

Youth Speech

delivered by Barbara Streibl and Fatih Oezcan, Ban All Nukes generation

Ambassador Cabactulan, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Today at this historic NPT conference more youth are present than ever before. We came from all over the world to this year's Review Conference with a great notion of hope. This is a message we want to spread and gain momentum. We believe it is crucial that this positive and enthusiastic atmosphere will be maintained and transformed into a positive outcome.

At this Conference we discuss disarmament, defence, deterrence, non-proliferation, sovereignty, security doctrines, technical issues and more. The main reason we pursue these negotiations is our common objective of security. At the heart of this security, which our governments work so hard to protect, is something even more important: life. We must ask ourselves: How can we best preserve and protect all life on this planet? What do we need to ensure the true fulfilment of the human rights our governments have committed themselves to?

We would like to give you an impression of what we are talking about when we talk about life. Life is what matters. Our families and friends should be our motivation to abolish a weapon that could destroy their lives. We asked young people from around the world what they love in their lives. Today we have the pleasure to present you some of their answers.

I love going to my football academy and scoring goals, I love my family and having dinner with them, and many more things - Ishaan Jha, 15 years from India

I love my family. No matter what happens, they love me for nothing and I feel a special bond between us. I love them as well as I thank them. - Sumi Iyo, 25 years from Japan

I love to cut, to glue and to draw. I love making things for my mum. – Gianna Sauer, 4 years from Germany

What type of security do we need, to ensure the ultimate aim: preserving life? We know the question of security is difficult, there is a multitude of factors to consider; however, one thing is clear: nuclear weapons are not the answer to our problems. Their indiscriminate nature goes against the progress that has been made in the implementation of international human rights over the course of the previous century. All people are entitled to the right to life, and no nation can define others as unworthy of this right. By maintaining nuclear weapons, states have the ability to indiscriminately kill whole populations of peoples and render the environment uninhabitable for generations to come. In signing the UN Charter, states committed themselves “to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources”. Nuclear weapons provide none of this.

Today, the money, technology and human intelligence that is being devoted to these instruments of death, could instead be devoted to the preservation of life. With other, more viable alternatives we don't see any need for any country in this world to maintain nuclear arsenals, to stick to nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants, to invest in arms and create toxic, radioactive waste, targets for terrorists and increase the risk of proliferation. A safer world and one without nuclear weapons must

reflect the principles of “our common future” and “our shared security”, a security that benefits every human being. Governments need to invest in human security by ensuring enough clean drinking water, sufficient food and access to necessary medical care.

The world I want to live in is a world in which the countries of the global north will look at those of the global south as friends and partners who are deserving help. We need to gain mutual benefit and work together removing all that threatens future generations. In the very least it is the kind of world I want my children to inherit. - Agyeno Ehase, 27 years from Nigeria

As human beings we have the ability to be creative, so let's not use our ability to destroy the world. - Suzy Elwakeel, 26 years from Sudan

"Save the earth, it's our only source of chocolate!" It's a quote which can seem trivial, but it's true! We always speak about petrol which is running out, but we don't mind about what will be of us when many little things which seem insignificant will disappear... flowers, insects, chocolate... Let's think about it! - Marie Orset, 20 years from France

Our generation was born after the Cold War. We had nothing to do with the creation and proliferation of these weapons. The Cold war is over and humanity is facing new problems. These 21st century problems cannot be solved by 20th century weapons. We are young and we have new ideas. We are growing up in a globalized world, where modern communication and technology connects so many of us. Today young people have friends all around the world. People in other countries are no longer distant and strange enemies to us. We speak to them every day. Therefore we are able to build trust. We do not have to fear foreign cultures and religions. Weapons are not protecting us from potential enemies - they are creating them. But communication gives us the ability to bring down borders. Nuclear weapons are now 65 years old. Don't you think it's time for compulsory retirement?

I love that the Dutch youth and a lot of European youth have the privilege not to have experienced war. Wouldn't it be great if that remains that way and will be established for everybody? – Franka, 26 years and Welmoed, 27 years from the Netherlands

More than anything in my life I love those brief encounters with strangers that make me feel we are all in this together. - Kirsten Stromme, 23 years from Norway

For me it is important that my family and I have a safe future in a secure country. – Elena Sipachova, 21 years from Belarus

The stability and security promised us by nuclear weapons is simply a façade behind which the awful truth resides. We, the young generation, have the courage to speak and act on the truth. The truth about the terrible effects of nuclear weapons, about the unacceptable and incalculable consequences of the future use of nuclear weapons, and the huge waste of human and financial resources, the harm to human beings, plants, animals and habitats, their contribution to the problem of climate change; and their potential to cause irreversible damage to all of us and future generations. We ask diplomats, experts, members of armed forces, public officials, and civil society, to have courage and to act on the truth.

U.S. President Obama has pointed to the desired goal at the horizon: a world free of nuclear weapons.

Now is the time to make concrete steps. We call on all nuclear capable states to commit themselves to the goal of Global Zero. We have to abolish the threat of causing a humanitarian and environmental catastrophe in less than half an hour. The time to start serious negotiations on a framework of agreements banning nuclear-weapons must be taken these weeks here in New York. The ultimate goal must be a world where nuclear weapons are illegal and no longer exist. The way to reach this goal is a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Each year since 2005 we have stood here in front of you, asking and pleading for you to be reasonable and to think about our future, and not to leave us the legacy of fear, threats and death. We have seen no real actions or courageous leadership. So today, we ask once more for all states to begin real, honest and fruitful negotiations leading to a nuclear weapons free world. We do not want our governments to be in constantly hostile postures. We, the youth and we, the people want you to take us into account when you plan our future.

We must remember that the decisions taken this month do not only have an impact on us, but on the future of your children, the future of our children and grandchildren. Now this is what counts and why it is up to all of us, to change hope into reality.

We thank you for your attention. And we and all future generations will thank you for abolishing nuclear weapons.