

*Remarks on European Security
and Nuclear Disarmament*

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Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to, again, be in Brussels and to participate in the Global Zero Institute. And wonderful to be here in front of you bright, concerned people ready to apply your intelligence and energy to further the activities of Global Zero so that we can all accomplish the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons by 2030. Our partner, Barack Obama, who said that “*Global Zero will always have a partner in me and my administration,*” is remaining in the White House ***so we are on a roll!***

Like you, I was a University student when I began to work for a nuclear weapon-free world.

In the early 1980s, we in Vancouver, Canada, were living in a climate of nuclear fear. The United States, despite huge civil society protests, established a nuclear weapons base on Vancouver Island, across the water from Vancouver. As well, there was a US nuclear submarine base 80 miles – as the crow flies – from Vancouver.

A local newspaper published a map of the city of Vancouver as a target with circles defining the devastating effects. I was a University student marching in the streets protesting this situation.

My own experience as an educator, advocate, activist and funder for nuclear disarmament and the prohibition of nuclear weapons, actually began because of my concerns as a mother.

I was horrified because my young daughter was having nightmares about nuclear war so I decided it was necessary to ***do more*** than just march as a form of protest. And, in 1985 - when I was in Graduate school - I established The Simons Foundation to fund my work and with a mandate to work against the negative effects of technology - specifically to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

For 27 years I have continued to work as an educator, advocate, activist and a funder for the elimination of nuclear weapons. And this is why I am a Founding Partner of Global Zero. I believe Global Zero is the organization with the best plan, and the one most likely to achieve my goal.

Concern about the issue has died away since the end of the Cold War. The dangers have remained, and have, in fact, become more complex and therefore are heightened. Though the relations between the United States and Russia remain friendly, the two countries maintain their Cold War nuclear war plan, and the nuclear forces are poised - on alert for immediate launch.

Furthermore, since the end of the Cold War, the number of nuclear weapons states has grown, ***nuclear capable*** states have grown in number, nuclear technology is proliferating and is also trafficked illegally, and terrorists are seeking acquisition to nuclear materials and nuclear weapons.

Despite the NPT commitments to eliminate their arsenals, all nuclear weapons states have been ***upgrading*** these arsenals. The numbers have come down but the ***projected power of upgrades*** make the actual numbers of weapons less relevant.

Nuclear weapons are an *accepted weapon* – and in fact considered by many – the military, politicians and many members of the public– *an essential weapon* – in military arsenals. There are many in civil society who does not understand the nature of these weapons and their catastrophic consequences.

Yet their very existence poses great danger to humans. Our task is to educate the public on the nature of these armaments and seek their active support for their elimination. And it is quite a challenge!

We are at risk because of the continued existence of nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert and targeted for immediate launch. Despite the NPT commitments to eliminate their arsenals, all nuclear weapons states have been *upgrading* these arsenals. The numbers have come down but the projected power of upgrades make the actual numbers of weapons less relevant.

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So it is more important than ever to revive the flagging civil movements and to raise the awareness of the dangers to which every person is subject.

My last visit to Brussels was in 2002 - thirteen years after the Cold War ended – and was to NATO headquarters at the invitation of the Canadian Ambassador. A lunch and meetings were arranged for me to talk about my work and its aim – the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons. At the lunch with NATO Ambassadors, I was considered rather bizarre and naïve, was patronized, and talked down to like a child - lectured to. I imagine they thought I should be at home cooking dinner rather than entering the world of *men's matters!*

So it really is a pleasure on my return visit to be invited to address a community whose minds are focused in the present realities; on the dangers of nuclear weapons; their inhumane nature; the inappropriateness of their use as a war-fighting weapon and the necessity for their elimination. I am happy to be here in Europe with you and I find it extremely satisfying to know that you are ready and willing to engage your minds and energies into what I believe is the most critical issue of our time.

Our task is to bring people to the streets again, - both literally - and in utilizing modern technology – figuratively - to have their voices resonate in the Congresses and Parliaments around the world to protest against the dangers of living in a world with nuclear weapons, and of the inhumane nature of these weapons.

Mass civil society protests – predominantly in the form of marches which took place in many parts of the world - have been very effective in moving the nuclear disarmament

agenda forward. In 1961, Women Strike for Peace, the largest national women's peace march of the century played a large part in the decision of President Kennedy to sign the nuclear test ban treaty with the USSR.

Marches involving millions in Europe and North America also influenced the decisions of Presidents Gorbachev, Reagan and George H.W. Bush to radically reduce the arsenals – but unfortunately not to eliminate them! President Obama – a University student during the Reagan era of nuclear weapons build-up in the 1980s - is the first President to *commit* to their elimination.

American President, Barack Obama, chose Europe as the venue for his historic speech committing himself to the future of a world without nuclear weapons. Europe has the opportunity to lead the way. And this why, *perhaps*, President Obama chose to make his declaration in Prague, in the centre of Europe – *a message for Europe*.

Recently, the European Union was awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize because it has “helped to transform most of Europe from a continent of war to a continent of peace.”¹ And with your help Europe can continue by making it a continent free of nuclear weapons.

It is to be hoped that Europe accepts that it has a responsibility to its own citizens and to the world to secure a safe global environment free of nuclear weapons.

Our immediate task is “to educate the public and build public support for European endorsement – both in the European Parliament and in the public realm - of the Global Zero Action Plan – to eliminate nuclear weapons worldwide by 2030.

Over thirty years ago, five million Europeans demonstrated against the planned deployment of United States intermediate range nuclear missiles on their territories.²

Though they were unsuccessful - according to former US Secretary of State, George Schultz, President Reagan was stunned, and decided he had to propose nuclear disarmament. Soviet President Andropov, Gorbachev's predecessor, was not ready. But Gorbachev, possibly for economic reasons, and influenced by both the Western peace movements and the Chernobyl disaster, willingly joined with Reagan and the process began of reducing their nuclear arsenals.

The results were a US-Russia ban on all nuclear missiles with a range between 500 and 5,000 miles; followed - in the H.W. Bush-Gorbachev era - by START I, the First Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. START I cut strategic intercontinental nuclear

¹ Text of the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize announcement
Oslo — Reuters
Published Friday, Oct. 12 2012, 6:18 AM EDT

² *Laurence Wittner*

weapons and was to eliminate all tactical nuclear weapons. However, the elimination of tactical weapons remains incomplete.

The Global Zero Action Plan calls for the US and Russia to repatriate their tactical nuclear weapons from combat bases in Europe to storage facilities in their countries as a part of the negotiations to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

Nuclear weapons are obstacles to European security. Europe, therefore, has the responsibility to take a leadership role in engaging reluctant member countries in negotiations to support the removal the tactical nuclear weapons from combat bases in Europe and their return to storage in their home countries.

Clearly, there are several European governments who have demonstrated a willingness to lead - in the elimination of weapons on their soil and from Europe. Three years ago, Herr Guido Westerwelle, [Foreign Minister for Germany, called for the removal of the US tactical nuclear weapons from his country. And the governments of Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg and Sweden called for the tactical nuclear weapons to be withdrawn from Europe. While removal of these weapons from Europe would not de-nuclearize Europe and NATO, it would be a first step – the creation of a tactical nuclear-weapon-free zone.

The wishes of these European states did not prevail at the NATO meeting in Chicago, last May. And the tactical nuclear weapons remain in these countries. There is some ambiguity about Germany's agreement to allow the upgrade of the US B21 tactical nuclear weapons and the upgrade of their delivery vehicles -the German Tornado aircraft. The German government has denied that it has made a commitment to upgrade the Tornado aircraft but it *has not denied* that it will permit the US to upgrade the estimated 10 – 20 U.S. B61-10 tactical nuclear weapons which Germany hosts on its territory³ - in fact, stating that it is a “national decision of the USA” to upgrade to “the more modern and accurate B61-12 [and that Germany] has no influence on this.”⁴ If these upgrades go ahead it will not only be a violation of the NPT, but will jeopardize the US-Russia negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons; and end “efforts to withdraw all atomic weapons from Europe.”⁵ *We must not let this happen!*

Another positive step for Europe would be for the two nuclear powers, France and the United Kingdom - who in 2010, signed a Defence Cooperation Treaty which includes

³ GSN Sept 5,2012

⁴ www.armscontrolnow.org/2012/09/12-no-german-pledge-on-nuclear-capable-aircraft-modernization

⁵ Gotz Neuneck quoted in Markus Becker” US Nuclear Weapons Upgrades: Experts Report Massive Cost Increase”*Spiegel Online* 16 May 2012

“unprecedented new levels of co-operation over nuclear weapons”⁶ - *to work together* on a plan to join with Russia, the US, and the other nuclear powers in multilateral negotiations to continue the elimination process of the weapons to zero. This new partnership provides an opportunity for the final step in denuclearizing Europe – at least of weapons - and would be consistent with Phase II of the Global Zero Action Plan.

I would also like to see the European Union develop its own equivalent of the United States Nuclear Posture Review. NATO Defence and Nuclear Policy is not representative of the European Union. Five states in the European Union *are not* NATO members and six NATO members countries are *outside* of the European Union.

The Global Zero Team recently produced an excellent new Facebook app – I imagine you have all seen it – entitled *What Would You do if it Happened Here*.

Well, it did happen in Europe – it is bad but not the catastrophe of the Apps fake news report. It happened at Palomares in Southern Spain – in 1966 when a nuclear bomber crashed during airborne refuelling. But, like the examples in the App, the weapons were not armed so there was no nuclear explosion and Europe was saved from a major disaster. However, there *was* a technical failure and the attached parachutes, intended to slow the fall of the bombs, did not open and three nuclear weapons broke apart on impact and spread plutonium over a wide area.

Plutonium is extremely toxic if it enters the body because the alpha radiation can damage living tissue, the genetic structure, the DNA. Plutonium remains radioactive in the environment for a very long time. The radioactivity level of plutonium is determined by its half-life, which is the time it takes for half of an original quantity to decay. The half-life of plutonium-239 is about 24,000 years.

The clean-up was never completed. The area surrounding the plutonium-contaminated area is now an economic wasteland. As a consequence, many people left. Its former economic base was food production. And the livelihoods of those who remained have been destroyed. Because of the fear of radioactive contamination the food produced is hard to sell. People are afraid to settle there and tourists stay away because of fear of radioactive contamination so the area has not developed like the tourist Mecca of Malaga 150 kilometres away.

In February last year, the Government of Spain demanded that the United States clean up this plutonium-contaminated site at Palomares. US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton has promised to resolve this before her term is up. However, this poses another danger because in disturbing the soil the plutonium will be disbursed.

⁶ www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/nov/02/britain-france-landmark-50-year-defence-deal

This is just one of the many incidents which give some insight into the dangerous nature of nuclear technology. *And to harness it for the mass killing of people is surely a crime against humanity.*

I give thanks that we can count on you bright young people ready and willing to engage your intelligence and your energy and work with us to change this situation. Though the prospects for nuclear disarmament look bright with President Obama in the White House, we have our work to do to ensure that the world continues on the path to zero – for the reason that true leadership comes, not from the top, but rather, in response to the citizens, to the grass roots.

I am confident that with your energies Global Zero can build a groundswell of public concern, and willingness on the part of the citizenry, to participate in finally eliminating these weapons of mass destruction.

Your presence breathes new life into this very important issue, and provides encouragement to those of us who have been actively attempting to rid the world of these weapons for so many years. Your presence here demonstrates your concerns, your interest and your energy and gives me the confidence that we can achieve our goal. And I wish you every success.

END

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