

2015 NPT Review Conference Civil Society Presentation
Youth Statement – Ban All Nukes generation

Madam President and Delegates,

Today, we stand before you as idealistic youth. We are not ashamed of this fact. We stand here because we believe the statements of the Nuclear Weapon States do not represent the majority of young people within their borders. We're here to speak on behalf of these young people and we believe that a better world can be created: a world without nuclear weapons. I'm sure everyone in this room today can remember being young and having dreams of making the world a better place. The United Nations is built on this ideal. But some, who are present, have forgotten this idealism; you've lost your way along the path.

We ask you all to take a moment today to remember why you went into world affairs, remember the idealism of your youth and return to your former aspirational path. Unless we preserve the daring energy to look beyond the reality of today to a vision of a better tomorrow, we will continue to face the walls of apathy and defeatism. To stay on our current path is to give into fear and accept a less than safe world.

Madam President

A nuclear attack would be devastating and as Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon reminded us, we only have to listen to the accounts of the victims of nuclear weapon use and testing to understand how no country could adequately respond. Unfortunately, keeping our heads in the sand is to continue to trust those that tell us that nuclear weapons keep us safe, that they will never be used again, and that they are a deterrent for other countries. Perhaps these convenient, unreflective and uncritical arguments veered you off the path of peace in the first place. After all, we are often told that because there has been no nuclear war for the last 70 years, we can assume that this will continue for the rest of history.

This illogical attitude can be summed up well by an analogy of a man falling from a skyscraper. Those half-way up the building heard him shout as he passed their window, 'So far so good.' We're often told as NGOs we are unrealistic in fighting for a nuclear weapon free world, but in fact basing world security on the 'so far, so good' recipe, we see that it is the nuclear weapon states that are being unrealistic. Clearly, 'so far so good' is not a recipe for world security. The worst is possible.

Madam President

We live in a highly interdependent world where the actions of one can effect us all. Even if we choose only to seek our own national interest, in today's globalized world, this cannot be achieved without cooperating beyond our borders. All of our actions have an effect and this conference can either go down in history as just another review conference, or it can down in history as *the* review conference which led to a ban on nuclear weapons. However to achieve this requires real action, not just empty words and promises. Action based on the shared trust and respect for our world, for each other, for the environment and for humanity.

Just as this conference can affect the whole of humanity, nuclear weapons used by anyone will have an immediate effect on everyone. Let's take a long term view and by doing so, realize the importance of acting in this moment, at this conference.

Madam President

Today we find ourselves defending our peace and security more frequently from unpredictable threats. Be it the outbreak of Ebola or the rise of terrorist groups such as ISIS, our commitment to achieving lasting peace and security is increasingly tested.

And yet, despite constantly reaffirming this commitment to pursuing a more safe and peaceful world, many leaders continue to ignore a threat that is within our power to end.

To the nuclear weapons states we ask, what contributions to global peace and security are your nuclear stock piles making? Your continued investment and modernization of such useless weapons is not only a threat to all, but divests valuable resources away from services in education, healthcare, and development; prerequisites for the secure world you all claim to strive for.

Quite frankly it's ironic that we've reached a point where the youth at this conference are acting more responsibly in regards to disarmament than many of the adults charged with handling the task in the first place.

Your inability to take action is appalling and resembles that of a child who procrastinates their homework until the last minute. The big difference here is that waiting until the last minute won't lead to a bad report card, but rather to the potential destruction of humanity.

You see it's simple; A world where nuclear weapons exist is not a secure world. It is not a world where peace and trust between nations can begin to grow, and it is not a world that, we the youth, plan to inherit.

Madam President

Today, we find ourselves at a crossroad, and the path we choose will decide our future.

The first path leads us to a future where continued empty promises only prevent progress from being made. To continue down this path is to give into fear; a groundless fear that nuclear deterrence is the only means to a secure and peaceful world.

However, the second path is one many of you have fallen off of. This path leads us back to the idealism and pragmatic energy needed for a better tomorrow. Here we confront our fears through diplomacy and understanding and once again pursue the future we all deserve.

In closing, Madam President and Delegates

During a time where tensions amongst nations are on the rise, we understand that the task before us is not an easy one. But know this; A star shines brightest when surrounded by darkness.

It is during our most trying times that we've proven that we can rise to the occasion.

We the youth are ready to do our part, the question is, are you all? Will you all continue down the path of fear, Or, will you all remember why you've dedicated your lives to making the world a better place, and return to the path of idealism.

A wise person is one who plants a tree whose shade they will never sit beneath. You can either continue to sit back and hope that we don't destroy ourselves, or you can finally do your jobs and begin building a future that is peaceful and secure for all.

So, what will it be? Thank you.