



**United Nations Office
for Disarmament Affairs**

**Remarks at the First Meeting of the Independent Scientific Panel
on the Effects of Nuclear War**

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As delivered



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you today to the inaugural meeting of the Independent Scientific Panel on the Effects of Nuclear War.

Please allow me to begin by expressing my enormous appreciation to you for your willingness to serve on this Panel. Your commitment is no small undertaking, given the demands on your time and expertise.

I thank you for your time, your energy, your expertise and your commitment to scientific endeavour.

Speaking frankly, the world is on a negative trajectory when it comes to nuclear weapons. We seem to have forgotten the hard-earned lessons of the Cold War. We seem blind to the long-term ramifications of nuclear weapons.

Yet, amidst a myriad of global challenges, the potentially existential threat posed by nuclear weapons is not receiving the level of alarm it warrants.

In this context, a holistic understanding, based in hard scientific facts, of the effects of nuclear war is long overdue.

I want to use this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Government of Ireland and the Government of New Zealand for co-sponsoring the resolution mandating this panel and for their financial support which has enabled this first session of the Panel to take place in-person.

As you know, the creation of this Panel derives from UN General Assembly resolution 79/238, which decided to establish a panel of 21 individuals, participating in their personal capacity, to be appointed by the Secretary-General not only on the basis on nominations by our Member States, but also through nominations by scientific and academic institutions and a public call for candidates.

As you would expect, the selection process was highly competitive. But you were selected because of your recognized expertise, whether in public health, climate, the environment, radiation and radiological effects, agriculture or global socioeconomic systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Scientists and academics have long played a critical role in international policymaking, whether through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or in the newly established Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence (AI). And from the early days of the nuclear era, nuclear scientists were some of the loudest voices for nuclear disarmament.

They have contributed to raising public awareness about the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war. They have been the driving force for advancing knowledge about the humanitarian and environmental consequences of nuclear weapons.

They have produced science-based evidence and lent their impartial expertise to develop approaches and techniques to safeguard and verify the non-diversion of peaceful nuclear activities to use in weapons. And they have worked tirelessly to ensure compliance with disarmament and arms control obligations.

Today, as the world stands once again under the shadow of nuclear Armageddon, we continue to count on their contributions. And we count on you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Your task is both straightforward and complex.

We can all agree that the risk of a nuclear weapon being used is currently higher than at any time since the darkest days of the Cold War. And once the nuclear threshold is crossed, an all-out nuclear war may not be far behind.

There is an urgent need to educate the public about the dangers and consequences of nuclear war. More to the point, the public is owed such information.

The production of a holistic scientific report - such as the one you are charged with producing - is long overdue. The most recent update of the General Assembly-mandated comprehensive study on nuclear weapons, including the effects of nuclear weapons and consequences of nuclear war, was produced in 1988 – over thirty-five years ago.

In no other field would scientific research conducted so long ago be left unchallenged and underexplored.

Since then, we have seen major advances in climatic and scientific modeling and in the scientific evidence-base on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

Such advances will benefit your work, enabling more confidence in its relevance and its results.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We owe it to the international community to fully understand the impact of nuclear war, based on the most up-to-date scientific tools and methodologies. In this pursuit we rely on the impartiality of scientists and the expert community to imbue their conclusions with the necessary credibility.

The threat of nuclear war is not confined to national borders nor to one segment of society. Therefore, we must ensure that we properly frame the issue of nuclear war in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner.

You have been selected for this panel because you are uniquely qualified for the task, and we are here to support you in this vitally important work.

I thank you very much for your attention.