

Promising Initiatives for Changing the Discourse

**The Fierce Urgency of Nuclear Zero:
Changing the Discourse Symposium**

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

Santa Barbara, California

October 23-25, 2016

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

I am deeply appreciative of the invitation to participate in this Conference, and to speak on *Promising Initiatives for Changing the Discourse*. I want to thank you, David, for the opportunity, and commend you and the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation for your commitment, your Foundation's stability, its unflagging energy - staying the course since 1982 - in order to advance the agenda for a nuclear free world.

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, I imagine, like The Simons Foundation, was an initiative in response to the immense growth of the US nuclear arsenals in the 1980's – a concrete expression of outrage and an urgent desire to do something about it.

The numbers are now down from the obscene number in the 1980s of some seventy thousand, to approximately fifteen thousand, three hundred and fifty. Yet, not only has the pace of elimination significantly lessened, the nuclear weapons states, disregarding their commitments to disarm, are upgrading their arsenals and infrastructure and planning for their indefinite retention.

The danger, therefore, to humanity still exists. In fact the current dangers are considered to be greater than during the Cold War.¹

Our task remains as urgent – or is, perhaps, more urgent than in the 1980s when the Cold War provided some stability.²

Russia has, not only been flaunting its nuclear capability, but is now breaking the former sacrosanct separation between nuclear and conventional warring. In retaliation to the global outrage about Russia's aerial bombardment of Aleppo, Russia has moved its nuclear-capable Iskander missiles to Kaliningrad, and as well, has withdrawn from three bi-lateral nuclear disarmament treaties between the US and Russia.

With the end of the Cold War, hopes for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons were high and at the turn of the century these high expectations remained. Promising initiatives, like the New Agenda Coalition, pressured the Nuclear Weapons States to fulfil their legal obligation to disarm; and were successful at the 2000 NPT Review Conference with the achievement of commitments, in Article VI, of thirteen steps to disarmament.

¹ 1, 800 nuclear weapons of these weapons on hair-trigger alert and targeted for immediate launch. There is no guarantee that India and Pakistan will not engage in a war and, as well, Pakistan's command and control systems are not considered secure. The risks are high from accidental, malicious or mistaken launch; from inadequate command/control and warning systems; and of hackers penetrating these systems which are highly automated. There is also the possibility of hackers "spoofing an attack which would set off an automated retaliatory response. We are at risk because of inadequate security of fissile materials and warheads, both of which terrorists have been attempting to acquire.

² Earlier this month, German Foreign Minister, Frank Walter Steinmeier, spoke of his dismay at "the collapsing relations between the West and Russia" and said that it is "a fallacy to think that this is like the Cold War. The current times are different and more dangerous." Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference, believes that there is "considerable danger of a military confrontation between Russia and the West."² Mikhail Gorbachev echoed these concerns several days later.

These hopes were dashed by the failure of the 2005 Conference, yet rose again in 2010 when crucial language - the “*catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons*” - was accepted as part of the 2010 NPT Review Conference document.³ This changed the discourse and set the stage for, what seemed to be, the most promising initiative for achieving the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

This new language in the 2010 NPT gave fresh life to the issue; and provided a new dimension for action and led to the three global conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons.

This, in turn, led to the UN Resolutions in 2012 and 2015⁴ to convene Open-Ended Working Groups.⁵

The outcome of these conferences was that, on September 28th, a group of participating states introduced a draft UN General Assembly Resolution calling for the convening, in 2017, of a two-day UN conference to “negotiate a legally-binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading toward their total elimination.”

While on the one hand this is the most momentous event since the Reykjavik Summit at which Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev – to the horror of their military bureaucracies - agreed to eliminate all their nuclear weapons.⁶ On the other hand, like Reykjavik, it will not lead to a nuclear-weapon-free world because there would be no regulations for elimination of nuclear weapons, and the critical elements of their irreversible, verifiable and transparent destruction would be left for future negotiations.

It does, however, hold some promise. As John Burroughs has pointed out “a prohibition treaty would have the beneficial effect of erecting a further barrier to the spread of nuclear weapons.” It could “strengthen non-proliferation obligations. It could perhaps “prohibit the *development* of nuclear weapons” or “prohibit the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium.” If nothing else, it would reinforce the norm against nuclear weapons use.⁷

³ The 2010 Review Conference of the NPT gave specific focus – inter alia – to this issue in its consensual conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions (2010 Action Plan) by expressing “its deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons [...] reaffirm(ing) the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law”. Moreover, the 2010 NPT Review Conference resolved in Action 1 of the 2010 Action Plan that “All States parties commit to pursue policies that are fully compatible with the Treaty and the objective of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.”

⁴ 2012 (67/56) and 2015 (L.13.Rev)

⁵ The first “to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons”; and the second, “to address concrete effective legal measures, legal provisions, and norms that will need to be concluded to attain and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.”

⁶ October 1986

⁷ *Changing the Landscape: The U.N. Open-Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament*, John Burroughs, The Simons Foundation Fellow, The Simons Foundation Briefing Paper, September 2016, www.thesimonsfoundation.ca. My emphasis.

The glaring weakness of this ban treaty initiative is that the nuclear weapons states have, not only refused to participate in the process, but, in fact, have outright rejected it. These are the states with the weapons. And it is only through their agreement that they will rid themselves of their arsenals and sign a treaty eliminating and prohibiting nuclear weapons.

Nuclear disarmament cannot - and will not - move forward without the participation of the states with the weapons. It is essential, therefore, to close the gap, *to change the discourse* – to seek appropriate engagement rather than to attack - so that this engagement with the nuclear weapons states encourages them to get on with the process of eliminating their arsenals, and within a time-bound framework.

I do not agree with – or in any way - support the nuclear weapons states non-compliance with their NPT commitment and their disregard of the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion.

Although he has not been successful, I *do* support President Obama’s call for a world without nuclear weapons and his efforts to accomplish this. He said “we cannot succeed in this endeavour alone, but we can lead it, we can start it.” And this is what he has attempted to do – to work with Russia on bi-lateral cuts to their arsenals as the first step forward, paving the way to multilateral negotiations which will lead to a nuclear weapon free world.

For this reason it is my view that Global Zero is the most promising initiative *because it does change the discourse*. Its mission is to centre on, and to work with, the nuclear weapons states. Global Zero has developed a foundational plan - a practical time-bound, phased, step-by-step process to zero; and formulates policies, strategies and recommendations for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Global Zero engages with governments, both nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapons states to advocate for these measures.

The organization, launched in Paris in 2008, is a nonpartisan, international community of three hundred influential political, military, business, civic and faith leaders backed by some half a million citizens worldwide; and the organization continues to build “a truly global disarmament movement from the grassroots to the highest levels of government, firmly rooted in critical nuclear weapons regions.

Global Zero has met with extraordinary success. The organization has attracted much attention from the global media which brought the nuclear disarmament issue, not only to the attention of the public again, but also to governments, their parliaments and Congresses. And some fifty international and national non-governmental organizations have supported and promoted Global Zero and its initiatives in various ways since its inception.⁸

⁸ While Global Zero has not yet become a household word, it has come to refer - not just to the organization, - but as well, to become the signifier of a nuclear- weapon-free world in the same way that Brexit is universally known as the UK’s withdrawal from the European Union.

Its greatest success to date has been its interaction and positive reception in direct dialogue with governments at the highest level, with Global Zero leaders meeting in Foreign Affairs and State Departments, “advancing policies and political strategies” for the reduction of their nuclear arsenals “and to eventually engage in multi-lateral negotiations for elimination and prohibition.”⁹

Global Zero’s foundational document is its Action Plan – a practical four-phase blueprint of concrete steps, which includes a negotiated and signed legally binding international agreement for verified dismantlement of all nuclear arsenals and the elimination of all nuclear weapons by 2030. This plan is compatible with Point 1 of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon’s Five-Point plan for nuclear disarmament.¹⁰

Global Zero has an on-going wealth of Commission Reports delineating essential interim steps, based on the Action Plan, in order to further its goal of a nuclear weapons free world.

The Global Zero Commission members are drawn from former senior, influential, knowledgeable leaders from the political and military realms in key countries; and undertake in depth research, analysis and recommendations which they present in “high-level outreach and direct dialogue with governments.”

The Commission issued a report at the Munich Security Conference in 2012 on NATO-Russian Tactical Nukes calling for the United States and Russia to remove all of their tactical nuclear weapons from combat bases on the European continent.

Another, in 2012, was the Global Zero U.S. Nuclear Policy Commission Report – *Modernizing U.S. Nuclear Strategy, Force Structure and Posture*. The Report called for the U.S. and Russia to reduce their nuclear arsenals to 900 weapons each. This would pave the way to bring other nuclear weapons countries into the multilateral nuclear arms negotiations.

⁹ Matt Brown email letter September 8,2016

¹⁰ Phases 1 and 2 of the Action Plan call for bilateral action on the part of the US and Russia – to agree to each reduce their arsenals to 1,000 by 2018 and to further reductions to 500 warheads each by 2021. The U.S. and Russia would ratify a bi-lateral accord and require the other nuclear weapons states to commit to a cap on their existing stockpiles and to participate in multilateral negotiations for proportionate reductions of their stockpiles following the Russian and US reductions to 500 each until 2021. The Action Plan requires “a rigorous and comprehensive verification and enforcement system is implemented, including no-notice, on-site inspections, and strengthened safeguards on the civilian nuclear fuel cycle to prevent diversion of materials to build weapons.”

Phase 3 of Action Plan requires all “the world’s nuclear-capable countries negotiate and sign a Global Zero Accord: a legally binding international agreement for the phased, verified, proportionate reduction of all nuclear arsenals to zero total warheads by 2030. [compatible with UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon’s 5-point plan for nuclear disarmament]

And Phase 4 “The phased, verified, proportionate dismantlement of all nuclear arsenals to zero total warheads is complete by 2030. The comprehensive verification and enforcement system prohibiting the development and possession of nuclear weapons is in place to ensure that the world is never again threatened by nuclear weapons.”

In July of that year, Global Zero was invited to testify before the U.S. Senate regarding the report and the implications of its recommendations for the defence budget. These recommendations included de-alerting, increased warning and decision time in the command and control systems, eliminating all tactical nuclear weapons and reducing the US arsenal from a triad to a dyad, by eliminating the silo-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

Global Zero briefed senior Russian officials on this Report at a conference in Moscow, and at meetings with Senior Russian Foreign Affairs officials.

The Report was endorsed by The New York Times and the recommendations reverberated across the U.S. - some of which were seized upon by NGOs for their furtherance. For example, Ploughshares Fund offered grants to NGOs to undertake - under the Ploughshares umbrella - a project to eliminate the Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles.

In 2014, Global Zero formed a Nuclear Risk Reduction Commission. In October of that year at the UN, in a First Committee Side Event, Co-Founder, Bruce Blair previewed the Commission's risk analysis and other findings. And in 2015, at the NPT Review Conference, the Commission Report was released recommending a number of US-Russia bi-lateral steps to reduce risks, including de-alerting, and multi-lateral steps to stabilize the world's Nuclear Force Postures. The Report was well-received, with one government committing to take the recommendations forward in a predominantly government - or *Track One-and-a-half* -meeting.¹¹

The Risk Reduction Commission Report also fed into the Humanitarian Consequences Conferences and the UN-mandated Open-Ended Working Groups; and its "authoritative validators" of risks provided a critical foundation for the Open Ended Working Groups' Reports.

There is no doubt that Global Zero is a major influence on the nuclear disarmament agenda. It is unfortunate that Russia has declined, at the moment, to engage in further bilateral cuts to its arsenals. President Putin ignored the 2013 offer made by President Obama to cut to a thousand weapons each, and the process is currently stalled.

The Global Zero Action Plan timetable will not be far off schedule, however, if Russia changes course and re-engages within a few years. This is not unlikely! Russia's Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr. Vitaly Churkin, in a recent interview said the "current situation is unlike the Cold War in that Russian and American diplomats today

¹¹ 2015 the Global Zero Commission on Nuclear Risk Reduction — led by former U.S. Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General James E. Cartwright and comprised of international military experts — issued a bold call for ending the Cold War-era practice of keeping nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert. The Commission's extensive report calls for (1) an urgent agreement between the United States and Russia to immediately eliminate "launch-on-warning" from their operational strategy, and to initiate a phased stand down of their high-alert strategic forces, beginning with taking 20% of both countries' nuclear forces off launch-ready alert within one year and 100% within 10 years; and (2) a longer-term global agreement requiring all nuclear weapons countries to refrain from putting nuclear weapons on high alert

“speak regularly and manage to accomplish things they can agree upon,” and stressed that he would like to “get back to normal in our relations.”¹²

According to Russia’s Global Zero Leaders and Commission members, this sentiment is echoed in Russia; and Global Zero is poised - with the lines of communication and engagement open - ready to move forward at the first signs of *détente*.

The resumption of bi-lateral cuts will depend, also, on the outcome of the US election, both in the White House and the Congress. President Obama’s offer of bilateral cuts to one thousand (1,000) still stands and Hillary Clinton has committed to this proposal. It is to be hoped, if she becomes President, that she will honour this commitment.

The final Presidential Debate demonstrated that the nuclear issue is on her mind because, in her critique of her opponent’s inability to handle the so-called “nuclear button,” she cited the Global Zero-initiated letter signed by ten nuclear launch officers.

And if the Democrats form a majority in the Senate, the possibilities are high for not only a resumption of bi-lateral cuts, but too, for positive change in United States Nuclear policy. Russia’s participation in the process though, will depend on the United States taking into account some of its concerns – missile defence for one, for example.

During this current period of tense relations between Russia and United States, Global Zero continues to formulate and promote essential steps in the process: for example, the promotion of *No First Use as a global norm* which, without the risk of a first strike, would provide confidence that no state is under attack and, as Bruce Blair says, would undermine Deterrence Policy.

No First Use would also have “huge implications for the U.S. Nuclear programme”. It would “reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorized use, eliminate launch of warning, and thus rationalize de-alerting. It would also “provide the rationale for the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons and the land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missile force, and save the United States about 100 billion dollars.”¹³

An important component of Global Zero is its campaign - its online social media programme and its on-ground grassroots campaign in US, which is currently taking advantage of the US election gatherings; and also its global Annual Bike around the Bomb programme and its international Action Corps. This awareness-raising, however, is not delivering enough of a critical mass to prompt leaders in the Nuclear Weapons States to action.

The most difficult issue with which we nuclear disarmers grapple is how to bring to the streets the numbers, protesting nuclear weapons, which we saw – and many of us were part of - in the 1980s: the five million in Europe, the one million in New York and the huge marches elsewhere around the globe, which caused Presidents Reagan and

¹² A Senior Envoy’s take on Relations with the United States: ‘Pretty Bad’, *NY Times*, October 18th, 2016

¹³ James E. Cartwright and Bruce G. Blair, “End the First-Use Policy for Nuclear Weapons,” *The New York Times*, 15/08/2016 Bruce Blair letter (email) September 13, 2016

Gorbachev to want to do something about it: And the earlier march in New York against nuclear testing which caused President Kennedy to act. This is a question that troubles me.

How can we awaken the public to the dangers of which they do not seem to be aware? How can we encourage millions of people – people enough so that their representatives in democratic parliaments and congresses will do something about it? Governments are not convinced by moral arguments, by invoking the devastating consequences to humanity. So unless there is a huge groundswell of public opinion, nothing will change.

It is disappointing that the International Court Justice and the U.S. Court declined jurisdiction for the Marshall Islands suit – though I understand that it is still alive and before the U.S. Court of Appeal. The initiative held some promise for change, gained the attention of the media and raised the issue in the public domain, so I do hope the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Nuclear Zero campaign on the Marshall Islands intends to continue; and turn its focus to an educational campaign on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear detonations, centred on schools, universities, parent-teacher associations, community centres and places of worship.

Who wants to suffer the fate of the Marshall Islanders – to live with the horror, and horrific effects, of nuclear destruction and its radioactive fallout? Who wants to die from the myriad of fatal cancers? What person, what parent or grandparent, wants to be the parents or grandparents of “monster babies” - of entities looking like bunches of grapes, or babies like jellyfish with no bones and transparent, so their brains and beating hearts are visible for the few days before they die?

The United States was responsible for this! Presented to the public as a personal perspective and from the perspective of moral responsibility, it could be an effective motivator in the United States.

It is past time to **wake up** America to those sixty-seven nuclear bomb tests on the Marshall Islands. The focus of the consequences of nuclear weapons use is, and has been, Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Not enough attention has been paid to the victims of nuclear tests.¹⁴

The Marshall Island tests were a crime against humanity of a magnitude far greater than the crimes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

¹⁴ Since 1954, the people of the Marshall Islands have engaged in “a lifelong battle for their health and a safe environment.” The radioactive fallout destroyed the lives of many – with deaths from leukaemia, brain tumours, thyroid and other forms of fatal cancers. Their food sources were destroyed – staple crops, like arrowroot, disappeared completely; the fish were radio-active and instantly caused blisters, terrible stomach problems and nausea.

The radioactive fallout from the nuclear testing has affected the health of three generations so far – and has definitely jeopardized the lives of future generations. The consequences have been the inability to reproduce and the birth of severely deformed babies – entities - because in many cases they do not resemble human forms. There were no words in the Islanders' language to describe these “monster” babies – some with two heads – so they described them as “octopuses,” “apples,” “turtles” and “jellyfish babies” who lived for a day or two - with no bones and transparent – their brains and beating hearts visible

When the United States tested on the Marshall Islands the devastating consequences to human beings of nuclear detonations *were known*. The US government, the Pentagon, the US scientists, the medical researchers sent to Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the blasts, knew about the incineration, the deaths, the consequences of fallout, radiation sickness, the maiming, the bleeding, and the fatal cancers.

But it is not just about tests, or nuclear war - both are currently unlikely - it is about the risks and dangers that come with possession: it is about the eighteen hundred nuclear weapons on hair-trigger alert and targeted for immediate launch; the accidental, malicious or mistaken launch, nuclear accidents; the inadequate command/control and warning systems; and hackers penetrating these systems which are highly automated. It is about inadequate security of fissile materials and warheads, both of which terrorists have been attempting to acquire.

I am in full agreement with the Conference title, *The Fierce Urgency of Nuclear Zero: Changing the Discourse*, but there is no fast track. The catalyst for a fast track, however, *could be* an accidental, malicious or unauthorized detonation of a nuclear weapon in the United States. This would be so devastating that we do not want this, and this is what we are attempting to prevent.

Therefore every initiative that brings attention to the issue and raises awareness of the danger holds promise and is important. It is slow, steady, dedicated work and we must continue to seek appropriate avenues for chances of success in weaning the nuclear weapons states from these inhumane weapons.

Thank you!