

International Meeting, 2022 World Conference against A and H Bombs

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Friends,

Let me begin with an apology. I so wanted to join this year's World Conference in person. After the pandemic hiatus, I was eager to reengage with Hiroshima, its most profound lessons for humanity, and with the people, energy and spirit of the World Conference. Unfortunately, having recently had covid, I remain grounded in the United States. But I am with you fully in spirit!

Vladimir Putin's brutal and illegal invasion of Ukraine triggered the most tumultuous and potentially dangerous geopolitical transformation of the geopolitical disorder since the imposition of the Cold War. With nuclear, cyber, AI weapons and the rise of autocracies, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists'* Doomsday Clock warns that humanity is 100 seconds from midnight. Even before Putin's invasion of Ukraine, with the collapse of the ABM, INF, CFE, and Open Skies Treaties, the nuclear powers had plunged into unrestricted nuclear and high-tech arms races.

While we celebrate the successes of the First Meeting of the States Parties of the TPNW, we cannot ignore the danger of nuclear war growing out of the Ukraine War. Ukraine is fighting to keep Russia from taking all of Donetsk & Luhansk and to block a Russian advance toward Odessa. President Zelensky speaks in terms of status quo ante, ousting Russia from Donbass, while Russia is moving to integrate its 2014 and 2022 conquests. Meanwhile, President Biden and General Austin speak in terms of defeating and weakening Russia, increasing the danger of escalation.

Russian nuclear doctrine calls for the use of nuclear weapons when the Russian state is in jeopardy. Were this to become an extended war that threatens to bleed Russian resources and power or were Russian forces unexpectedly to face possible military defeat, Putin could launch one or more tactical nuclear weapons to terrorize Kyiv into suing for peace. U.S. doctrine mandates possible use of nuclear weapons when its vital interests and those of its allies **and partners** are threatened. Russia's use of tactical nuclear weapons could thus trigger a cataclysmic nuclear exchange.

The imperative is to win a ceasefire and negotiated settlement.

To the East, China is the power that Washington warns is challenging its "rules based order," the global systems and arrangements the U.S. imposed at the dawn of the Cold War when China was a marginalized nation. We should not be surprised that China, in the tradition of rising powers, is pursuing what its elite believes to be in its national interests, sometimes, as in the cases of East and South China Seas, sometimes with little regard for the rights and interests of others.

U.S. National Defense Strategy commits the U.S. to maintain its U.S. competitive advantage and to ensure that U.S. military capabilities can defeat China in a war. The administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy warns that the U.S. is "determined to strengthen our long-term position and commitment to the Indo-Pacific" by shaping the "strategic environment." This includes increased funding for new nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, massive investments in cutting edge technologies, the QUAD and AUKUS alliances.

The Chinese government is no innocent power - witness its actions in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, inner Mongolia, the East and South China Seas and its military provocations in the Taiwan Strait. But this does not justify the Biden Administration's

provocative “freedom of navigation” operations or its assault on the One China policy, long the foundation of Northeast Asian stability. Following Trump weakening the Taiwan “strategic ambiguity” doctrine, Biden has moved to “strategic clarity.” The Washington establishment is now determined to bring Taiwan fully into the U.S. sphere to reinforce China’s containment. U.S. warships and warplanes have been repeatedly dispatched to the Taiwan Strait. Biden declared a U.S. military commitment to defend Taiwan and has massively increased arms sales to Taipei. More, the State Department removed statements from its webpage that the U.S. “does not support independence” for Taiwan and that “Taiwan is part of China”.

This is extremely dangerous. Taiwan cannot be militarily defended. This helps to explain Biden’s reaffirmation of the Pentagon’s nuclear first-strike war fighting doctrine. Only by threatening nuclear cataclysm, they believe, can they ensure that Beijing refrains from military action to reunify what Beijing believes to be its “renegade” province. Japan’s LDP leaders have also signaled that the SDF would join a fight for Taiwan and is moving to double Tokyo’s military spending and to develop conventional first-strike capabilities.

The combination of Taiwan’s geostrategic value as the hinge of U.S. East Asian and western Pacific power and U.S. military commitments to defend Taiwan make the island today’s geopolitical center of the struggle for world power. Were the U.S. to fail to defend Taiwan, it would call into question Washington’s Asian, Pacific, and European alliances and thus its global primacy.

Finally, even as we condemn Putin’s nuclear threats, we need to acknowledge that they did not break new ground. On at least thirty occasions during international crises and wars since the Hiroshima and Nagasaki A-bombings, the U.S. has prepared and/or threatened to initiate such genocidal attacks and maintains its first-strike

doctrine. Each of the other nuclear powers has also done so at least once. The rationale is not nuclear deterrence but to “create the 'maneuver space' for so-called conventional military operations.

Today all this takes place midst increasingly unrestrained nuclear arms races in flagrant violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. That is why the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was negotiated. We must be clear eyed, imaginative, and courageous. We cannot blink away the reality that humanity continues to face the existential nuclear threats, as well as climate change.

June’s First Meeting of States Parties of the TPNW in Vienna condemned first-strike nuclear threats. It further stigmatized the use of nuclear weapons by focusing on their humanitarian consequences. It gained ratifications of three additional small nations. And deepened the Treaty’s institutionalization. But this is hardly enough to prevent nuclear war or to move us toward a nuclear weapons free world. That will only come when our movements make it impossible for nuclear umbrella states like Japan to persist in opposing the TPNW and disregarding the nuclear powers’ refusal to fulfill Article VI of the NPT. And the reality is that those of us who live in the nuclear weapons states have yet to fulfill our moral and historic responsibilities to transform the international environment into one where successful nuclear weapons abolition negotiations can take place, to reduce and eliminate our nation’s reliance on nuclear weapons, and to create the nuclear weapons-free future that our children and grandchildren deserve.