

Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group

*Report for 2021 AGM**

Introduction

The [Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group](#) (formerly called the *De-alerting Working Group*) promotes measures to reduce the risks of nuclear weapons being used and to lower the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines. These include de-alerting, eliminating launch on warning, lowering threat postures and adopting policies of no-first-use and/or sole purpose.

These are incremental measures, to be advanced along with simultaneous efforts to eliminate the role of nuclear weapons entirely and to achieve the global prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. Such incremental measures are vital to prevent nuclear weapons being used, and to build confidence amongst those currently relying on nuclear weapons that the phased prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons will increase – not decrease – their security.

Activities 2020-2021

The working group has been very active over the past year with a range of events, appeals/letters and other education and advocacy including establishment of a new [No-First-Use Global campaign platform](#).

1. Events

- **Webinar: 100 Seconds to Midnight What does this mean? What can we do?**

July 30, 2020

In this [international webinar](#) a group of experts explored the risks of nuclear weapons use by accident, miscalculation or intent, the initiatives at national and international levels to reduce these risks, and the support needed for these from legislators, civil society and like-minded governments.

- **Webinar: Nuclear risk-reduction & disarmament: Is it time for no-first-use policies in the USA & globally?**

April 29, 2021. In two sessions : a) Asia/Pacific, and b) Americas/Europe

'No-first-use' is a policy that can be adopted by a nuclear armed (or allied) state to never initiate a nuclear exchange by being the first to use nuclear weapons. [This webinar](#) explored whether such policies could reduce the risk of a nuclear war and pave the way for multilateral nuclear disarmament, how such policies could be operationalised, what new initiatives were advancing such policies, and political forces and security arguments supporting or preventing their adoption. ([Click here](#) to view the video recording).

2. Appeals/Letters

- **Call on Governments at the UN High Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament**

[A letter](#) was sent to all governments (Presidents, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and UN Ambassadors) in early September calling on them to use the occasion of the [UN High Level Meeting on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#) to, amongst other things, 'affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and therefore the nuclear armed States should all affirm policies never to initiate a nuclear war (no-first-use policies).' The two civil society speakers for the High Level Meeting (Saber Chowdhury and Vanda Proskova) followed up on this call.

* [Please see also: ["Reflections on the actions and achievements of the Abolition 2000 nuclear-risk reduction working group"](#) by John Hallam, Co-convenor of the working group.]

- **Protect People and the Planet: Appeal for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World**

In follow-up to the [civil society event](#) organised for the *International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on Sep 26, 2021*, a [Global Appeal for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World](#) was launched. The appeal calls on cities, parliaments and governments to, amongst other things, 'Affirm that nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, and therefore the nuclear armed States should stand down their nuclear forces and affirm policies never to initiate a nuclear war (no-first-use policies).' Over 1000 people have endorsed the appeal. Quotes from endorsers are circulated on social media.

- **Open Letter to Presidents Biden and Putin**

Members of the working group, in cooperation with other participants of the ne NoFirstUse Global campaign (see below), drafted an [Open Letter to Presidents Biden and Putin](#), which was [endorsed by over 1200 distinguished and dedicated people](#), and sent to the Biden and Putin teams prior to their Summit in Geneva. We were very pleased that the two Presidents made nuclear risk reduction and disarmament a priority of the Summit – with the adoption of a [U.S.-Russia Presidential Joint Statement on Strategic Stability](#) in which they reaffirmed 'the principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought' and announced that they will embark together on an integrated bilateral **Strategic Stability Dialogue** in the near future. (See [US-Russia Summit advances key points in international Open Letter](#)).

- **Press releases and other letters**

During the year John Hallam (People for Nuclear Disarmament and co-convenor of the Nuclear Risk Reduction Working Group) organised a number of other letters to the nuclear armed states (especially USA and Russia) and accompanying press releases on nuclear risk reduction issues. These had varying levels of endorsement from other Abolition 2000 members. These letters and press releases are posted on the [People for Nuclear Disarmament](#) website.

3. Other advocacy and legislation

In its events, appeals, letters and media work, the working group highlights relevant legislative bills and motions, as well as inter-parliamentary resolutions on nuclear risk reduction. These include the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly resolutions on No-First-Use and US draft legislation on diplomacy in nuclear related conflicts (e.g. Iran and North Korea) and No-First-Use.

4. No-First-Use Global campaign platform

The working group is a co-founder of [NoFirstUse Global](#), a coalition of organizations, academics, policy makers and civil society advocates working cooperatively for the adoption of no-first-use policies by nuclear-armed States, support for such policies from nuclear allied countries, and implementation of such policies to help achieve broader nuclear risk-reduction, non-proliferation and disarmament measures.

NoFirstUse Global held a [Global NFU webinar](#) in 2 sessions on April 29, 2021 and a [Global NFU campaign meeting](#) in 3 sessions on May 26-27. These events are preparatory for a NoFirstUse Global launch event coming up in July. The [NoFirstUse Global platform](#), still under development, includes interesting [blog articles](#), instructive [questions and answers about NFU](#), and [actions people can take](#) including appeals to support NFU [in the USA](#) and [globally](#).

Working group convenors and website:

John Hallam, Aaron Tovish, Marc Finaud and Alyn Ware. For more information see <https://www.abolition2000.org/en/working-groups/nuclear-risk-reduction/>.