuclear weapons have no place on our planet, he said, "It's time to lift the cloud of nuclear annihilation, once and for all. It's time to proliferate peace".

In his opening remarks, the Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations, Ambassador Magzhan Ilyassov, said the world continues to be just as precarious now, as in 1945, because of the threat of nuclear weapons—the deadliest of all scourges, to avert which, the United Nations was founded 77 years ago.

However, this dread persists, despite the relentless efforts of the UN and the international community to eliminate nuclear weapons.

"The turmoil and havoc of the last two and half years, seen in all countries across the economic spectrum, should therefore not be further aggravated by nuclear warfare or pollution of any kind," he noted.

"Peace, disarmament, justice, sustainable development and environmental protection are the pre-requisites for human survival and wellbeing," the ambassador said.

Despite the challenges that NPT has encountered, it remains one of the key cornerstones of the international security architecture and global non-proliferation regime.

The Tenth NPT Review Conference is most timely "and compels us to make a critical decision for human security and progress to avoid a plunge into unforeseen disasters".

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Kazakhstan will continue to work with others to seek a speedy and safe recovery to ensure enduring stability and security for all. It is a long-cherished objective it has upheld consistently since its independence by advocating for an international effort to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world, said Ambassador Ilyassov.

"We are well aware that as long as there is a place in the world for nuclear weapons, there is simply no absolute guarantee of their non-use. We are now reopening diplomacy, and its potential must be used to the fullest during this Conference.

We hope that we will manage to break the deadlock soon and see a new bright and hopeful horizon for humanity," he declared.

Christine Parthemore, Chief Executive Officer of the Council on Strategic Risks (CSR), said the potential for nuclear confrontation is rising.

"There are numerous drivers of this problem—geopolitical tensions are rising, we lack sufficient momentum in shaping future arms control steps, the world is grappling with the effects of the climate crisis and pandemic, and countless pressures."

It's important not to overlook another driver—that is that several nuclear-armed nations have or are considering increasing prominence for nuclear *capabilities* that may lower the threshold for such weapons being used, capabilities that increase the risks of miscalculations, or both, she added.

This includes nuclear weapons that some would label as low-yield and sub-strategic. It also includes nations possessing dual-capable systems that can carry both nuclear and conventional payloads and which may be difficult to differentiate in a crisis.

"I started seeing an increased focus on these types of capabilities during my time in the Pentagon, and this drives the framing of much of our work at CSR, where we've worked with many nations and others to explore steps to reduce the risks that nuclear weapons will be used, and return nuclear-armed states toward paths of restraint, responsibility, and progress toward NPT commitments," said Parthemore.

"We recommend that nuclear-armed nations should consider any steps that show progress toward the following 3 objectives:

- 1) Halting consideration of *new & novel* nuclear weapon capabilities that are not part of today's landscape
- 2) Avoiding actions that introduce even greater ambiguity in an already complex security environment, and starting to reduce such ambiguity, and

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

3) Avoiding and reducing entanglement between conventional and nuclear forces

There are many forms that such steps could take, and many of these have been explored in works by my organisation, other NGOs, [UNIDIR](#), and others."

Examples could include:

- Agreements to avoid the pursuit of dual-capable weapon systems that could carry conventional and nuclear payloads—either specific weapons or broader classes, such as cruise missiles
- A nuclear-focused successor to the INF treaty, given that numerous nations have expressed interest in maintaining only conventional intermediate-range ground-launch systems
- Moratoriums or agreements not to deploy specific types of nuclear capabilities in specific regions or not to deploy them at all.

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director of the Washington-based Arms Control Association (ACA) and Yerzhan Saltybayev of the Institute of World Economics and Politics also participated in the discussion. The moderator was Anna Ikeda, SGI.

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Nuclear Weapons Policies of Japan and South Korea Challenged

By Jaya Ramachandran

GENEVA — The [Basel Peace Office](#), in cooperation with other civil society organisations, has challenged the nuclear weapons policies of Japan and South Korea in the [UN Human Rights Council](#), maintaining that these violate the Right to Life, a right enshrined in Article 6 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR).



UN Human Rights Council. Photo Credit: UN Web

The two East Asian countries' nuclear strategies have been called into question in reports submitted on July 14 as part of the [Universal Periodic Review](#) (UPR) of the obligations of Japan, South Korea and 12 other countries under human rights treaties. (See [Submission on Japan](#) and [Submission on South Korea](#)).

The submissions, presented at a time when Russia has made nuclear threats to the US and NATO if they intervene in the Russian invasion of Ukraine, underline the need to address the risks of nuclear deterrence policies. Besides, Russia is

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

not the only country that possesses nuclear weapons and/or maintains options to initiate nuclear war.

"In times of high tensions involving nuclear-armed and/or allied states, plans and preparations for the use of nuclear weapons elevate the risk of nuclear war, which would be a humanitarian catastrophe, severely violating the rights of current and future generations," says Alyn Ware, Director of the Basel Peace Office. "Compliance with the Right to Life with respect to nuclear weapons is, therefore, an urgent matter, impacting the rights of all humanity."

In 2018 the UN Human Rights Committee [affirmed that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the Right to Life](#), and that States parties to the ICCPR have obligations to refrain from developing, acquiring, stockpiling and using them. They must also destroy existing stockpiles and pursue negotiations in good faith to achieve global nuclear disarmament.

But both Japan and South Korea are engaged in extended nuclear deterrence policies which involve the threat or use of US nuclear weapons on their behalf in an armed conflict. Both have also supported the option of first use of nuclear weapons on their behalf, even when the United States has been trying to step back from such a policy.

The Basel Peace Office and other civil society organisations argue that the extended nuclear deterrence policies of Japan and South Korea violate their human rights obligations, as is their lack of support for negotiations for comprehensive, global nuclear disarmament.

The submissions make several recommendations of policies the governments could take to conform to the Right to Life. These include adopting no-first-use policies and taking measures to phase out the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines.

This they could do by establishing a Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone and urging at the ongoing [Non-Proliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#) Review Conference an agreement on the global elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045, the 75th anniversary of the NPT.

The submissions are not solely critical of the two governments. They also applaud Japan and South Korea for the positive steps taken. South Korea, in particular, has deployed sports diplomacy (the [2018 Winter Olympics peace initiative](#)) and other diplomatic efforts to rebuild dialogue and agreement with North Korea on a process for peace and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

If the UN Human Rights Council decides to pick up on the challenges and recommendations in the submissions, and direct these to Japan and South Korea, the two countries are required to respond.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Similar submissions were made over the past two years to the Human Rights Council and other UN human rights bodies with regard to the nuclear policies of [Russia](#), the [USA](#), [France](#), [Canada](#), [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [North Korea](#), [Netherlands](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) (see [Nuclear weapons and the UN human rights bodies](#)).

At that time, the issues were not taken up in earnest by the relevant bodies. However, it is hoped that the increased threat of nuclear war arising from the Ukraine conflict might stimulate the Human Rights Council to make this a much higher priority for the current review cycles.

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Applause after the adoption of the political declaration and action plan as 1MSPTPNW ended on June 23 in Vienna. Photo: Credit: United Nations Vienna.

Let's Eliminate Nuclear Weapons, Before They Eliminate Us

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — When UN Secretary-General António Guterres congratulated States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) on the successful conclusion of their first meeting in Vienna, his warning was dead on target.

“Let’s eliminate these weapons before they eliminate us,” he said pointing out that nuclear weapons are a deadly reminder of countries’ inability to solve problems through dialogue and collaboration.

“These weapons offer false promises of security and deterrence—while guaranteeing only destruction, death, and endless brinksmanship,” he declared, in a video message to the conference, which concluded on June 23 in the Austrian capital.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Guterres welcomed the adoption of the [Political Declaration and Action Plan](#), which will help set the course for the Treaty's implementation—and are “important steps toward our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons”.

Alice Slater, who serves on the boards of [World Beyond War](#) and the [Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space](#), told IDN : “On the heels of a precedent-shattering First Meeting (1MSP) of the States Parties to the new [Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna](#), the dark clouds of war and strife continue to plague the world.”

“We are enduring continued violence in Ukraine, new nuclear threats issued by Russia including a possibility of sharing nuclear weapons with Belarus, in the context of tens of billions of dollars in armaments being poured into Ukraine by the US, and a brutal and careless rush to expand the boundaries of NATO to include Finland and Sweden despite promises given to Gorbachev that NATO would not expand east of Germany, when the wall came down and the Warsaw Pact was dissolved.”

She said the news in the Western Media has been unrelentingly critical of Putin and has barely mentioned the new treaty to ban the bomb, despite the stunning Declaration issued in Vienna.

The States Parties, she pointed out, proposed thoughtful plans to move forward on establishing various bodies to deal with the many promises of the treaty including steps for monitoring and verifying the total elimination of nuclear weapons under a limited time frame, with full cognizance of the relationship between the TPNW and the [Non-Proliferation Treaty](#).

“They provide for the development of unprecedented victims assistance for the dreadful suffering and radiation poisoning visited upon so many poor and indigenous communities during the long, horrible and devastating era of nuclear testing, weapons development, waste pollution and more”, said Slater who is also the UN Representative for the [Nuclear Age Peace Foundation](#).

Dr M.V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security, Graduate Program Director, [MPPGA](#), School of Public Policy and Global Affairs at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, told IDN the meeting of the States parties to the TPNW offers one of the few positive ways forward from the dangerous nuclear situation that the world is confronting.

“Russia’s attack on Ukraine and its nuclear threats have served as reminders of the fact that as long as nuclear weapons exist, they can be used, albeit under rare circumstances.”

As famed truth teller/whistle blower Daniel Ellsberg has pointed out over the decades, nuclear weapons can be used in two senses: one of exploding them over an enemy target (as happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and the other sense of threatening to explode them if the adversary did something that was not acceptable to the possessor of the nuclear arsenal, Dr Ramana said.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“This is akin to someone pointing a gun to force someone to do something that they would not want to do under normal circumstances. In the latter sense, nuclear weapons have been used repeatedly by states that possess these weapons of mass destruction,” he added.

It is, therefore, a welcome development that the States parties to the TPNW have promised not to rest until “the last warhead has been dismantled and destroyed and nuclear weapons have been totally eliminated from the Earth”.

That is a goal all countries should work towards, and work with urgency, declared Dr Ramana.

Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ([ICAN](#)), an anti-nuclear activist group which won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize, said: “This meeting has really been a reflection of the ideals of the TPNW itself: decisive action to eliminate nuclear weapons based on their catastrophic humanitarian consequences and the unacceptable risks of their use.”

The States Parties, in partnership with survivors, impacted communities and civil society, have worked extremely hard over the past three days to agree on a wide range of specific, practical actions to take forward every aspect of the implementation of this crucial treaty, she pointed out, at the conclusion of the meeting.

“This is how we are building a powerful norm against nuclear weapons: not through lofty statements or empty promises, but through hands-on, focused action involving a truly global community of governments and civil society.”

According to ICAN, the Vienna meeting also took a number of decisions on practical aspects of moving forward with implementation of the Treaty which was adopted on June 23, 2022.

These included:

- Establishment of a Scientific Advisory Group, to advance research on nuclear weapon risks, their humanitarian consequences, and nuclear disarmament, and to address the scientific and technical challenges involved in effectively implementing the Treaty and provide advice to states parties.
- Deadlines for the destruction of nuclear weapons by nuclear-armed states joining the treaty: no more than 10 years, with the possibility of an extension of up to five years. States parties hosting nuclear weapons belonging to other states will have 90 days to remove them.
- Establishment of a program of intersessional work to follow the meeting, including a coordinating committee and informal working groups on universalization; victim assistance, environmental remediation, and international cooperation and assistance; and work related to the

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

designation of a competent international authority to oversee the destruction of nuclear weapons.

On the eve of the meeting, Cabo Verde, Grenada, and Timor-Leste deposited their instruments of ratification, which will bring the number of TPNW states parties to 65.

Eight states told the meeting they were in the process of ratifying the treaty: Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ghana, Indonesia, Mozambique, Nepal and Niger.

The TPNW entered into force and became international law on January 22, 2021, 90 days after it reached the requisite 50 ratifications/accessions

Elaborating further on the outcome of the meeting, Slater said: "If we are to realize these new promises, we need a lot more truth telling. It is dishonest for our most respected media outlets to constantly harp on Putin's "unprovoked" attack on Ukraine".

She quoted the famed Noam Chomsky, American linguist, philosopher, scientist, and social critic, as saying: *that it is de rigueur to refer to Putin's criminal aggression in Ukraine as his "unprovoked invasion of Ukraine"*.

A Google search for this phrase finds "About 2,430,000 results" Out of curiosity, [a] search for "unprovoked invasion of Iraq." yields "About 11,700 results"—apparently from antiwar sources.

"We are at a turning point in history. Here, in the United States, it has been revealed for all to see that we aren't really an "exceptional" democracy," she argued.

Besides the shocking events of an insurrection in our capital on January 6, 2020, and the incomprehensible reactions to those events, splitting our body politic into bloody parts, our history is catching up with us as we examine the continuing oppression of our black citizens, the renewed racial stereotyping and outrageous injuries to our Asian citizens as we ratchet up Obama's pivot to Asia, demonizing China as well as Russia, noted Slater.

"Add to that the continued mistreatment of our indigenous natives who survived the slaughter of the colonialist patriarchy, the denial of citizenship to women, a battle we thought we had won which has to be fought all over again now as the patriarchy rears its ugly head stripping us of the illusion of democracy we thought we had."

The US government, she said, empowered by corrupt corporate marauders is protected by a judicial system, media, and government that offers no vision or path forward out of perpetual wars and towards cooperative and meaningful actions to avoid the cataclysm of nuclear war or catastrophic climate collapse,

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

not to mention the spreading plague that we seem so inept at dealing with because of corporate greed and misplaced priorities.

“It seems America got rid of a king only to wind up with a tyrannical cabal of what Ray McGovern, a former CIA briefer for Presidents Bush and Clinton who quit in disgust and founded the Veterans Intelligence Professional for Sanity (VIPS) refers to as the MICIMATT: the Military, Industrial, Congressional, Intelligence, Media, Academia, Think Tank complex.”

This ongoing insanity, she pointed out, has led to our relentless expansion of NATO which met this month to address global challenges with Indo-Pacific partners Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea participating together in a NATO Summit for the first time, demonizing China, making commitments to continue the fight against terrorism, and to address threats and challenges from the Middle East, North Africa and Sahel.

There is a rising tide of grassroots actions. A peace wave went around the world to celebrate the need to end wars in June. Many people showed up to demonstrate against the NATO summit in Spain and locally around the world.



Anti-NATO peace protests in Spain. Photo Credit: CGTN screenshot

“The new treaty to ban the bomb, while not supported by the nuclear weapons states, has growing numbers of parliamentarians and city councils around the world urging its nuclear nations to join the treaty and make the promised efforts to abolish nuclear weapons.”

And three NATO states, under the US nuclear umbrella, came to the first TPNW Meeting of States Parties as observers: Norway, Germany and the Netherlands. There are also grassroots actions in NATO countries that share US nuclear weapons, Germany, Turkey, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy, to remove the US nuclear weapons that are kept in those countries.

A good message to send to Russia which is thinking of putting nuclear weapons in Belarus. Giving peace a chance, declared Slater.

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Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

A Side Event at TPNW Conference Focusses on Nuclear Weapons Victims

By Aurora Weiss

VIENNA — "Today is a historic moment," are the words with which the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons ([TPNW](#)) opened in Vienna on June 21. Representatives of the international community, government, civil society and academia gathered here to put into effect the historic Treaty and to shape the future of nuclear disarmament.



Historic meeting of the TPNW in Vienna. Photo Credit: Katsuhiko Asagiri, Multimedia Director of IDN-INPS

Regardless of national interests or belief systems, there is meanwhile agreement that what was considered illusory a decade ago, has become a stark reality. The big powers are in possession of some of the most catastrophic nuclear weapons ever created.

It was appropriate therefore that a side event at the margins of the First Meeting of TPNW States Parties' First Meeting drew the focus on addressing victim assistance, environmental remediation and international cooperation in accordance with Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty.

It was co-organized by the Ministry of foreign affairs of Kazakhstan, the Permanent Mission of Kiribati to the UN, the [Nuclear Age Peace Foundation](#) and [Soka Gakkai International \(SGI\)](#).

Kairat Sarzhanov, Director of the International Security Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, stressed the importance of this side event and thanked the Republic of Kiribati, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation and Soka Gakkai for their support in co-organizing a meaningful event.

SGI was represented by Hirotsugu Terasaki, vice president of Soka Gakkai. Director of Toda Peace Institute Hideki Sakomoto and Chairperson of Komeito Council for Elimination of Nuclear Weapons Masayoshi Hamada also arrived from Japan on this occasion.

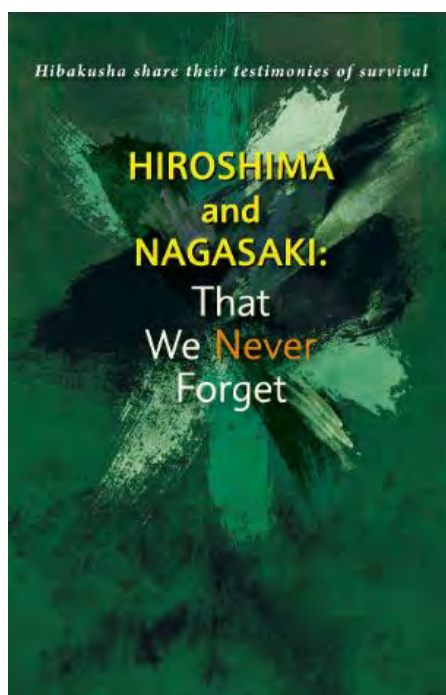
Addressing the event, Mr Terasaki said it was a great honour to join the co-sponsors of the side event at the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. On behalf of Soka Gakkai International, he emphasized that Articles 6 and 7, which are the theme of the event, symbolize the universal values of the Nuclear Convention. Just before the event, Kazakhstan

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi expressed his gratitude to the SGI for the promotion of peace.

Addressing the event, Mr Terasaki said it was a great pleasure to be present at the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. On behalf of Soka Gakkai International, he emphasized the values he shares with the victims affected by the consequences of testing and use of nuclear weapons. Just before the event, Kazakhstan Foreign Minister Mukhtar Tleuberdi expressed his gratitude to the SGI for the promotion of peace.

Upholding the ultimate respect for human dignity, SGI is therefore an active member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ([ICAN](#)). SGI activities for nuclear abolition originate from the 1957 anti-nuclear declaration made by the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, to 50,000 young people in Yokohama, Japan. In his declaration, Toda condemned nuclear weapons which threaten humanity's right to live as an embodiment of the bleakest aspects of the human heart and called on the youth of the Soka Gakkai to take up the challenge of abolishing them.



Soka Gakkai Youth Division even published 2017 a book, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: That We Never Forget*. Over 50 hibakusha, survivors of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945 give vivid testimony of living through the nightmare of those fateful days and their hellish aftermath³.

The Soka Gakkai is a global, community-based Buddhist organization with a membership of over 12 million people around the world that promotes peace, culture and education centred on respect for the dignity of life. The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) as a non-governmental organization has been in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)) since 1983. The SGI Office for UN Affairs operates in New

York and Geneva, representing the SGI at the UN.

Victims of nuclear weapons testing also shared their shocking experiences at the side event. During the Soviet era, Moscow tested nuclear weapons in Kazakhstan. Karipbek Kuyukov, an artist and nuclear nonproliferation activist, with whom we had the opportunity to talk, also personally testified about the terrible consequences of nuclear tests.

³ You may download the book here: <https://cdn2.assets-servd.host/un-sgi/production/assets/downloads/Hiroshima-and-Nagasaki-book.pdf>

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

His physical deformity and the fact that he was born without arms he attributes to the nuclear tests that took place in his village in central Kazakhstan. He describes how he and other locals often saw a mushroom-shaped explosion, how the furniture in the house shook, they felt an iron taste in their mouths, headaches, and their teeth and hair fell out. After the explosion, it looked apocalyptic! Dead birds lay in the street, hairless dogs walked around. Animals were born with several heads and legs, and deformed children were born who often did not survive the very first year of their life.

"Radiation does not affect in the way it can be seen, but it enters the body very quickly. Its devastating consequences are thus passed on to generations," said Karipbek Kuyukov pointing out the fatal effects of weapons that genetically kill new generations.

Dmitriy Vesselov (Kazakhstan), who inherited from his parents and now suffers from nuclear weapons testing, says doctors could not tell him whether his children would bear the consequences, and the decision not to have children was the worst thing he faced.

Bonnie Docherty, Associate Director of Armed Conflict and Civilian Protection and a Lecturer on Law at the International Human Rights Clinic, focused on Articles 6 (Victim Assistance and Environmental Remediation) and 7 (International Cooperation and Assistance). For example, victim assistance should include but is not limited to medical care, rehabilitation, and psychological support, provision for social and economic inclusion, acknowledgement of harm, and promotion of victims' human rights. The biggest problem raised by the present victims is the lack of free health care as well as its temporary absence.

"Each State Party shall, with respect to individuals under its jurisdiction who are affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, in accordance with applicable international humanitarian and human rights law, adequately provide age and gender-sensitive assistance, without discrimination, including medical care, rehabilitation and psychological support, as well as provide for their social and economic inclusion," concluded Docherty.

"There are no right hands that can handle the wrong weapons."

Kazakhstan and Kiribati have together proposed the implementation and promotion of Articles 6 and 7 of the TPNW. Therefore, we have brought together experts and civil society in drafting a working document as the outcome of the event. Our efforts should be focused on all forms of victim assistance, physical, psychological, as well as financial compensation

In his opening speech at the TPNW First Meeting of States Parties, Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg pointed out that nuclear risks have not been this high for decades and that's why he called for responsibility to draw the right lessons.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

"This is no time to celebrate. War has returned to Europe. And the shockwaves of this war of aggression can be felt around the globe. But not only that, Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has been accompanied by explicit threats of the use of nuclear weapons. This is blatant nuclear blackmail! It is a clear violation of the UN Charter, completely irresponsible and utterly unacceptable!" stressed Schallenberg. Besides, the current situation has put one truth sharply into focus: as long as these horrendous weapons exist, they will remain "a threat to us all".

He pointed out that we must counter the narrative that any possession of nuclear weapons is legitimate, and unacceptable because of the humanitarian risks and consequences. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it: "There are no right hands that can handle the wrong weapons".

In a video message, UN Secretary-General António Guterres pointed out that Nuclear Weapons Disarmament is everybody's business because life itself is everybody's business. "It is only by joining in solidarity that we can eliminate this scourge and get back to the business of building a better, more peaceful and trusting world for all. Let's eliminate these weapons before they eliminate us."

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews – 21 June 2022]

Second Comprehensive Study on NFWZs Is Needed

Viewpoint by Dr Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan

The writer is Chairman of Blue Banner NGO, Former Mongolian Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

ULAANBAATAR — In preparation for the 10th Review Conference (Revcon) of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ([NPT](#)) in August, a group of NGOs met in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, to exchange views and discuss the challenges and prospects of nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) regimes that are recognized as important practical regional measures of non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWSs) that contribute to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.



Dr Jargalsaikhan Enkhsaikhan (Photo Credit: Global Peace Foundation) against the backdrop of Chinggis Khaan (Sükhbaatar) Square in Ulaanbaatar, the capital and largest city of Mongolia. Photo Credit: Hostelman ID

All agreed that the most effective way to prevent nuclear weapons threat and their proliferation was the total elimination of such weapons. They had underlined that the entry into force of the Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons ([TPNW](#)) provides a legal framework to delegitimize further nuclear weapons and strengthen the global norms to abolish such weapons. However,

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

that was not enough. In today's rapidly changing geopolitical landscape NWFZs need to play a larger and more active role than before since there still exists enormous constructive potential in the concept and actual practice of NWFZs.

At present, the sea-bed, Antarctica and the outer space are considered as uninhabited NWFZs. There are also five NWFZs in inhabited areas: Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, the entire African continent and Central Asia. These include 116 states covering about 84 million km² of the world's landmass representing 39% of its population and making up 60% of the membership of the United Nations. The regional zones are known as traditional zones. Mongolia is recognized as a state with special nuclear-weapon-free status.

As the number of traditional NWFZs increases, their joint voice will become more weighty and would contribute further to the goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free world. To make NWFZs more credible and effective, all five recognized *de jure* nuclear weapon states (the P5) need to sign or ratify without delay the protocols to NWFZ treaties and withdraw their reservations or unilateral interpretative statements that affect the statuses of NWFZs. The states that have assumed international responsibility over dependent territories need to make sure that their responsibilities do not affect the NWFZs or the legitimate interests of the peoples of those territories.

When reviewing the role of NWFZs, the participants of the Ulaanbaatar conference underlined that one of the main weaknesses of the current NWFZ concept was connected to Article VII⁴ of the NPT that excluded individual states in establishing NWFZs and the 1975 UNGA definition of NWFZs reflecting in its resolution 3472 (XXX) followed the NPT's approach. The definition that the zones needed to be established "on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the states of the region concerned"⁵.

That approach excluded individual states in becoming part of regional zones, even though the 1975 first "comprehensive study of NWFZs in all their aspects" had recognized that zones could be established not only by groups of states but also by entire continents and even by individual states. Today this is not an academic issue anymore but has far reaching practical geopolitical implications. Cumulatively these individual states and their sovereign territories far exceed Central Asian and Southeast Asian states and their sovereign territories.

Moreover, the exclusive group approach contradicts the very spirit of the sovereign equality of states reflected in the United Nations Charter and the fundamental principles of international law, including the right to security. An advisory opinion of ICJ can be sought on the issue. When defining NWFZs the General Assembly in the same resolution has conceded that it "in no way impaired the resolutions which the General Assembly had adopted or may adopt

⁴ NPT's Article VII regarding NWFZs says that "nothing in the treaty affects the right of any group of States to conclude regional treaties" is still being recognized as accepted norm of contemporary international relations and international law. However, the question is whether that is enough today in moving towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

⁵ UNGA resolution 3472 (XXX) B of 11 December 1975

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

with regard to specific cases of NWFZs or the right emanating for the Member States from such resolutions”⁶. No wonder that resolution was adopted by voting with some voting against and some abstaining in its adoption.

Currently under consideration is the issue of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. Informal exchanges of views and ideas to establish a Northeast Asian NWFZ and a zone in the Arctic are also underway. However, there are numerous small states that due to their geographical location or for some credible political or legal reasons cannot be part of a group, i.e. traditional zones. We all know and recognize that the nuclear-weapon-free world would be as strong as its weakest link(s).

Hence there is a need to review the outdated definition of NWFZs so that these NNWSs are not excluded from joining the nuclear-weapon-free world. Otherwise, political vacuums and international legal loopholes would be created in international relations that may be seen and used by the competing nuclear-weapon states to acquire geopolitical advantages with all the ensuing destabilizing consequences not only for that particular region but even broader at a time when in this fast-changing world space and time are becoming important, if not decisive, geostrategic factors.

Excluding some NNWSs based on their geographical location would only widen the division among NNWSs with the majority being protected by international law while some few not. Therefore, a second, this time truly comprehensive study of NWFZs in all their aspects needs to be undertaken, which should be inclusive in its approach to allow for further expansion of NWFZs, as has been pointed out in the statement adopted at the Ulaanbaatar conference.

This second study, which Mongolia proposed in 2013, should make practical use of the more than four decades of accumulated state practices, rich experience and lessons learned that could be helpful in negotiating the second generation of zones, closing all possible legal and political vacuums and loopholes that would weaken the NWFZ regime. The second study is undertaken with the participation of all interested states and should include, as mentioned earlier, unconditional security assurances to be provided by the P5 of NWFZ-related protocols, the role of the *de facto* nuclear-armed states, etc. It should also pronounce itself on the issue of establishing single-State zones and providing by the P5 to NNWSs not parties to traditional zones of pledges to respect their status and not to contribute to any act that would violate their status, known as *security assurance lite*.

If there is a decision by the NPT Revcon to agree to undertake the second study on NWFZs it will be a practical contribution of NNWSs to strengthening further the NPT regime and the next NPT Revcon can review its implementation on par with other issues reflected in the Revcon agenda.

[Published by IDN-InDepthNews – 16 June 2022]

⁶ Ibid

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



U.S. Air Force Staff performing a simulated missile reduction in accordance with the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty on Minot Air Force Base, N.D., 2011. Photo Credit: Flickr/US Air Force

World Threatened with More Nuclear Arms as Modernization of Arsenals Continues

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — The growing modernization of the world's nuclear arsenal is threatening an increase of deadly weapons in the not-too-distant future.

The grim prediction comes from the latest Yearbook released June 13 by the [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\) 2022](https://www.sipri.org/yearbook).

One of the key findings is that despite a marginal decrease in the number of nuclear warheads in 2021, nuclear arsenals are expected to grow over the coming decade.

The world's nine nuclear-armed states—the US, Russia, the UK, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)—continue to modernize their nuclear arsenals, says the report.

Wilfred Wan, Director of SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme said: "All of the nuclear-armed states are increasing or upgrading their arsenals, and most are sharpening nuclear rhetoric and the role nuclear weapons play in their military strategies. This is a very worrying trend."

Although the total number of nuclear weapons declined slightly between January 2021 and January 2022, the number will probably increase in the next decade, the report predicted.

Of the total inventory of an estimated 12,705 warheads at the start of 2022, about 9,440 were in military stockpiles for potential use. Of those, an estimated 3,732 warheads were deployed with missiles and aircraft, and around 2,000—nearly all of which belonged to Russia or the US—were kept in a state of high operational alert.

The total warhead inventories of Russia and the US continued to decline in 2021, largely due to the dismantling of warheads that had been retired from military service several years ago, according to SIPRI.

The number of warheads in the two countries' useable military stockpiles remained relatively stable in 2021.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

World nuclear forces, January 2022

Country	Deployed warheads ^a	Stored warheads ^b	Total stockpile ^b	Total inventory 2022 ^b	Total inventory 2021 ^b
United States	1 744	1 964	3 708	5 428	5 550
Russia	1 588	2 889	4 477	5 977	6 255
United Kingdom	120 ^e	60 ^f	180 ^f	225 ^f	225
France	280	10	290	290	290
China		350 ^g	350 ^g	350 ^g	350
India		160	160	160	156
Pakistan		165	165	165	165
Israel		90	90	90	90
North Korea	—	20 ^h	20 ^h	20 ^h	[40–50] ^h
Total	3 732	5 708	9 440	12 705	13 080

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2022

But the deployed strategic nuclear forces of both countries were within the limits set by a bilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty (2010 Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, New START).

The New START does not, however, limit total non-strategic nuclear warhead inventories.

Hans M. Kristensen, Associate Senior Fellow with SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme and Director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) said: "There are clear indications that the reductions that have characterized global nuclear arsenals since the end of the cold war have ended."

Asked for his comments, Tariq Rauf, former Head of Verification and Security Policy, IAEA, told IDN "following the extension of New START in February 2021 and the June 2021 Geneva meeting between Presidents of Russia and the United States, a tentative dialogue was started on strategic stability and further reductions in nuclear arms".

"This dialogue was suspended following the Russian invasion of Ukraine (last February) and now unfortunately there are no prospects of further nuclear arms

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

reductions," he said, pointing out, that China-US nuclear arms control dialogue also is missing.

"The five NPT nuclear-weapon States now—the US, UK, France, Russia and China, who are also the five permanent members of the UN Security Council—are not fulfilling their NPT obligations on nuclear disarmament and the four other nuclear-armed States too remain outside any constraints.



An empty UN Security Council chamber. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

"The world once again is in dangerous times with heightened risks of nuclear war and top leadership is lacking in all nine nuclear-armed States, with little or no prospects for improvement," Rauf warned.

Dr Rebecca Johnson, executive director of AIDD ([Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy](#)), who worked on the 1996 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and [UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#), told IDN: "Horrifically, we are now seeing the tragic consequences of governmental failures to abolish all nuclear weapons when the Cold War ended."

"Vladimir Putin's nuclear threats after invading Ukraine show us the existential dangers for humanity of allowing any government to possess nuclear weapons," she said.

If not stopped and disarmed, she argued, the greed and short-sightedness of such political leaders may yet destroy the world—like the governments and industries that failed to tackle climate destruction decades ago because they were so in thrall to environmentally destructive fossil fuels.

"It's up to us, the people, to act together to stop the nuclear addicts and gas guzzlers that are so demonstrably incapable of acting responsibly for global security."

Nuclear arsenals and bases began to be reduced because of civil society uprisings in the 1980s, but what resulted was not nuclear disarmament but a form of nuclear management, said Dr Johnson, who was imprisoned for campaigning against NATO's intermediate-range nuclear missile deployments while living in the Women's Peace Camp outside the Greenham Common nuclear base from 1982 to 1987.

After the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was indefinitely extended in 1995, nuclear arsenals carried on being upgraded. Inevitably, the number of nuclear-armed governments went up from five to nine, and these all kept increasing military expenditure.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

"That's why the vast majority of nations and peoples got together to bring the TPNW into force in 2021. Now we have to make this treaty work, in conjunction with International Humanitarian Law."

The priority, she said, should be to strengthen and embed the TPNW's legal prohibitions, norms and requirements. Recognise the dangers attached to arguments from people who want to normalise nuclear threats and ignore the consequences of nuclear use by pontificating about tactical versus strategic weapons, or distinctions between first and second uses.

These spurious distinctions serve to justify retaliatory nuclear strikes, and so make nuclear war possible, with all the horrific consequences of mass murder, nuclear winter and global starvation. Regardless of the delivery range and warhead size, each and any nuclear use must be stigmatised and prosecuted as a crime against humanity, Dr Johnson declared.

According to SIPRI, the UK in 2021 announced its decision to increase the ceiling on its total warhead stockpile, in a reversal of decades of gradual disarmament policies. While criticizing China and Russia for lack of nuclear transparency, the UK also announced that it would no longer publicly disclose figures for the country's operational nuclear weapon stockpile, deployed warheads or deployed missiles.

In early 2021, she pointed out, France officially launched a programme to develop a third-generation nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN).

India and Pakistan appear to be expanding their nuclear arsenals, and both countries introduced and continued to develop new types of nuclear delivery systems in 2021.

Israel—which does not publicly acknowledge possessing nuclear weapons—is also believed to be modernizing its nuclear arsenal, said SIPRI.

North Korea, meanwhile, continues to prioritize its military nuclear programme as a central element of its national security strategy. While North Korea conducted no nuclear test explosions or long-range ballistic missile tests during 2021, SIPRI estimates that the country has now assembled up to 20 warheads and possesses enough fissile material for a total of 45–55 warheads.

"If the nuclear-armed states take no immediate and concrete action on disarmament, then the global inventory of nuclear warheads could soon begin to increase for the first time since the cold war," said Matt Korda, Associate Researcher with SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme and Senior Research Associate with the FAS Nuclear Information Project.

Elaborating further Johnson said that as the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine and other armed conflicts around the world make plain, militarism, nuclear threats and environmental destruction are part of a violent, patriarchal-industrial continuum of harm against us all.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Preventing nuclear war will take millions of honourable, courageous people to unseat the bullies and act together for disarmament and peace.

"Women are at the forefront of rejecting the violent threats and creating sustainable ways to build peaceful relations and share the Earth's resources. That's why I continue to write, speak and act for nuclear disarmament, climate justice and peace."

"I was in Glasgow for COP 26 and have put in a working paper on implementing the TPNW when the first meeting of TPNW States Parties meets at the end of June. The governments will follow our lead—if they can't get away with threatening and using nuclear weapons, they will stop spending money on making and deploying them."

"We can stop nuclear weapons being used and abolish all the arsenals – we have to work together against war and make all international treaties and agreements work more effectively for disarmament, peace and the environment," she declared.

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Nuclear Policies Violate Right to Life, Warn Civil Society Organisations

By Jaya Ramachandran



Photo Credit: UK Ministry of Defence

GENEVA — While arms control and disarmament efforts have come to a halt, civil society organisations are insisting that nuclear policies contravene the right to life. "Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life," declares Article 6 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR).

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Drawing on the right to life enshrined in this Convent, organisations promoting arms control and disarmament from the UK and the Netherlands have challenged the nuclear weapons policies of the two countries.

They declared in the UN Human Rights Council recently that those policies are in violation of the right to life. which concludes that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the right to life and may amount to a crime under international law.

The challenges have been made in reports submitted to the Human Rights Council by groups of organizations as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the obligations of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands under international human rights law including the ICCPR. (See [submission on the Netherlands](#) and the [submission on the United Kingdom](#)).

The submissions tabled on March 31 make several recommendations of policy actions the governments could take in order to conform to the right to life. These include adopting no-first-use policies, cancelling plans to renew nuclear weapons systems, taking measures to phase out the role of nuclear weapons in their security doctrines and advancing at the 2022 NPT Review Conference a goal for the global elimination of nuclear weapons by 2045, the 75th anniversary of the NPT.

The submissions also include sections which highlight the connections between nuclear weapons and climate change, and include recommendations to the UK on re-allocating nuclear weapons budgets to renewable energy development and climate action financing, and to the Netherlands to support the [initiative](#) to take the issue of climate change to the International Court of Justice.

In 2018 the UN Human Rights Committee [affirmed that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the Right to Life](#), and that States parties to the ICCPR have obligations to refrain from developing, acquiring, stockpiling and using them, and also have obligations to destroy existing stockpiles and pursue negotiations in good faith to achieve global nuclear disarmament. The submissions argue that the nuclear weapons policies of the UK and Netherlands are in violation of these obligations.

The submissions come at a time when Russia has threatened a nuclear war over the Ukraine conflict. These are a reminder of the vital importance to address the risks of nuclear deterrence policies. Besides, together with China, France, United Kingdom, and the United States, Russia is one of the five nuclear-weapon states (NWS).The five maintain options to initiate a nuclear war. They are officially recognised by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as possessing nuclear weapons.

The four countries that are not listed in the NWS as nuclear-weapon states—Pakistan (165), India (156), Israel (90) and North Korea (40-50) possess—and the NWS together possess an estimated total of about 13,000 nuclear weapons.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Most of these are many times more annihilating than the nuclear weapon dropped on Hiroshima. Thirty-one other states are also part of the problem.

In addition, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey all host U.S. nuclear weapons. The United States insists that it maintains operational control of these weapons, but the fact is that their positioning in these countries helps U.S. nuclear war planning.



NATO Summit 2021. Photo
Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Beside the five hosts, twenty-six countries also "endorse" the possession and use of nuclear weapons by allowing the potential use of nuclear weapons on their behalf as part of defence alliances, including the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) headed by Russia.

Explaining a crucial reason behind the submissions, Alyn Ware, Co-founder of UNFOLD ZERO and Director of the Basel Peace Office, one of the submitting organizations said: "In times of high tensions involving nuclear-armed and/or allied states, plans and preparations for the use of nuclear weapons elevate the risk of nuclear

war which would be a humanitarian catastrophe, severely impacting rights of current and future generations."

Mr Ware added: "Compliance with the Right to Life with respect to nuclear weapons is therefore an urgent matter, impacting the rights of all humanity."

The importance of nuclear weapons of the United Kingdom lies in the fact that UK deploys about 160 nuclear warheads (40 on each of their 4 strategic nuclear submarines) which are ready to be fired at any time under policy options to potentially use the nuclear weapons in a wide range of circumstances, including in response to threats from chemical and biological capabilities or emerging technologies that could have a comparable impact.

The Netherlands hosts approximately 20 United States B61 nuclear bombs at its Volkel airbase and maintains operational measures to 'deliver' these by the Dutch Airforce F-16 planes to potential targets for use in wartime.

If the UN Human Rights Council decides to pick up on the challenges and recommendations in the submissions and direct these to the UK and the Netherlands, the two countries are required to respond.

Similar submissions were made in 2020 and 2021 to the Human Rights Council and other UN human rights bodies with regard to the nuclear policies of [Russia](#), the [USA](#), [France](#), [Canada](#), [Denmark](#), [Iceland](#) and [North Korea](#), (see [Nuclear weapons and the UN human rights bodies](#)), but the issues were not taken up in

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

earnest by the relevant bodies. Knowledgeable circles hope that the increased threat of nuclear war arising from the Ukraine conflict might stimulate the Human Rights Council to make this a much higher priority for the current review cycle.

The UK submissions have been tabled by: Abolition 2000 UK, Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Association of Swiss Lawyers for Nuclear Disarmament, Basel Peace Office, Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Christian CND, CND Cymru (Wales), International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, International Forum for Understanding, Legacy of the Atomic Bomb/Recognition for Atomic Test Survivors (LABRATS), Nuclear Free Local Authorities, Pax Christi Scotland, Scientists for Global Responsibility, Sheffield Creative Action for Peace, Uniting for Peace, Westminster West Rotary Club Peace Committee, Youth Fusion, World Future Council and 80,000 Voices.

The Netherlands submissions come from Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Association of Swiss Lawyers for Nuclear Disarmament, Basel Peace Office, Council of Churches in the Netherlands, International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms, Pugwash Netherlands, Tribunal for Peace, World Future Council, World's Youth for Climate Justice and Youth Fusion.

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ICAN Successfully Promoting the Nuclear-Weapons Ban in Africa

By Jaya Ramachandran

GENEVA — 2017 Nobel Peace laureate, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ([ICAN](#)) and its [partner organisations](#) are carrying out activities across Africa to promote adherence to the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#) and to raise awareness of the grave threat that nuclear weapons pose to all humanity.

The TPNW includes a comprehensive set of prohibitions on participating in any nuclear weapon activities. These include undertakings not to develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons.

The Treaty also prohibits the deployment of nuclear weapons on national territory and the provision of assistance to any State in the conduct of prohibited activities.

States parties will be obliged to prevent and suppress any activity prohibited under the TPNW undertaken by persons or on territory under its jurisdiction or control.

Besides, the Treaty obliges States parties to provide adequate assistance to individuals affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, as well as to take necessary and appropriate measures of environmental remediation in areas

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



ICAN Nobel Peace Prize Concert 2017. Photo Credit: Ralf Schlesener

under its jurisdiction or control contaminated as a result of activities related to the testing or use of nuclear weapons.

ICAN, a coalition of non-governmental organizations in 104 countries, played a crucial role in the Treaty being adopted by a vote of 122 States in favour, with one vote against and one abstention at the United Nations in New York on July 7, 2017. Forty-two were African states.

It was opened for signature by the UN Secretary-General on September 20, 2017. Following the deposit with the Secretary-General of the 50th instrument of ratification or accession of the Treaty on October 24, 2020,

Since then, all 54 African states have voiced their support for this landmark treaty in the UN General Assembly, and many have signed and ratified it (see the [list here](#)), while several are now in the process of becoming states parties.

The organisations with which ICAN is carrying out regional activities are the [African Union](#), [AFCONE](#) and [ECOWAS](#).

In April 2019, the African Union's Peace and Security Council held a meeting on the TPNW, and ICAN was invited to brief the 15-member body. In March 2022, the Commission of the AU, in partnership with ICAN, convened a meeting "to promote universalisation of the TPNW in Africa", at which government officials from AU member states exchanged views.

They recalled the leading role African states played in the negotiation, adoption, and promotion of the TPNW, as well as the synergy of the treaty with other regional priorities and instruments, notably the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (the "Pelindaba Treaty").

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

The Treaty is named after South Africa's main Nuclear Research Centre, run by The South African Nuclear Energy Corporation and was the location where South Africa's atomic bombs of the 1970s were developed, constructed and subsequently stored. The Pelindaba Treaty was signed in 1996 and came into effect with the 28th ratification on July 15, 2009.

The Treaty prohibits the research, development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, testing, possession, control or stationing of [nuclear explosive devices](#) in the territory of parties to the Treaty and the dumping of [radioactive wastes](#) in the African zone by Treaty parties.

The Pelindaba accord also forbids any attack against nuclear installations in the zone by Treaty parties and requires them to maintain the highest standards of physical protection of nuclear material, facilities and equipment, which are to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes.

The Treaty requires all parties to apply full-scope [International Atomic Energy Agency](#) safeguards to all their peaceful nuclear activities. A mechanism to verify compliance, including the establishment of the [African Commission on Nuclear Energy](#) (AFCONE), has been established by the Treaty. Its office will be in South Africa.

ICAN has cooperated with the AFCONE to advance nuclear disarmament. In October 2021, an ICAN delegation [attended](#) the fifth conference of states parties to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in Johannesburg, South Africa.

ICAN and its partner organisations in West Africa have [engaged](#) with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) since 2019. In December 2021, following advocacy by ICAN, the ECOWAS parliament expressed its [support](#) for the TPNW and encouraged ECOWAS members that have not yet done so to become parties to the treaty.

Besides, ICAN has been carrying out activities to promote adherence to the TPNW and to raise awareness of the grave threat that nuclear weapons pose to all humanity on a national level in 24 African countries.

These are: Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

In 2017, 42 African states voted in favour of the Treaty's adoption. Since then, 29 African states have signed it and 12 have now ratified it. Congo is the first Central African State to ratify the TPNW.

Mr Jean-Claude Gakosso, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Congolese Abroad of the Republic of the Congo signed the TPNW on September 20, 2017, when it opened for signature, at a high-level ceremony in New York.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Congo's ratification on May 12, 2022 is considered a testimony of Africa's firm stance that multilateral action on nuclear disarmament is more necessary and urgent than ever, and that it is the responsibility of all states to lead towards the elimination of these horrific weapons.

"The ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is worth its weight in gold and reminds us that international peace and security is worth this price", Isidore Mvouba, President of the Congolese National Assembly, said in February 2022.

Indeed, the consequences of any use of nuclear weapons anywhere would be disastrous, everywhere, resulting in death, destruction, climate change, famine, and an ensuing refugee crisis that would ripple throughout Africa and the world, threatening the very survival of humanity.

"Congo, by ratifying the TPNW, has just made a major contribution to global public health. The use of nuclear weapons would have devastating health consequences for years. It is important that countries which have not yet signed and ratified the TPNW follow Congo's example for a safe and healthy world," said Georges Batala-Mpondo of the Association congolaise pour la santé publique et communautaire (ACSPC), ICAN's Congolese partner.

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North Korea Continues to Defy UN with 17 Missile Tests in 2022

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations, faced with a defiant nuclear-armed Russia in a destructive war with Ukraine now running towards the third month, is fighting an equally unsuccessful confrontation with North Korea which is openly violating multiple Security Council resolutions as it continues launching ballistic missiles threatening neighbouring countries.



South Korean commuters watch TV coverage of the North Korean missile launch from a Seoul railway station. Photo Credit: AFP: Jung Yeon-je

Addressing the UN Security Council on May 11, US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the United States strongly condemns the DPRK's (North Korea's) April 16, May 4, and May 7 ballistic missile launches.

These launches were just the latest in a series of ballistic missile launches conducted by the DPRK in recent months, each one a blatant violation of multiple Security Council resolutions, she said.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“The DPRK has conducted 17—and I do repeat 17 because I’ve heard different numbers in the room today—they have conducted 17 ballistic missile launches this year alone.”

At least three were intercontinental ballistic missiles; one was an intermediate-range ballistic missile; two were so-called hypersonic weapons, and two were described as a new type of missile for tactical nuclear weapons. The DPRK is also reconstructing its nuclear testing site in preparation for a seventh nuclear test, she pointed out.

“All of these ballistic missile launches, as would a nuclear test, violate Security Council resolutions. They pose threats to regional and international security. And they seek to undermine the global non-proliferation regime.”

This Council should not stand for it. But the Security Council has stayed silent because two Council members have argued that Council restraint will somehow encourage the DPRK to stop escalating and instead come to the negotiating table.

The two veto-wielding permanent members of the Council she refused to name are China and Russia.

In Resolution 2397, the Security Council committed to taking action to further restrict the export to the DPRK of petroleum if the DPRK conducts a launch of a ballistic missile system capable of reaching intercontinental ranges. In full knowledge of this provision, the DPRK moved forward with launching at least three ICBMs this year, she added.

Unfortunately, over the last four years, two members have blocked every attempt to enforce and to update the DPRK sanctions list, enabling the DPRK’s unlawful actions, declared the US envoy.

Ambassador Barbara Woodward of the UK told the Security Council that once again, “this Council is meeting to condemn ballistic missile launches by North Korea. This year alone, as we’ve heard, North Korea has launched 17 ballistic missiles—each in violation of UN Security Council resolutions”.

In the whole of 2021, she said, North Korea conducted eight missile tests. “So, let’s make no mistake about the escalation in tempo and missile capability that these 17 launches represent.”

Responding to reports that North Korea plans a nuclear test, UN Deputy Spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters on May 9: “I don’t want to prejudge what happens. I’m not going to speculate on whether there is a nuclear test or not”.

“Of course, we have expressed our previous concerns about all missile tests, and we continue to reiterate those. Ultimately, we want to call, once again, for a return to dialogue amongst all the parties on the Korean Peninsula so that we

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

can proceed with the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” he added.

Dr Alon Ben-Meir, a retired professor of international relations at the Center for Global Affairs at New York University (NYU) and who taught courses on international negotiation and Middle Eastern studies for over 20 years, told IDN there is no doubt that North Korea’s launching of missiles during the past 4 months is by far more frequent than in previous years during the same period of time.



Presidents Kim (North Korea) Trump (US) shakes hands during the Singapore summit in 2018. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

“I do not see how North Korea will stop perfecting its ballistic missile program and further expanding its nuclear arsenal, unless there is a new agreement, specifically with the United States. Such an agreement, however, will not come to pass if the United States continues to insist that North Korea agrees to completely relinquish its nuclear arsenal.”

At best, he said, “I feel that an agreement can be achieved only if North Korea merely freezes its program, both ballistic and nuclear, on the condition of course that the negotiations resume and bring about the removal of the economic sanctions in particular that have been imposed on North Korea for the past decade”.

But at the same time, he argued, both North and South Korea will have to engage directly and constructively certainly on economic and political levels that could lead to some form of normalization of relations between the two countries as a prerequisite to reaching a wider and more sustainable agreement.

Asked about a comment from a North Korean diplomat who stated that no country with nuclear weapons has been attacked, “it is certainly valid”.

Short of reaching an agreement, North Korea continues to feel threatened by the United States and hence, it will not halt the development of both programs until an agreement is reached, said Dr Ben-Meir.

He also pointed out that it is important that the United States reiterates its commitment to the security of its allies in the region, specifically South Korea and Japan, as this would certainly deter North Korea from threatening either country.

That said, though, the present status quo cannot be sustained indefinitely as North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons with a delivery system has

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

certainly a destabilizing effect as it raises the level of anxiety and concerns in the region.

"Although China definitely has some concern over North Korea's program, it does not openly criticize North Korea, but they do have regular private conversations about the subject. North Korea relies heavily on China's political and economic support and would not want to raise the ire of the Chinese. On the whole, China agrees that North Korea's nuclear program is a source of instability, but it does not see as representing an imminent threat," declared Dr Ben-Meir.

Dr Rebecca Johnson, Disarmament Diplomacy campaigner and author of the 2022 report "[Nuclear weapons are banned](#)," told IDN, "North Korean leaders will continue to make and deploy nuclear weapons as long as they fear American nuclear forces and military coercion".

"Change on three interconnected levels would enable North Korea's leaders to end reliance on military threats and nuclear weaponry that could never be used without destroying the whole country, if not our planet."

"*One*, there needs to be a peace agreement supported by the United Nations and directly involving North and South Korea and the United States, as advocated by [WomenCrossDMZ](#) and others."

She said this must go further than the 1953 armistice, and deal with outstanding humanitarian, peace and confidence-building issues that have blighted so many lives since the terrible war that divided the Korean Peninsula.

Two, Six-Party talks must be urgently reconvened between North and South Korea, China, Russia, the United States and Japan. These negotiations need to put the denuclearizing of North Korea into a broader framework of building regional security through establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone covering North-East Asia.

Three, it would greatly increase the safety and security of the Korean Peninsula if denuclearization steps are undertaken alongside accession to the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), said Dr Johnson.

"As the TPNW begins to be internationally implemented, with its first meeting of States Parties scheduled for Vienna in June, early steps by Japan and South Korea towards adhering to this UN-backed Treaty would help to engage North Korea by providing non-discriminatory mechanisms to assist and monitor the removal of nuclear weapon threats and technologies from the Korean Peninsula."

These steps, she argued, would be most effective if backed by commitments from China, Russia and the United States that they will not deploy or use nuclear weapons in the region.

Pending their adherence to the TPNW and in line with NPT obligations and the UN Charter, all states need to help North Koreans to end the military-nuclear

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

programs that threaten their survival and global security, said Dr Johnson, an Ecofeminist peace activist.

Asked about the missile launches, US State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters said it demonstrates the fact that North Korea's ballistic missile program, its nuclear weapons program, pose a threat to the DPRK's neighbours.

"They pose a threat to the region. They pose a threat to peace and stability throughout the Indo-Pacific.

When it comes to the United States—and we have said this before; we've said this in the aftermath of other recent provocations—our commitment to the defence of our treaty allies, the Republic of Korea and Japan, that commitment is ironclad", he added.

Asked about China's non-criticism of North Korea, Price said: "The PRC, of course, is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The fact that there are multiple UN Security Council resolutions, and multiple statements that have emanated from the UN Security Council chamber itself is a testament to the fact that countries around the world—including the PRC—recognize that the DPRK's ballistic missile, its nuclear program is a source of instability, it is a source of insecurity, and that it is a threat to the broader region."

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Ukraine Proves UN Cannot Singlehandedly Usher in a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS — The devastating war in Ukraine—now moving towards the third month—has triggered several threats of the "nuclear option".

The battle, which began with the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, is between one of the world's major nuclear powers and a neighboring non-nuclear country.

The latest implicit threat comes from Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov who warned April 25 that the possibility of a nuclear conflict "should not be underestimated".

"Everyone is reciting incantations that in no case can we allow World War III," he was quoted as saying in a Russian television interview. "The danger is serious," he said. "It is real."

The crisis in Ukraine has also revealed the UN's limitations in the "maintenance of international peace and security" as spelled out in the UN charter.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



The Sun rises behind Long Island City skyscrapers at dawn of the first day of the general debate of the General Assembly's seventy-sixth session (2021). Photo: Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garten

As the conflict continues to spiral out of control, the United Nations has come under heavy fire for its inability to bring the crisis to an end or even help negotiate a cease-fire—despite Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' one-on-one meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on April 26.

Judging by these developments, there is a related question that cries out for an answer: Can the UN ever bring about a nuclear-weapons-free world as foreseen in dozens of resolutions and international conferences?

Dr M.V. Ramana, Professor and Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security and Director, Liu Institute for Global Issues at the School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, told IDN the United Nations, by itself, can never bring about a nuclear-weapons-free world, regardless of the number of resolutions and conferences.

However, the United Nations can act as a meeting place where countries around the world that are interested in this goal can get to express their collective will, he pointed out.

But such countries by themselves, even as a combined grouping at the UN, might not be able to force powerful countries like the United States or Russia or China to give up their nuclear weapons, he argued.

"It would have to be combined with the power of social movements within these countries. Of course, at this moment, such movements are very weak and the likelihood of them being able to change policies is extremely low."

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

“But we do not have an option, for a continuation of the current nuclear status quo—or worse, an arms race—will almost definitely end in a catastrophe,” he warned.

Henriette Westhrin, secretary-general of Norwegian People’s Aid said: “The war in Ukraine and Vladimir Putin’s nuclear threats are yet another stark reminders of the profound dangers of living in a world where some states insist their security must rest on the capacity for massive and indiscriminate nuclear violence.”

“We have ended up trusting luck rather than the supposed stabilizing effects of nuclear deterrence. It is deeply concerning that the global stockpile of nuclear weapons available for use is now increasing,” said Westhrin, secretary-general of Norwegian People’s Aid, which published its annual Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor report on April 11, 2022.

Medea Benjamin, a co-founder of CODEPINK, a women-led grassroots organization working to end U.S. wars and militarism, told IDN this is certainly not the first time the UN has failed to stop a war.



Medea Benjamin. Photo Credit: Hamed Malekpour/Tasnim News Agency

“But the war in Ukraine has actually given people a heightened sense of the danger of nuclear war. This is especially true for the younger generation, as they have not grown up with such a looming possibility as we are experiencing right now. We must build on this.”

According to the UN ban treaty, she said, “nuclear weapons are now illegal, and we have to keep working to get the nuclear States to sign”.

The first task is to end the war in Ukraine, without triggering a nuclear confrontation and without allowing it to drag on for years, the way the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan did.

“But we can use this time to educate people about the existential threat of nuclear war and build support for the UN treaty.”

Asked whether nuclear disarmament was a good try in a lost cause, Benjamin said: “A lost cause would be a nuclear confrontation between Russia and the United States. It is our obligation to fight for a nuclear-weapons-free world because the future of the planet hangs in the balance”.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Dr Ramesh Thakur, Emeritus Professor, the Australian National University and Senior Research Fellow at the *Toda Peace Institute*, told IDN: First, there is a common misunderstanding about the UN.

"It was never designed to be able to stop a major power (a P5) from aggression against smaller states: the US and UK against Iraq in 2003 and Russia against Ukraine currently. It gave higher priority to preserving peace by avoiding a full-scale war between the major powers."

The veto clause ensures both goals, he said.

"This also hints at a crucial factor that the biased Western media is mostly ignoring. In a real sense, the Ukraine war is a proxy Russia-NATO war for which the US and NATO share responsibility."



The Solomon Islands prime minister Manasseh Sogavare Photo Credit: Solomon Islands Government Communications Unit

For example, Australia's PM Scott Morrison said recently that a Chinese military base on the Solomon Islands would be an unacceptable red line. And a White House statement after Biden's top Pacific adviser Kurt Campbell met with the Solomons Prime Minister said the US would have significant concerns and respond accordingly to a Chinese military base on the Solomon Islands.

The Solomons are 2,000km offshore from Australia's north coast. Russia and the

Ukraine share land border and Kyiv is under 800km from Moscow. Yet the US refuses to concede that NATO's continual eastward expansion crossed an understandable Russian red line, he noted.

Second, on the nuclear question, the issue is again slightly less clearcut than your question implies, said Dr Thakur, whose most recent book is *The Nuclear Ban Treaty: A Transformational Reframing of the Global Nuclear Order* (Routledge, 2022).

He pointed out it's possible to argue three positions. *Firstly*, the hard return of geopolitics has pushed the cause of nuclear disarmament back quite severely by highlighting the role of nuclear weapons and leading to increased interest from some US allies, both in Europe and in the Pacific, in entering into nuclear-sharing arrangements with NATO and the US.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Secondly, and alternatively, the crisis highlights the critical importance of actually doing something about the threats posed by the very existence of nuclear weapons, instead of forever pushing it into the future because the present time is never the right time to pursue this goal.

Thirdly, in light of the Ukraine crisis, can the world afford to continue with a virtual civil war between the nuclear arms control and disarmament community between the NPT and TPNW camps, instead of pooling efforts towards credible and practical steps to reduce nuclear dangers? asked Dr Thakur.

Meanwhile, according to the latest figures from the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor, the nine nuclear-armed states had a combined arsenal of 12,705 nuclear warheads at the beginning of 2022.

Of these, an estimated 9,440 warheads—with a collective yield equivalent to approximately 138,000 Hiroshima bombs—constituted usable stockpiles, available for use by the nuclear-armed states on their missiles, aircraft, submarines and ships.

The number of nuclear warheads in usable stockpiles is now on the rise, warns the Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor.

In addition to the 9,440 nuclear warheads in global usable stockpiles, at the beginning of 2022 an estimated 3,265 retired, older warheads were awaiting dismantlement in Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

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The End Of (Human) History?

Viewpoint by Sergio Duarte

The writer is an Ambassador, former United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affair, and President of Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

NEW YORK — Roughly three decades have gone by since the publication of Francis Fukuyama's essay "The End of History?". The interrogation mark makes clear that the social scientist and philosopher was not announcing an end to contradiction and conflict among nations. He was mainly asking whether Western liberal democracy could be considered as the final stage of human sociocultural evolution and the final form of governance that would endure.

The "end of history" concept, discussed by philosophers such as Hegel and Marx in the 19th century presupposes a state in which human existence would continue indefinitely into the future without major changes in society, system of governance or economics.

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons



Montage of an inert test of a United States Trident SLBM (submarine launched ballistic missile), from submerged to the terminal, or re-entry phase, of the multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles. Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

The main question posed by Fukuyama thirty years ago was how post-Soviet Russia would evolve: either emulate Western Europe's trajectory since World War II or "realize its own uniqueness and remain stuck in history". At the close of his essay, Fukuyama noted that "nostalgia for the times when history existed" would continue to fuel competition and conflict." His question seems to have been answered by Putin's Russia.

Many analysts of the current situation after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia agree that the driving force behind the Russian action is a yearning to reconfigure Greater Russia as it is claimed to have existed even before the times of the czars and later during the five decades of the Soviet Union. That, quoting Fukuyama again, might mean that Russia decided to remain "stuck in history". Obviously, the roots and causes of the current state of hostility between NATO and Russia are much more complex than that and would not fit in the scope of his article.

Let us recall that at the time of the publication of Fukuyama's article the prospect of mutual assured destruction in a battle between the United States and Soviet Russia was slowly being replaced by complacency. Most of the rest of the world had by then decided that to rely on nuclear weapons to protect their own security was too dangerous and certainly counterproductive.

Despite the underlying assumption of the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons \(NPT\)](#) that such weapons had come to stay, the wide majority of nations condoned the inherent discrimination embedded in the treaty and preferred to forgo developing their own arsenals, in the hope that somehow the weak promise of its article VI would be realized. For the nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear ones that entrusted their security on positive assurances

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

given by the former, the treaty came to be regarded as a license to the five parties anointed by it as legal possessors to continue adding to their arsenals.

For sure, to this day both superpowers keep engaged in a race to develop ever more destructive weapons, followed at a considerable distance by China. The two other nuclear-weapon states seem content, at least for the time being, to maintain a much smaller nuclear force aimed at deterring potential aggressors. Since they are not bound by the treaty, the four nuclear-armed countries that emerged after 1970 feel free to follow the course of their predecessors.

In 2009 presidents Barack Obama and Dmitri Medvedev concluded the [New START Treaty](#), committing to reduce the nuclear arsenals of both countries and giving rise to the hope that there would be further reductions in the near future. That hope, however, was soon thwarted. Weapons that had outlived their usefulness or whose maintenance had become too costly were indeed dismantled but ~~soon~~ thereafter both countries dedicated large sums to technological improvement and production of new means of destruction far sharper and faster than the ones that had been discarded. They also stopped short of clearly linking such reductions to the objective of complete elimination. Reductions seem to have been undertaken for economic and technical reasons, as with new weapons replacing obsolete ones, rather than as a harbinger of a real willingness to do away with the threat posed by them.

Only nine months ago, in June 2021, the current leaders of the United States and Russia, Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin, met in Vienna and accepted the prodding of civil society around the world by jointly reaffirming the 1967 declaration by Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan “a nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought” and promising “to embark together on an integrated Strategic Stability Dialogue (...) to lay the groundwork for future arms control and risk reduction measures”.

So far there has been no follow-up to these propositions. The New START Treaty was extended for five years beyond its original expiration date but given the state of US-Russia relations it seems doubtful that there will be any progress in negotiations for new reductions in arsenals or increased bilateral stability in the short and even medium run. All possessors of nuclear weapons have declared, with various rhetorical twists, the willingness to use their weapons in the circumstances that they themselves see such use as necessary or justified. China is the only one to have stated that it will not be the first to employ that awesome power, and several voices in civil society urge other nuclear weapon states to adopt formally a similar posture.

However, non-first use, or NFU as this policy is commonly referred to, ultimately amounts to condoning the maintenance of ever more destructive arsenals and would be conducive to a situation where nuclear weapon states feel that it is permissible to continue developing ever more lethal means of warfare under the justification that they will not use them first. The character *Candide* in Voltaire's tale of innocence and double standards would simply ask: if you yourself doubt the wisdom of using them, why are you so attached to them?

Toward A World Without Nuclear Weapons

Although in different forms, all nine states that possess nuclear weapons seem to share the self-fulfilling proposition that they are entitled to keep the power to wipe out human civilization “as long as nuclear weapons exist”. Ever since nuclear weapons were used in war, efforts to negotiate and adopt multilateral disarmament measures have eluded the international community.

In 1946 the first Session of the United Nations General Assembly established a commission tasked with “making specific proposals for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other weapons adaptable to mass destruction”. Predictably, mistrust and hostility between the two most powerful states prevented any progress in that direction.

As time went by, other states came to acquire those weapons and the emphasis was gradually shifted from disarmament to the prevention of proliferation, as if the main problem was not the existence of the weapons themselves, but the number of countries that possessed them. To this date, existing multilateral treaties have not gone beyond establishing ever stricter rules designed to keep new states from seeking membership in the exclusive nuclear club.

The abrupt shift in international relations caused by Russia’s aggression to Ukraine as a response to what it sees as a threat posed by the eastward expansion of NATO shook the whole world and complacency gave way to fear and anxiety. Suddenly, the use of nuclear weapons seemed a real and present danger, not only for those directly engaged in the hostilities, but for the whole world. The prospect of escalation brought the fear that even the use of relatively low-yield tactical atomic devices in the battlefield would spark an inevitable chain of events with ever more powerful explosions culminating in the utter extermination of combatants and the civil population everywhere.

Researchers have calculated that some 13.000+ nuclear weapons exist today in the stockpiles of the nine possessors, some 95% of which in the hands of Russia and the United States. Even if only a fraction of them is used, countries spared actual destruction by the exchange of swarms of nuclear bombs coming at several times the speed of sound would soon be decimated by radioactive clouds and by the consequences of the nuclear winter that would forbid agriculture and generate widespread famine. The detonation of even a few hundred would be enough to render our environment unfit for human life and extinguish civilization as we know it.

This would not mean the end of human history *in the Hegelian sense*, but rather the end of human history upon the planet we call Earth, for it would continue to spin around the Sun as a barren, radioactive and cold mass of rocks and water where only a few primitive yet resilient species might be able to survive. Human civilization needed several millennia to evolve and reach admirable achievements. It does not deserve to disappear with a bang in a few seconds.

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2022 JOINT MEDIA PROJECT REPORT



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TOWARD A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD was first launched in 2009 with a view to raising and strengthening public awareness of the urgent need for non-proliferation and ushering in a world free of nuclear weapons.

It is a project of the Non-profit International Press Syndicate Group with IDN as the Flagship Agency in partnership with Soka Gakkai International in Consultative Status with ECOSOC.

The significance of the Project is underscored by the fact that:

In 2017, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly and opened for signature at the UN, marking a turning point in the global history of efforts to achieve peace and disarmament. Attention is now focused on pushing for an early entry into force and universalization of the Treaty.

Nuclear weapon states have been fiercely opposing the Treaty arguing that it ignores the reality of vital security considerations, and indicating that they would not engage with the Ban Treaty.



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