

**Introductory words by Sergio Duarte, President of Pugwash, at the event  
“Nuclear Dangers and the Arms Control and Disarmament Architecture”  
held on the margins of the 10<sup>th</sup> NPT Review Conference on August 12 2022.**

I welcome you all to this side event co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Brazil and Pugwash on “Nuclear dangers and the arms control and disarmament architecture”.

The risk of use of nuclear weapons has risen dramatically in the past few months. Since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 the world has never been as close to the actual use of nuclear weapons as now, while the disarmament and arms control architecture put together over the past 75 years is increasingly disregarded and discredited.

The contention that the existence of nuclear weapons was responsible for the absence of a war in Europe since the end of World War II has proven to be false. Not only has a major war erupted in European territory on February 24 and is going on for almost six months, but also the parties involved seem not to exclude the possibility of nuclear weapons being used.

Since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 the dangers of further use of nuclear weapons have existed. Thousands of nuclear tests were carried out in the atmosphere, underground and under waters, harming populations and poisoning the atmosphere and the marine environment. Moreover, by maintaining huge arsenals and stating their willingness to use their weapons in the circumstances they see fit, the nuclear weapon states assert hegemony and maintain a privileged place in world affairs.

The existence of nuclear weapons is a real and present threat to the permanence of human civilization on the planet. I am sure that the discussions we are about to have on this issue will enhance our endeavor to abolish what the late President John Kennedy called “a sword of Damocles hanging over our heads’.

The speakers today are Professor Paolo Cotta-Ramusino, Secretary-general of Pugwash; Ambassador Wael Al-Assad, Former Representative of the Secretary-general of the Arab League for Disarmament and Regional Security and former Advisor to the Government of Qatar; Mr. Andrey Belousov, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation in Geneva and Deputy Head of the Russian Delegation of the Russian Federation to the 10<sup>th</sup> NPT Review Conference; and Dr. Steven E. Miller, Director of the International Security Program, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University.