

***On the Occasion of the First Meeting of the States Parties to
The Treaty on The Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons***

Opening Event

Co-convened by
The Simons Foundation Canada
and the
International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Vienna, Austria
June 20, 2022

Welcome Remarks

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

Good Evening!

My name is Jennifer Allen Simons and I am Founder and President of The Simons Foundation Canada.

I am joined here by my colleague Beatrice Fihn, Executive Director of ICAN - the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, our co-convenor tonight. On behalf of The Simons Foundation Canada and ICAN, I am delighted to welcome you to this evening's event. We are honoured that His Excellency Peter Launksy-Tieffenthal, Secretary-General for Austria's Ministry for European and International Affairs, has joined us here and will speak to us tonight.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons truly deserved the Nobel Peace Prize for its remarkable efforts in achieving the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It has been a driving force in bringing the Treaty to fruition and to its Entry into Force.

ICAN was initiated in 2006 in Melbourne, Australia by the Medical Association for the Prevention of War and I have watched it grow and develop into a global coalition of 634 partner organizations - and for many years, strengthened and guided by the steady hand of my co-convenor, Beatrice Fihn. Congratulations Beatrice!

And together we welcome the participants in today's Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons and the Delegates in the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty. It is a pleasure to be among people who recognize that global security and state security are indivisible - who are concerned with the security and survival of all humanity and the immense risk nuclear weapons pose to humankind.

I would like to thank the Government of Austria for hosting today's Conference and specifically for its Conference in 2014, which proved to be the crucial stepping stone to the Treaty process. And I applaud Austria for its commitment to multilateralism, for its focus on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and its support of humanitarian disarmament initiatives.

I also commend Brazil, Ireland, South Africa, Mexico and Nigeria - the core group of states that actively worked in close consultation with Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand and Chile, for the success of the TPNW.

I would like to particularly thank and to celebrate the President-designate of the First Meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW - Ambassador Alexander Kmentt - for his unceasing activity on behalf of the Treaty; and for his role as the leading architect of the Humanitarian Initiative, and initiator and principal author, of the Humanitarian Pledge, which dramatically reshaped diplomatic discussions on nuclear disarmament and the subsequent Treaty Prohibiting Nuclear Weapons.

We are here in Vienna at a moment of paramount importance – a critical moment of heightened global tensions, and renewed nuclear risk. As well, we are faced with the potential destruction of the rules-based global order which has governed and guided the conduct of states for almost two hundred years.

President Putin’s unconscionable attack on Ukraine and devastation wreaked on the country and its people has changed the world as we know it.

Russia’s barbarious acts – rape, torture, killing and maiming of innocent civilians, the use of landmines and cluster munitions demonstrate his contempt for International Humanitarian Law, the Geneva Protocols, The Genocide Conventions, the NPT and the tenets of the United Nations Charter itself – undermine and weaken the multilateral architecture of global governance.

In a nuclear-free world destruction on such a devastating scale would not have occurred. Friends and allies of Ukraine *would not have been hamstrung by the threat of nuclear war*. They would have intervened *directly* with enough military forces and hardware to defend Ukraine – to fend off the Russian invasion.

It is not nuclear weapons that are devastating Ukraine, demolishing its culture, destroying its buildings, its infrastructure. It is nuclear weapons *deterrence policy and practice* which *has an evil utility* – the liberty to visit devastatingly destructive consequences to the Ukrainian people, their culture, their lives and their ability to survive.

Putin’s cynical affirmation of the Gorbachev/Reagan statement “ a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought” - less than three weeks before his threat to use nuclear weapons if challenged - prepared the way for the introduction of *this malevolent dimension* to deterrence policy and practice. His nuclear threat created a safe nuclear-free space for Russia to invade and attack and destroy Ukraine – **a non-nuclear weapon state**.

The practice of deterrence protects the nuclear weapons states from each other, but offers no protection to states without nuclear weapons, or independent of the nuclear umbrella.

The Ukraine experience confirms and bolsters the legitimate security concerns of the non-nuclear weapons states. All non-nuclear weapons states should be frightened by this. And they are!

Previously neutral states, Finland and Sweden, have sought protection under the NATO Nuclear umbrella.¹ South Korea is again considering acquisition of nuclear weapons.

States are placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons in their national security policies and, as well, are upgrading and adding to their arsenals of both nuclear and conventional weapons.

¹ rather than joining the TPNW despite the majority of citizens in Finland and Sweden calling for their countries to join the Treaty.

And one wonders, if Putin gets away with the destruction of Ukraine, and part or all of Ukraine is annexed to Russia, where will this end?

- Will Russia next invade and attack Georgia? Moldova? Kazakhstan?
- Will China use the same strategy to invade Taiwan?
- To take possession of the South China Sea?
- To invade Indonesia? New Zealand? Samoa? Fiji?
- Will states with nuclear break-out capability eye Russia's success and see the value - the power - of possession thus lead to further proliferation of nuclear weapons?

So what does this mean for the TPNW?

- Is it a potential setback ?
- Or a catalytic moment which will promote and advance nuclear disarmament?
- Will it invite new interest and a call for urgency for the success for the TPNW?
- Will this situation encourage more states to join the Treaty?
- Will the new deep division among the P-5 cause NATO and the US allies protected under the nuclear umbrella, to look more kindly on the TPNW?

We are at a critical juncture because, on the one hand, the attack on Ukraine could drive nuclear escalation and nuclear proliferation.

On the other hand, it could spur immediate action on nuclear disarmament. It is very clear to all peace-loving countries and their people that these weapons must be eliminated because they are not weapons of war. They are weapons with destructive power so immense that we could see the end of civilization as we know it.

The answers may lie here in Vienna with the First Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is - to quote International Committee of the Red Cross President, Peter Maurer – *“a light to all humanity.”* So let this First Meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty demonstrate his truth! A demonstration of faith in the importance of global governance - an endorsement of multilateralism. An opportunity to strengthen the NPT – specifically Article VI and to advance all the treaties pertaining to nuclear disarmament.

On behalf of The Simons Foundation Canada, I wish you every success during the next days as you build on the foundations of the Treaty - in your development of a robust order of work which will be sufficiently vigorous to affect positive change, to encourage universality of the Treaty, and to further the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Thank you!

I now invite Beatrice to take the floor.

Jennifer Allen Simons, C.M., Ph.D., LL.D
Founder and President,
The Simons Foundation Canada
June 20th, 2022