



**Statement by Lucy Duncan  
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Disarmament**

**Conference on Disarmament  
Opening Statement (2022)**

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Thank you Mr President.

As this is the first time I take the floor, I want to congratulate you on assuming the role as President of the Conference on Disarmament.

Aotearoa New Zealand wishes you every success in this role, as our inaugural President in 2022.

On a personal note, I wish you and your delegation a peaceful and prosperous Year of the Tiger, and a Happy Lunar New Year.

As we begin our work for the year, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all new colleagues who have assumed their positions since we last met in 2021. The New Zealand delegation looks forward to working closely with all of you.

Mr President, at the outset of 2022 the world is becoming a more unpredictable and dangerous place.

Developments in international security and disarmament have been trending downwards for some years now.

Just last month, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists' revised its Doomsday Clock; the world remains stuck at one hundred seconds to midnight, the closest it has ever been to midnight – and the risk of nuclear war.

This only makes the mission before us, of achieving arms control and disarmament agreements, more urgent.

Our governments must find ways to reduce tensions, build trust and renew cooperation between us, on the critical issues of disarmament and arms control.

We can – each of us – contribute to this shared goal if we are prepared to work together. So let's get to work.

We must agree a programme of work promptly.

For too long this body has deliberated without being able to agree to resume the role for which it exists – to undertake negotiations on new security-related agreements.

Among their roles, arms control and disarmament agreements can help to prevent major crises or be additional guardrails if they occur.

This is not a hypothetical argument.

Aotearoa New Zealand remains deeply concerned about the ongoing tension between Russia and Ukraine, including the continuing and unprecedented build-up of Russian military forces on its border with Ukraine. We call on Russia to take steps to reduce tensions and the risk of a severe miscalculation.

We have been consistent in our support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We hope that ongoing discussions between the US, Russia, Ukraine and other partners will bring about an urgent de-escalation of tensions.

Aotearoa New Zealand stands ready to support diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis.

Words must mean something, and commitments given must be implemented.

Just over one month ago, the Five NPT Nuclear-weapon States issued a Joint Statement underlining their desire to "work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all". They stated their intention to seek bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, and prevent an arms race.

Importantly, the joint statement affirmed that 'a nuclear war can never be won, and must never be fought'—a first for the five countries. This was an important signal. Issued as it was against the backdrop of increasingly acute strategic tension, it is imperative that it is now reinforced by concrete action. In the context of the NPT, I refer colleagues to the New Agenda Coalition and Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament responses to the joint statement. In New Zealand's view, a welcome further signal by the Nuclear-weapon States would be a clear reaffirmation of their unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament, in accordance with outcomes agreed at the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT.

Later this year, delegations to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will meet for its next Review Conference—the tenth in its history, and the fifth since it was extended indefinitely in 1995.

For more than fifty years, the NPT has constituted a cornerstone of international security. Members of the NPT must do all we can to ensure that the elements of the NPT's Grand Bargain are enhanced, and not weakened, at the forthcoming RevCon. In light of the

linkages between the NPT and the priorities of the Conference on Disarmament – and irrespective of differing treaty obligations – there is much this body can do to help.

Mr President, New Zealand is pleased to see the gathering strength of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons' (TPNW), which we staunchly support. This year, TPNW States Parties will convene for our First Meeting to be held in Vienna, and we are thankful to our Austrian hosts for doing all they can to ensure a safe and successful meeting.

The TPNW sends a strong signal that the very existence of nuclear weapons is untenable. The detonation of even a single nuclear weapon would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. And at times when tensions are heightened, we are reminded why action to eliminate these weapons is necessary. We encourage all States – Parties, Signatories and observers – to join us in Vienna for this meeting.

Mr President, our disarmament calendar this year remains as busy as ever. New Zealand is active across issues of concern to us, including the call for prohibition and regulation of autonomous weapons systems, in forums such as the CCW; and to negotiate and deliver a political declaration on explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA), as highlighted in our Disarmament Strategy released last year. Both of these present us with important opportunities to make our world safer, including for civilians in conflict stricken regions.

New Zealand is also supporting international efforts to respond to the repeated missile tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, and to encourage a positive conclusion to the resumed negotiations on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran. Achieving a positive resolution to both of these issues is important for the global non-proliferation regime and for international peace and security.

Despite our intense schedule and the scale of the challenges ahead of us, I hope, and I am sure, that we can all work together in the spirit of collegiality and common purpose. In this regard, Mr President, you, the P6+2, and all colleagues in this room can count on the full and constructive support of the New Zealand delegation, in progressing our shared agenda.

Before concluding, I wish to put on record New Zealand's views on two further matters relating to our Conference's work.

Firstly, New Zealand strongly supports the principle of open access to all States who wish to be observers of the CD. It would be a grave error to suggest that only member States had a stake in multilateral disarmament and arms control. New Zealand strongly favours our Conference being open and inclusive. We hope that all observer applications are approved promptly in 2022.

Secondly, I wish to add our voice in support to those many delegations that have consistently advocated for gender-neutral language to be adopted by the Conference on Disarmament within its Rules of Procedure. It is backward and deeply anachronistic that our Rules of Procedure continue to use language that identifies as male only, failing to

recognise the equality of all human beings, regardless of gender identification, who play an important role in this conference.

Mr President, at the beginning of each year our Conference is presented with another opportunity to start afresh. It should be a precious opportunity for revitalisation and renewal. Instead, each year that we under-utilise our time and fail to negotiate on disarmament is another year that we do not contribute to a safer international security environment —and so damage the reputation of this body and, ultimately, our own security.

All is not yet lost. It is within our gift to make a difference to global security as we have done in the past. Now we must act on our statements of position and intent, and work toward collective results.

I thank you.