

**60th Pugwash Conference on Science & World Affairs on
Dialogue, Disarmament, & Regional and Global Security**

**Third Simons Symposium on
Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Elimination**

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OPENING ADDRESS

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Good Afternoon!

I appreciate, very much, the opportunity to introduce the third Simons Symposium. I would like to add my welcome to those who have come before me. And congratulate Professor Paolo Cotta-Ramusino and his team at Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and Professor Bulent Aras and the Center for Strategic Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey, the organizers of this conference in Istanbul, such a great, exotic city.

The subject of today's Symposium, Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Elimination is certainly timely, and *fundamental* for peace in the Middle East and the world. There can be no more delay on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

Thirty-nine years ago the first Resolution on a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons was introduced in the United Nations General Assembly and every year since then, has passed without a single NO vote. It is understandable that states in the Middle East are becoming disenchanted with the United Nations, with the unfulfilled commitments and the seeming inability to implement agreed upon outcomes.

The time has come, also, for resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine; and the assumption of Palestine to sovereign independent statehood; for resolution of Iran's purported nuclear weapons aspirations; and for an end to Syria's civil war – all in fulfilment of United Nations commitments.

And it is time for states in the Middle East to renounce their historic hatreds and rivalries, their enmity - to unite in a powerful peaceful, prosperous sustainable union similar to that of European community, the 2012 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1945, at the end of two of the bloodiest wars ever fought, who would have thought that reconciliation, and an economic partnership, between France and Germany could unite Europe to form a lasting peace, a democratic, prosperous community.

It is an immense challenge for the Middle East states to do likewise. But it is not impossible! In fact it is imperative that states in the Middle East develop a framework for common security in the region and cease their dependency on global powers whose interests in the Middle East serve, primarily, their own agendas. It is time for an end to sectarian strife, and for the creation of a strong Middle East union in order to face – together - the host of new enemies - to tackle the multitude of problems shared by them all.

War between states is an anachronism and the new enemies in the Middle East are common to all:

The consequences of climate change - drought, rising sea levels already causing salinization of the Nile;

The consequences of environmental degradation - desertification, and disappearing groundwater causing water shortages, rural unemployment, and poverty:

The consequences of refugee crises - the diaspora of some four and a quarter million Palestinians, displaced by the formation of Israel, existing in sixty-five year-long quasi-permanent refugee camps, in four countries in the region.

The consequences of the civil war raging in Syria - creating the worst refugee crisis in history with over two million persons displaced –and according the United Nations expected to increase by another two million.

The development of refugee camps in surrounding Middle East states, and the destabilizing consequences of spill-over violence, *strains* the infrastructures of these states leading to more violence, to water and electricity shortages, to poverty, and unemployment. And adds to already existing problems of rapid population growth, illiteracy, youth unemployment, and poverty - all sowing the seeds for radicalization and growth of terrorist organizations intent on destabilizing the region.

Iran, a rising power in the region, has taken some first steps on the path to peace, which we trust will resolve the issue of its nuclear aspirations. As state party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – the NPT, Iran does have the right to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. And I imagine that an acceptable resolution would be that Iran will restrict its uranium enrichment to below the level possible to rapidly enrich to bomb-grade material, and open all of its nuclear facilities to IAEA inspection – actions that will prove fruitful for peace and security in the Middle East, and in the larger global community.

It is time for Israel to dismantle its fortress, to let down the drawbridge and join the Middle East community - though not in order to encourage a few states to band together against other states; but rather in full-fledged co-operative membership in order to forge a true community.¹ Israel is a great country - a successful, prosperous state - and has a good deal to offer the region as a true partner; though much was accomplished to the inexcusable detriment of the Palestinian people. However, it is hoped that *finally* there may be resolution to this crisis.

¹ www.spacedaily.com reports that “in May Netanyahu’s government was working on an anti-Iran defense pact with several “moderate” regional states, including Saudi Arabia, The Emirates, Jordan and Turkey (Tel Aviv, Israel, (UPI) Oct. 3,2013.

With all due respect to Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu, his revision of Ronald Reagan's dictum from *Trust but Verify* to *Mistrust, Dismantle and Verify* cannot create the basis *for any relationship* between persons, or between states. It cannot establish a basis for initiating, and engaging in, negotiations. It is true that suspicion is rife, and that most every overture for peace is regarded, as has been said, as a *poisoned chalice*, but there is no way forward if all overtures are treated as such.

The time has come for a *leap of faith*, acceptance of overtures - a smile, a phone call, a handshake - based on President Reagan's dictum, *Trust but Verify* in order to lay the foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, sustainable secure future for the region.

There is no foundation for trust when states, side by side are faced with the threat of chemical, biological or nuclear destruction because a number of these states harbour weapons of mass destruction.

The problems seem formidable but every crisis is a breeding ground for opportunity! With the resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel, with peaceful overtures from Iran; and with Syria acceding to the Chemical Weapons Treaty and destroying its arsenals; there are new opportunities for the integration of the Middle East countries to engage as a community in cooperative security measures, in order to resolve the most contentious of the common issues they face.

A first step on this path to peace would be for all states in the Middle East to participate in the Helsinki Conference on the Weapon-of-Mass-Destruction-Free Zone in the Middle East.

Israel has made clear that it is not willing to engage on the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction until there is peace in the Middle East. It is hoped that Israel will *reconsider its position* and engage with its neighbours on this issue *prior* to the achievement of a sustainable peace in the region for reason that mediations for peace are proceeding.

Negotiations are underway for a sovereign Palestinian state. Negotiations are also underway for resolution of Iran's nuclear aspirations; and meeting dates are being negotiated for Syrian peace talks. With these all concurrent, it would be *timely and appropriate* to begin negotiations on a zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East.

Israel has also insisted that it receives "assurances that it would not be singled out at the event as the region's sole nuclear arms power when it sees more pressing chemical, biological and potentially nuclear threats affecting the Middle East."² Syria's accession to the Chemical Weapons Treaty and the destruction of its chemical arsenal could allay the concerns of Israel. Israeli President Shimon Peres *has indicated* that now that Syria

² Elaine M. Grossman *In Bid to Break Mideast Impasse, WMD Confab Set at Swiss Venue This Month* www.nti.org/gsn/articles OCT 1,2013

as acceded to the Chemical Weapons Treaty and is destroying its chemical arsenal, Israel will seriously consider ratifying the treaty.

With Egypt's signature and ratification of the Chemical Weapons Treaty all Middle East states will be parties to the Treaty. A significant next step forward towards a Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction would be Israel's signature and ratification of the Biological Weapons Convention; and the ratification of this Convention by Egypt, Syria and the United Arab Emirates.³

Discussion could then begin on the issue of nuclear weapons. Concurrent negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme are already proceeding separately -with the next meeting set for November 7th and 8th. It is hoped that these will be successful.

And with these former obstacles resolved or under negotiation, one could hope that Israel will have the confidence to, *finally*, acknowledge that it possesses 80 nuclear weapons and enough fissile material to produce an additional 115 to 190 warheads; to commit to their elimination, and to join the NPT.

These are immense challenges but they are not unrealistic - not impossible in this rapidly changing geo-political climate.

The Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction is both a regional and a global issue. It has been an on-going issue for the world community since 1974, when at the United Nations, Iran and Egypt co-sponsored a Resolution calling for a zone free of nuclear weapons and the United Nations General Assembly voted, to establish such a zone; it is the subject of the 1991 UN Security Council Resolution 687;⁴ and in 2008 included in the third point of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's Five-Point Nuclear Disarmament proposal.⁵

The Resolution on a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons became a *de facto fourth* pillar of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995 when it was extended indefinitely. This Treaty is commonly thought of as a three-way Bargain: non-nuclear weapons states commit to non-acquisition of nuclear weapons, for this – the second part – they obtain the right to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes – and in exchange – the third part – the five states possessing nuclear weapons when the treaty was drafted, commit to eliminating their arsenals.

³³ This could provide encouragement to all states to achieve the universality of the two Conventions of Weapons of Mass Destruction, the Chemical and Biological

⁴ Randy Rydell, "The Multilateral Dimension of the Middle East WMD Free Zone: United Nations, IAEA and NPT, *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, Vol.19 No. 1&2, 2013, p.71 "paragraph 14 stated that Iraq's disarmament activities "represent steps towards the goal of establishing in the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery and the objective of a global ban on chemical weapons."

⁵ Randy Rydell, -ibid- p.70-71

With the indefinite extension of the Treaty, in 1995, it became in effect, a *four-way* bargain. States of the Middle East agreed to join the Treaty in exchange for a *core commitment* to establish a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear weapons. And all NPT member states, and in particular the nuclear weapons states were called upon, *“to exert their utmost efforts”* to achieve this. The sponsors of this Resolution were Northern Ireland and three nuclear weapons states, the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom.

Because of this sponsorship, the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom, were invited by the UN Secretary-General, to convene the 2012 Helsinki Conference for the establishment of a zone free of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East. However, the United States, in support of Israel’s reluctance to participate, cancelled the conference. It is hoped that the Conference will take place in the near future.

But is convening a conference by nuclear weapons states *sufficient “exertion of their utmost efforts”* in supporting a zone free of Weapons Mass Destruction in the Middle East? Does this fulfil their commitment to the NPT 1995 Resolution on the Middle East? *Surely not!*

It is distressing to the extreme, that the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China - are upgrading their arsenals, creating new capabilities for their nuclear weapons,⁶ and planning and budgeting for years ahead to continue to modernize their programmes for nuclear weapons, their delivery systems and the infrastructure required for their maintenance.

As well, non-NPT members, Pakistan and India continue to develop, upgrade and enlarge their arsenals and the delivery vehicles. Israel maintains its opacity with regard to its weapons and programmes, but the presence of Israel’s nuclear weapons in the Middle East creates an incentive for further proliferation in the region.

States without nuclear weapons cannot continue to tolerate this double standard. As Iran’s Former President Ahmadinejad said to the US: *“if you have them, we want them; if they are so good, we want them too.”*

Surely a requirement - “exertion of their utmost efforts” - would be for the nuclear weapons states demonstrate good faith in *their responsibility* and further cut their arsenals, in order to create – not just in one part of the world, but rather the *entire* world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

To *affirm* their commitment, two steps could be taken – both proposed in the Global Zero Action Plan. The first step would be for the repatriation of all Russian and United States “tactical nuclear weapons from combat bases on the European continent to national

⁶ eg US Adding new tail fin for B-61 tactical nuclear weapons

storage facilities in the United States and Russia.”⁷ Turkey, our host country would then, too, be free of these horrifyingly destructive weapons; and at the same time, this would remove Turkey as one of the two nuclear threats on the periphery of the Middle East zone.

A second step would be to bring “China and the nuclear weapons states into ... multilateral nuclear arms negotiations”⁸ to eliminate their arsenals - a requirement currently proposed by Russia as a condition for Russia to further reduce its arsenals. Engaging China would, as well, create a positive domino-effect. It would lower the threat posed by China to India, and therefore in turn, the threat posed by India to Pakistan⁹ - a state on the periphery of the Middle East zone; and lower the nuclear threat of Sunni Pakistan to potential nuclear weapons state, Shia Iran.

The Chemical Weapons attacks in Syria have demonstrated the *outrage* in the world community, the *desire* to punish the perpetrators, and the *will* to expedite the immediate elimination of these weapons of mass destruction.

Do we have to wait for deliberate use, or an accidental detonation, of a nuclear weapon before the world community endorses, and takes action, on the rapid elimination of all nuclear weapons; before it outlaws and prohibits their acquisition, development and possession?

Thank you very much!

Jennifer Allen Simons was a member of the Canadian Delegation to the 2000 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and the 2002 PrepCom for the 2005 Conference. She is Founding Partner of Global Zero and at Simon Fraser University, is Senior Fellow at the Centre for Dialogue and Adjunct Professor at the School for International Studies.

⁷ *Global Zero NATO-Russia Commission Report: Removing U.S. and Russian Tactical Nuclear Weapons from European Combat Bases.* www.global.zero.org

⁸ *ibid* p.2

⁹ *Pakistan Country Profile: Nuclear.* www.nti.org “In general, Pakistan's position on nuclear disarmament is that it will only give up nuclear weapons if India gives up its own nuclear arsenal”