

# Today's Wars No Excuse to Abandon Nuclear Disarmament

For the first time, the four leading organizations in Canada devoted to nuclear disarmament issues — Canadian Pugwash Group, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention and Project Ploughshares — co-sponsored a single event on Oct. 19, 2023. This extraordinary Roundtable, “Revitalizing Nuclear Disarmament After the Ukraine War,” was convened at a moment of extreme danger to the world. This is the Roundtable’s abridged report to the Government of Canada.

The global nuclear arms control and disarmament machinery is in a deep crisis. This crisis far predates the Ukraine war and must be understood in the broader context of the breakdown and abandonment of nuclear weapons treaties alongside the introduction of new destabilizing weapons technologies and modernization of existing nuclear arsenals. Russia’s threat to use nuclear weapons in the Ukraine war has exacerbated the existential risk of nuclear conflict.

Due to a lack of sustained leadership on human security issues, blind allegiance to allies, and structural underfunding of arms control work, Canada has lost credibility, capacity and trust. There is an urgent need for Canada to restore its place as a leading middle power with powerful ideas.

The ongoing Ukraine war and the violent hostilities in the Middle East ought not to be used as excuses for the failure to advance a workable plan for comprehensive negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons, but rather as catalysts to accelerate progress on this urgent objective. During the Cold War, states were able to “compartmentalize” their work for nuclear disarmament in the midst of the exigencies of the East-West divide. Now, in the new multi-polar world, which is fraught with confrontation, states must return to the use of trust-building communication to advance mutual security interests.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was built on an understanding of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. This valuable treaty ought not to be scorned by the nuclear weapons states and the NATO leadership. Even if Canada is not prepared, at this juncture, to sign the TPNW, it should at least show its concern for the protection of humanity by attending as an Observer the second meeting of the states parties to the TPNW Nov. 27-Dec. 1, 2023.

We congratulate Canada for currently pursuing a dialogue within NATO on reducing nuclear risks; but the government should go further and advocate, within the processes of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the replacement of nuclear deterrence with a common security program.

In a multi-polar world, common security is the only way to peace — and survival. Canada must re-focus its vision away from reliance on nuclear deterrence and amplify the declaration issued by the G20 that any threat or use of nuclear weapons is “inadmissible.”

## Urgent steps toward this end would include:

1. A government call for the immediate resumption of bilateral talks between Russia and the U.S. to conclude a follow-up agreement to the New START prior to its expiration in 2026.
2. Promotion of No-First-Use policies to reduce the saliency of nuclear weapons in national security policies.
3. Advocating de-alerting of nuclear weapons to insert a firebreak for nuclear use.

The Special Roundtable appeals to the government to lead in lifting the level of parliamentary debate and public discourse to a higher level.

## Signed by:



Ploughshares



CANADIAN NETWORK TO  
ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS  
Le Réseau canadien pour  
l'abolition des armes nucléaires

Canadians for a  
Nuclear Weapons Convention



Rassemblement canadien pour  
une convention sur les armes nucléaires

Steering Committee

Canadian  
Pugwash

Affiliate of the Pugwash Conferences  
on Science and World Affairs

les Conférences  
Pugwash  
Canada

Affilié aux Conférences Pugwash  
sur la Science et les Affaires Mondiales