

**TEXT FOR NPT 2023 PLENARY PRESENTATION
90 SECS TO MIDNIGHT – HOW CLOSE CAN YOU GET?**

INADMISSIBILITY OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS USE

**BASEL PEACE OFFICE
NO FIRST USE GLOBAL
ABOLITION 2000 NUCLEAR RISK REDUCTION WORKING GROUP
ZONA LIBRE
PEOPLE FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT
HUMAN SURVIVAL PROJECT
WORLD FUTURE COUNCIL
AOTEAROA LAWYERS FOR PEACE**

I have now been making presentations on nuclear risk reduction, with a few gaps notably for COVID, at UN meetings, (NPT and First Cttee) since 2006.

Each year I have spoken here since about 2011, the risk has been higher. It continues to climb.

UN undersecretary for Disarmament Izumi Nakamitsu last March said that the risk of nuclear weapons use is higher than at any time since the depths of the cold war. Arguably it is now as high as it has ever been.

The Doomsday Clock is now at an unprecedented 90 seconds to metaphorical 'midnight'. This is the closest it has ever been, including during the cold war.

A major (though not the only) contributor to that risk has been the stream of explicit and implicit nuclear threats emanating from one single Government.

Other Governments have, by their nuclear postures and use-policies, contributed to nuclear risk to be sure, and risks of a nuclear exchange continue at an unacceptable level between India and Pakistan, and from North Korea (who has also made explicit nuclear threats).

But the Government that possesses more nuclear weapons than any other Government is currently the only one making explicitly threatening gestures, and the only one that repeatedly threatens the use, initially of tactical, nuclear weapons in the context of what can only be described as aggression against Ukraine.

Undersecretary Izumi, in response to Russia's announcement that it had agreed with Belarus to station nuclear weapons in that country, noted that:

“I wish to be clear at the outset — all States must avoid taking any actions that could lead to escalation, mistake or miscalculation,” and noted that the war in Ukraine was/is 'the most acute example' of elevated nuclear risk.

There have been a series of more or less veiled threats since 2014, but they have intensified since Feb 2022, emanating variously from President Vladimir Putin, Russian State TV's Margarita Simonyan, and former-President Medvedev, to the effect

that Russia was/is prepared to use its nuclear arsenal. These threats continue to be made.

Indeed it seems the only considerations that restrained possible use are:

--Doubts over the military effectiveness of nuclear weapons use. It is argued that nuclear weapons use would fail to deter Ukrainian forces from fighting.

--Knowledge that the use of nuclear weapons would bring about massive retaliation either of a conventional nature, or nuclear.

--Influence on Russia of the 1996 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the Illegality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons

--Doubts have been expressed in some quarters as to the reliability of Russian nuclear weapons.

However we parse the details of the current spike in nuclear risk, and the proliferation of nuclear threats, and even more so if we also include the possibility of nuclear weapons use between India and Pakistan, and between the DPRK and either the RoK or the US, it cannot be denied that this year is indeed the year in which the risk of a nuclear apocalypse is as great or greater than it has ever been, ever.

The urgency of action to lower that risk is undeniable.

There is one bright spot.

The taboo against use of nuclear weapons, in spite of – or because of – the threats emanating from one government, has received a massive upgrade.

<https://nofirstuse.global/2022/12/12/breakthrough-at-the-g20-summit-leaders-of-nuclear-weapon-and-allied-states-affirm-the-inadmissibility-of-nuclear-weapons-threat-or-use/>

On January 6th, the five NPT nuclear-weapon states (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) declared at the level of 'leaders' that “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

Then on November 17th leaders of the G20 – which includes six nuclear armed states, seven states in alliances with nuclear-weapon states and six nonaligned/neutral states – declared that “The threat of use or use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible.”

(See [G20 Bali Leaders Statement](#) paragraph 4. The G20 countries are Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the U.K. and the U.S. The European Union is also a member).

The G20 statement, in particular, indicates a breakthrough in consolidating a general practice against nuclear weapons use and elevating this to a norm now accepted, at least on paper, by the nuclear weapon states.

It is vital that this 'breakthrough' be reaffirmed in as many forums as possible – here at the 2023 NPT Preparatory Committee, at UNGA First Committee, or else at

succeeding G7 and G20 meetings, such as the upcoming one in Delhi.

In Hiroshima, Shamefully, The G7 declaration was a climbdown from the Bali declaration, using the 'inadmissibility' of nuclear weapons use as a stick with which to beat one government in one specific conflict, rather than emphasising, as in the Bali Declaration, the *universal* principle of the inadmissibility of nuclear weapons use.

A global network of over 90 NGOs under the umbrella of No First Use Global have banded together to promote the reaffirmation of the language of the Bali declaration that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible.

Over 1000 notables – former Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Defence Ministers, and Parliamentarians, academics, and NGOs – have signed onto a Declaration of Conscience, urging reaffirmation of the Bali Declaration on inadmissibility of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and and calls on the United Nations, through decisions of its Security Council and General Assembly, to enshrine this stance as a dictate of international law and to require all member states to comply fully, in order to ensure their security policies and practices rule-out the initiation of nuclear war including any first-use of nuclear weapons. The advent of this qualitatively diminished role for nuclear weapons would enhance the prospects for establishing a nuclear-weapon-free world, and should be used with utmost determination to achieve that essential goal.

It is my pleasant duty to formally present that declaration with an up to date signature list, to this assembly now.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeh67hNh3Q_j1RBFxJbInFzNyZ7vy3UnL-RMP8FQWJixesQbA/viewform

In French:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdnBH125j7cgHLxvxoKOmyHwoke0cSW7MiNn3OLdgckKX8KWQ/viewform?pli=1>