

# **Nuclear Disarmament: The Fierce Urgency of Now**

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Madam President, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Peter Weiss and I am Co-President of IALANA, the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms. I call your attention to our paper, “Nuclear Disarmament: The Road Ahead”, which is available outside this room. It contains our legal analysis of the nuclear weapons issue and our recommendations for going forward.

But I want to speak to you today more as a citizen of this endangered world than as a lawyer. I had the privilege of addressing an NPT Review Conference once before, in 2000. Not a great deal has changed since then, except that I am 15 years older and approaching my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. I therefore have an urgent request to put before you, dear distinguished delegates: Make the nuclear weapons free world happen, which, to listen to their speeches, all world leaders desire, but make it happen in my lifetime.

It should not be difficult. You, more than any other body, have the power to do it. Every long march requires a first step. This conference should end with a decision to launch a process to start drafting a convention or treaty that will define the path leading to the total elimination of the thousands of nuclear weapons that now threaten a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. That path should be subject to effective verification and be completed within a reasonable, fixed time line.

Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna have demonstrated that continuing the nuclear arms race is the devil's work, while a child could understand that a world without nuclear weapons is infinitely preferable to one in which such weapons exist. The failure to take a first step toward total nuclear disarmament can only be understood as unwillingness to embark on the road to zero.

The nuclear weapons story has had its heroes. The Hibakusha who keep the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki alive so that no one else will ever have to suffer as they did; Lt. Col. Petrov, who paid with the loss of his career for refusing to carry out a procedure that could have plunged the world into nuclear holocaust; the tiny Republic of the Marshall Islands which has taken all nine nuclear armed states to the International Court of Justice for their failure to carry out their disarmament obligation; Sister Megan Rice, the 85 year old nun who is spending three years in prison for pouring some of her own blood on the wall of a building housing enough weapons grade uranium to manufacture thousands of nuclear weapons.

What we need now is a heroic state, or coalition of states, who will risk the displeasure of the powerful nuclear weapon states by leading the way to a world not just free of, but liberated from, the curse of nuclear weapons. I have faith that such states are represented in this chamber today. But please remember: In my lifetime.