

The Urgency of Disarmament
Disarmament and Nuclear Risks
Practical Steps and Instruments for Nuclear Disarmament

Sixth Simons Symposium
On Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Elimination
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80 Years After the Atomic Bombing –
Time for Peace, Dialogue and Nuclear Disarmament
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I would like to congratulate the organizers of this 63rd Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs; and to particularly commend Professor Tomohiro Inagaki and the Conference organizing Committee for this excellent program. My thanks go to Hiroshima City, the Hiroshima Prefecture and the Hiroshima Convention and Visitors Bureau for their contribution to, and support for, the Conference.

I am most appreciative of the opportunity to introduce the Sixth Simons Symposium on Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Elimination, on the 80th Memorial of the Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – an evil atrocity which transformed the world to *the age of mass extermination*¹ with humankind living in fear of apocalyptic nuclear annihilation. This year is also the 80th Anniversary of the birth of the United Nations which rose - like the Phoenix - from the ashes of World War Two. But this was ***not as a consequence of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki*** – but rather for a more general mission “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

The first resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (in 1946), however, established the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission which called upon all nations to cooperate in controlling atomic energy and eliminating weapons. ***Eliminating - not banning*** – because the United States argued that it was not the weapons that needed to be outlawed, but rather war itself.

The consequence today - eighty years on - is that the United Nations has failed to eliminate the scourge of war. The world is engaged in more conflict than at any time during the last 80 years - with the military powerful countries participating in the “most destructive arms race in human history.”² - with the risk of nuclear war reaching new heights.

Political will, dampened since 2010 with a succession of violations and withdrawal from treaties; with the 2014 invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea, culminating in the full invasion of Ukraine; with Russia’s hybrid warfare and its nuclear-war focused taunting of NATO - more serious now with President Putin’s announcement of the successful test of the nuclear capable long range Burevestnik missile - has led to renewed and strengthened belief in the salience of nuclear weapons.

With the collapse of a broad range of nuclear agreements; with commitments on disarmament ignored by the nuclear weapons states; with their new weapons, new uses and a new arms race - all contrary to Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty - we are courting nuclear catastrophe with tensions so high that we are on the verge of an accidental, miscalculated or deliberate launch of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear arming and warmongering threats of nuclear weapons use, rather than nuclear disarmament, is the prevailing states of affairs.

The United States - with its massive “investment in offensive and defensive nuclear systems” - is now on a war-footing. The Department of Defence is rebranded the Department of War and the

¹ President John Kennedy, 1961

² Volodimir Zelensky, UN Speech September 22/2025

Secretary of Defence promoting “maximum lethality....Violent effect”.³ Moreover, there is broad consensus in the United States that, for its security, the United States needs not only the ability to fight but, as well, to win a nuclear war. A few days ago, the President of the United States joined Russia’s President Putin in nuclear sabre-rattling, calling for a resumption of nuclear testing.

Furthermore, the United States - the world’s most powerful militarized and nuclearized nation - has denigrated, attacked and withdrawn funding from the United Nations and is indifferent to its treaties and to International Law.

The multilateralist international order - the keystone of the United Nations - is on the verge of collapse. The UN Charter is suffering from flagrant violations and withdrawal and flouting of treaties; the UN Security Council is paralysed by competing states’ veto; and the U.N. consensus rule makes it difficult to move forward, to resolve conflict, through negotiation.

With this dismissal of many value-based norms threatening survival of multilateral system – erosion of democratic norms; and violations of International Law - we are in danger of a world without rules. And against the will of most of the world’s people, we are being brought to the verge of chaos.

The conference title subtitle, a *Time for Peace, Dialogue and Nuclear Disarmament*, is extremely timely for as UN Secretary-General António Guterres warns us that “instead of dialogue and diplomacy being deployed to end the nuclear threat, another nuclear arms race is taking shape, and sabre-rattling is re-emerging as a tactic of coercion. We need to stop the madness: he asserts, “before it’s too late.”

At this crucial turning point - this new era of international discord - diplomacy and dialogue are essential. And Pugwash, as a leading international civil society organization, is in a unique position to contribute to a more peaceful world because of its tradition of “dialogue across divides,” its history - to quote Kateriina Simenon and Poul Christensen - “as contributors to diplomatic breakthroughs,”⁴ its expertise in facilitating track 1.5 and track 2 dialogues and its membership spanning 50 countries.

Pugwash is thus ideally situated to contribute to reducing the risk of nuclear war, and to work for a world free of nuclear weapons culminating in their abolition.

The majority of United Nations member states have joined the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons - “a concrete step forward” to their abolition. A suggestion for the first step for Pugwash is to build support for the universality of the TPNW.

The second step is for our colleagues in Russia and the United States to join together to engage Russia and the United States -through Track One Point Five (1.5) dialogue and diplomacy – to renew New START. And further, to encourage them to continue beyond renewal of New Start: to commit to No-First-Use of nuclear weapons; to reduce their stockpiles; to de-alert, stand down and de-mate their nuclear weapons.

³ Joe Cirincione, *The dangerous new Washington consensus for more nuclear weapons*
<http://thebulletin.org/2025/09>

⁴ Kateriina Simenon and Poul Erik Christensen **Dialogue Across Divides**
The Pugwash Conferences in the Twenty-First Century

A third step, is to persuade the United States and Russia to begin negotiations to further reduce their nuclear arsenals to that of China's, in order to engage China – which has the fastest growing nuclear arsenal - to join trilateral negotiations for further reductions.

A fourth step is to work for total adherence to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which is under threat, not only because the Nuclear Weapons States ignore their Article VI commitments, but also because of United States illegal strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Ambassador Taous Feroukhi reminds us of the United States' violation of the NPT Article IV - the "inalienable right of States Parties to use the atom for peaceful purposes" - and of the United States and Israel's violation "International Law with the assassination by Israel of Iranian scientists and engineers."⁵

And my suggestion Number 5 is to encourage the nine nuclear weapons states to respond to China's call for them to "negotiate and conclude a treaty on No-First-Use of nuclear weapons"⁶

Of utmost importance, too, is understand the comprehensive manifestation of Artificial Intelligence in all military systems and how, - *inadvertently* - Artificial Intelligence may negatively affect the Nuclear Command and Control systems. And for Pugwash to use its expertise and to facilitate Track 2 and Track 1 and a half dialogues, between the nuclear weapons states, on a treaty to prohibit the utilization of Artificial Intelligence *in any form* in the delegation of nuclear launch authority, or critical command-and-control systems – a principle already agreed upon in November 2024 by the United States Biden Administration and President Xi of China.⁷

I call on Pugwash to utilize its resources to its full capacity: the strengths of its expertise and its international range of membership in 50 countries to fully engage with the immense task of convincing the world that security does not lie in nuclear weapons. And through dialogue and diplomacy to further contribute to their elimination and abolition of nuclear weapons.

We cannot allow nuclear disarmament to become a dead issue.

We must never forget that *Nuclear war is both suicide and genocide.*

Thank you!

⁵ Draft by Ambassador Taous Feroukhi, *Assassination of Scientists*, July 2025

⁶ China Takes Over P5 Process, Repeats No-First-Use Call with African States, *Arms Control Association*, 2024-09 Nuclear Disarmament Monitor

⁷ **Nuclear command and control:** Prohibiting the delegation of nuclear launch authority, or critical command-and-control decisions, to AI systems (a principle already [agreed](#) upon by the US and China).