

Dennis J. Kucinich
Speech to the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament
on behalf of the Basil Peace Office and civil society

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

Your Excellency, President of the General Assembly, Distinguished Ministers, Delegates and Colleagues:

I speak on behalf of the Basel Peace Office, a coalition of international organizations dedicated to the elimination of nuclear weapons

The world is in urgent need of truth and reconciliation over the existential threat of development of and use of nuclear weapons.

We have a shared global interest in nuclear disarmament and nuclear abolition, deriving from the irreducible human right to be free of contemplation of extinction.

This is the place and now is the time to take confidence-building measures, new diplomatic steps towards averting a nuclear catastrophe, to enact the new ban treaty, to refrain from precipitating nuclear showdowns, to begin anew the quest to eliminate nuclear weapons through reciprocal trust-building.

We from Civil Society insist upon structured, legally-affirmed nuclear arms treaties compelling non-violent conflict resolution, mindful of the founding principle of the United Nations to “end the scourge of war for all time.”

Today’s world is interdependent and interconnected. Human unity is the first truth.

Technology has created a global village. When a greeting can be sent to the other side of the world in a matter of seconds, this represents the constructive power of global citizens, affirming our commonality.

Contrast that with a nation sending an ICBM missile with a nuclear warhead.

There is a thin line between deterrence and provocation. An aggressive expression of nuclear sovereignty is illegal and suicidal.

The threat of the use of nuclear weapons nullifies our humanity.

Let us hear and heed the demands for peace and nonviolent conflict resolution from the peoples of the world community.

Let the nations of the world affirm the evolutionary potential of technology for peace. The UN has mechanisms and initiatives to help nations resolve conflicts and achieve security without recourse to nuclear weapons or the use of force. But this great institution cannot do it alone.

Each one of us must disarm and abolish any destructive force in our own lives, our own homes and our own communities which breed domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, gun violence, racial violence.

The power to do this is in the human heart, where courage and compassion reside, where the transformative power, the conscious willingness to challenge violence anywhere helps to tame that beast everywhere.

If we are to eliminate nuclear weapons we must also eliminate destructive rhetoric.

Here we acknowledge the power of the spoken word. Words create worlds. Harsh words, the exchange of threats between leaders, begins a dialectic of conflict, breeding suspicion, fear, reaction, miscalculation, and disaster. Words of mass destruction can unleash weapons of mass destruction.

The ghosts from Nagasaki and Hiroshima hover over us today, warning us that time is an illusion, that the past, the present and the future are one and can be obliterated in a flash, proving nuclear weapons are a fact of death, not life.

Nations must explicitly abandon designs for empire and nuclear dominance.

The brandishing of nuclear weapons triggers the inevitability of their use.

In the name of all humanity this must stop.

Instead of new nuclear nations and a new nuclear architecture we need new, clear action to create a world with freedom from fear, freedom from violent expression, freedom from extinction, and a legal framework to match.

On behalf of the Basel Peace Office and civil society, we say let peace be sovereign. Let diplomacy be sovereign. Let hope be sovereign, through your work and our work.

Then we shall fulfill the prophecy that “nation shall not take up sword against nation.”

We must save our world from destruction. We must act with a sense of urgency. We must destroy these weapons before they destroy us. A nuclear weapons-free world is waiting to be courageously called forth. Thank You.

Dennis Kucinich represents the Basel Peace Office and Civil Society today. He served 16 years in the US Congress and was Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio. He has twice been a candidate for President of the United States. He is a recipient of the Gandhi Peace Award.

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