I am glad of this opportunity to welcome you, albeit from a distance, to this, the 55th Pugwash International Conference. It has a very special significance for a number of reasons. It marks the 60th anniversary of the explosion of the first nuclear weapon on this city and, a few days later, the attack on Nagasaki. It is also 50 years since the signing of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, of which I am the last remaining signatory, and it is the tenth anniversary of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize for our contributions to world peace. As you can imagine, for these reasons alone, I am deeply sorry that I am not able to be with you. It is the first Annual International Conference that I have missed.

But there is another reason why this conference is of special significance, a reason that dwarfs the others. Earlier this year, the NPT Review Conference ended in virtual failure. This disaster, for such it is, must spur us on to even greater efforts. Ultimately, its failure was due to the refusal of nation-states to relinquish even one iota of their national sovereignty. The original nuclear weapon states not only hold on to their nuclear status, but seek to augment their nuclear armoury. One of them even seeks to retain its military capability so that it can impose its will on the rest of the world. Other states seek to acquire nuclear weapons to deter an attack from others that possess them. Carried to its logical conclusion, this would mean that every nation will acquire its own nuclear weapons.

This is no way to run the world. Imagine a world governed forever by mutual fear. Surely, that is not a world in which any of us would want to live, yet it is the way the politicians are taking us. One reason for their ability to do so is spelled out in the Russell-Einstein Manifesto.

“People scarcely realize in imagination that the danger is to themselves and to their children and their grandchildren, and not only to a dimly apprehended humanity. They can scarcely bring themselves to grasp that they, individually, and those whom they love are in imminent danger of perishing agonizingly.”

Hitherto, Pugwash has owed its success to maintaining impeccable scientific respectability and thereby earning the respect of politicians. It is because of this reputation that I am able to congratulate the present Secretary-General on his initial success in facilitating meetings between the two sides in the world’s main trouble spots. But I am coming to believe that the time has come for Pugwash, while not for a moment relinquishing its scientific integrity, to lay the facts before the public. The end of the Cold War has led to public complacency, but in fact the dangers of a nuclear conflict are about as high as they have ever been. In the UK we have been running a campaign, in collaboration with other organizations, to make the public aware of the danger. I hope that Pugwash Groups in other countries will follow and improve upon our efforts.
I believe that we must go beyond that, and seek to abolish war itself. This aim, intrinsic to the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, will take us on a long hard road. It does not necessarily mean pacifism as that is generally understood, but it means choosing to seek a world with “continual progress in happiness and wisdom,” a world in which morality, law and mutual respect govern the relations between nations, and no nation uses military power to impose its will on others.