

NUCLEAR AGE PEACE FOUNDATION

1622 Anacapa Street, Santa Barbara, California 93101 USA

+1 805.965.3443 · wagingpeace.org

Statement to the 10th Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

August 5, 2022

Delivered by Ivana Nikolić Hughes, President

*Now, before we are engulfed in flames,
while there is still time, while we still can,
Wake up!*

—David Krieger

Honorable President and Distinguished Delegates,

We need all resources of mind, heart, and will to have any realistic hope of addressing the grave nuclear dangers to the peoples of the world and other life forms with whom we coexist on our beautiful planet. These dangers have been exposed as never before in this century by the Ukraine War and the unfolding global crisis it portends.

Ever since atomic bombs were dropped on two Japanese cities in 1945, the peoples of the world have lived beneath a dark shadow of a potential nuclear catastrophe. Over the decades, more countries have acquired and developed nuclear weapons and at times confrontations have raised fears that a war would be fought with these deadly weapons. The Cuban Missile Crisis was an occasion on which a horrific nuclear war was averted due mostly to good luck and prudent leadership. But rather than learn from this experience and many other close calls, nine countries seem as determined as ever to retain this terrifying approach to protect the intertwined interests of their own societies and those of their allies, and to fulfill their global and regional geopolitical ambitions.

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, since its founding more than 40 years ago, has stood for a contrasting vision of peace. We have insisted that safety and security of peoples depends on the responsible elimination of these infernal weapons, based on trustworthy international supervision. It is our deepest belief that the only path to peace and genuine security is through a solemn commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. We must do so before their almost inevitable use tragically blights forever the prospects of the human species and its natural habitat for a brighter, sustainable, and peaceful future.

It is our fervent hope that the Ukraine War will at last awaken people and leaders to these dangerous conditions and summon the political will and courage to embark on pathways of restorative change. Our focus is on nuclear dangers, although we are keenly aware of other global challenges, including militarism, climate change, extreme poverty, and public health, felt most acutely by the Global South.

As long as political leaders possess authority to use nuclear weapons, there is a risk in crisis situations that such use will be threatened, and a cycle of action and reaction will end with actual use. The possibility of deliberate use is also subject to related concerns about miscalculations and accidental use.

Fifty-two years after the entry into force of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the nuclear weapons states have not only NOT fulfilled their disarmament obligations according to Article 6, but are doing precisely the opposite of pursuing disarmament. China for example, is not only modernizing, but also increasing its nuclear weapons count. France has plans to build new weapons that will last till the year 2090. And the United States is planning on spending up to \$2 trillion on its nuclear arsenal modernization, money that could be spent on healthcare, education, and poverty. Article 6 needs to cease being useful fiction. Instead, it must be turned into a reality. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons or TPNW provides a mechanism for this and we call upon all NPT States Parties that haven't done so already to join the TPNW. Humanity's very existence depends on this.

Distinguished Delegates,

In addition to simply meeting their legal obligations according to Article 6, nuclear weapons states all have much to gain from pursuing nuclear disarmament. Only by leading on disarmament first, can they put genuine pressure on the remaining four countries that possess nuclear weapons to disarm as well.

The United States is the country that was not only the first to develop nuclear weapons, but also the only one to use them on two Japanese cities, with civilians incinerated or sickened for lifetimes. In addition, the United States wrote the playbook for the nuclear testing era by exploding weapons near vulnerable indigenous populations both on its own territory and in the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and elsewhere in the Pacific; the testing had and continues to have devastating humanitarian consequences. As such, the United States has a moral and ethical obligation to lead the world in disarmament, just as it aspires to lead it in other ways.

The United Kingdom and France, as part of Europe, have much to gain from nuclear disarmament. Not only are Russia's weapons pointed at London, Paris, and other European cities, but the presence of US nuclear weapons in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey puts everyone in Europe at a high risk, where relatively small countries with relatively large populations could be wiped off the map in a matter of minutes.

For Russia, the images of the pain and suffering of Ukrainians will be long implanted in the minds of people around the world. What better way for Russia to begin to restore its image than to negotiate in earnest not only toward peace in Ukraine, but towards nuclear disarmament as well.

Finally, six out of ten most populated cities in the world are located in China. An attack on just one of those cities would kill millions of people in an instant. Nuclear disarmament is also in China's best interest.

The Ukraine War has already demonstrated that the doctrine of deterrence provides no assurance against threats or use of nuclear weaponry and that governments are prepared to resort to this weaponry if strategic interests or unbalanced leadership should so decree. The journey to a world without nuclear weapons can begin with a firm commitment to No First Use for all countries that possess nuclear weapons and a verified process of de-alerting nuclear warheads deployed around the world.

We are inspired by the deep wisdom of figures such as Pope Francis, Setsuko Thurlow, and the late Desmond Tutu, whose calls for a world free of nuclear weapons have sadly gone unheeded for too long. We must do everything we can to make their nuclear disarmament aspirations a reality. We must wake up before it is too late. Thank you.

