

## RUSSIAN STUDENT YOUNG PUGWASH

Address by Ambassador Sergio Duarte, President of Pugwash, at the opening of the Conference “Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation: Entering a new decade”.

2-3 December 2021

It is for me a great pleasure and an honor to address the Russian Student/Young Pugwash Group, albeit virtually and not in person. It is always stimulating to be among young people, and especially people like you, who care about the security and the future of our planet. Pugwash was founded in 1957 by scientists who were genuinely concerned with the course of events in their time. They were inspired by a Manifesto published two years before by Bertrand Russel and Albert Einstein. These two distinguished individuals, one a philosopher and the other a physicist, understood the existential danger posed to mankind by the development of nuclear weapons. At the time, only two nations possessed such awesome means of destruction. Today, nine countries together have approximately 14.000 nuclear warheads and their means of delivery and are engaged in an endless race to achieve illusory military superiority. By doing so, instead of obtaining security for themselves they put into danger the security of all peoples on Earth. The dangers identified by Russell and Einstein in 1955 still haunt us.

The Pugwash movement inspired by the Manifesto was carried on in 1957 by the initiative of a group of scientists who started the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. Over the past sixty-four years Pugwash has worked dilligently to help bring about progress in the international regulation of armaments and disarmament, as well as as fostering dialogue across divides and in the pursuit of peace.

We can say that some progress was achieved. The international community was able to conclude a number of important treaties and conventions in the field of disarmament and arms control. Pugwash substantively contributed to the development and negotiation of some of those instruments, which are today part of the corpus of international law. Much, however, remains to be done and this is the task that lies before you.

Many of you may recall that for a short while in the last decade of the past century humanity nurtured the hope that the end of the ideological rivalry between the two most heavily armed nations would finally usher in an era of undersdanding and cooperation. Soon, however, a search for elusive military superiority replaced ideology as the basis for confrontation. The dichotomy between nuclear capable antagonists is repeated in other regions where local disputes and regional rivalries have emerged, increasing the risk of disaster.

Paradoxically, in spite of the drastic reductions in overall nuclear arsenals since the Cold War years, the risk of nuclear conflict seems to have increased in our times. Mistrust, arms competition and outright hostility between major powers continue to generate instability. As

you are aware, most of the arms control agreements between the major powers have ceased to exist, while international tensions have grown.

My dear young colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It has become commonplace to say that our planet faces two existential threats of our own making; climate change and the existence of nuclear weapons. Science warns us that if we do not act decisively on climate change now, civilization as we know it may be wiped out in a couple of decades. At the same time, common sense tells us that if we do not act decisively on disarmament now, civilization may disappear in a matter of seconds as a result of a nuclear confrontation. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists has kept the Doomsday Clock at two minutes to midnight – the closest it has ever been to the symbolic mark of total destruction. In the statement explaining the move, the Board of the Bulletin explained that global leaders are not responding appropriately to reduce this threat level and counteract the hollowing-out of international political institutions, negotiations, and agreements that aim to contain it.

The surge in interest and participation by civil society in the recent climate negotiations in Glasgow shows that tomorrow's leaders – that is, you – understand the urgent need for greater public engagement and civic action. Common citizens, and particularly youth around the world no longer assume that today's leaders will keep them safe and secure. This Conference is a clear demonstration of your interest and concern.

Civil society organizations, and especially those dedicated to the improvement of international security must demand increased participation in the decision making processes that affect the future of the world.

To conclude, I wish to stress the urgent need for the construction of a new paradigm of international security not based on the possession and possibility of use of weapons of mass destruction.

Peace and security are common goods that belong to all nations and peoples. International security cannot be achieved by confrontation and mistrust. It must be non-discriminatory and inclusive in order to ensure security for all and not only for a few super-armed nations. The general interest must be placed above parochial considerations. This task requires understanding, restraint and rational behavior by world leaders, as well as encouragement and cooperation by civil society. The conditions to achieve meaningful and lasting results do not need to be re-invented: they are already well-known and are enshrined in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations: renunciation of the use or threat of force, peaceful solution of differences, adherence to the accepted norms and standards of international behavior and good-faith compliance with commitments.

I wish you success in your deliberations.