



UNODA and BASIC Webinar

“Launch of the Emerging Voices Network (EVN) on nuclear policy”

**Remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**

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Virtual Event
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Mr. Hamilton, [Director General for International Security Policy at Global Affairs Canada]

Ambassador Zlauvinen,

Distinguished panellists,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a real pleasure to be present at the first plenary of the Emerging Voices Network (EVN). This is an exciting achievement that will enable young voices to be heard in vital debates. It is also an important development for the NPT and the rest of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The EVN creates a pipeline of fresh thinking on the future of nuclear weapons and the measures needed to eliminate them.

Those who have been listening to me over the past several years will have heard my constant refrain about the need to increase youth participation and create space for young people to make substantive contributions to disarmament. At the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), we firmly believe that imparting knowledge and skills to young people empowers them to contribute to these issues, as both national and global citizens.

We do not do so for reasons of tokenism or as mere lip service. We do so because we believe that the continued relevance of multilateralism and international cooperation actually depends on how we will be able to create space for youth and work with youth. After all, it is you, young people, that will be responsible for developing the ethical, moral, security and legal frameworks of the future.

And it is young people from around the world that have a critical role to play in the here and now in raising awareness and developing new ways to reduce threats from weapons. Given the growing impact of new and emerging technologies on peace and security, contributions by young people with fluency in these matters will be essential.

To this end, in 2019, UNODA launched its youth outreach initiative, “#Youth4Disarmament”, or Y4D, to engage, educate and empower young people with the aim of facilitating their meaningful and inclusive participation in the field of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

To date, our efforts have consisted of:

- A conversation series on issues related to disarmament,
- A dedicated digital platform, www.youth4disarmament.org,
- The “75 Words for Disarmament Youth Challenge” contest,
- The flagship “UN Youth Champions for Disarmament” training programme; and,
- In partnership with the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), a ‘Steering Committee’ of young leaders in Northeast Asia,
- In partnership with the Office of the Secretary-General Youth Envoy, a disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control workshop on development for young leaders for SDGs and young peacebuilders.

These efforts are already bearing fruit and I am very proud of the fact that #Youth4Disarmament was recognized as the Best Coalition Building Project of 2020 by the Billion Acts of Peace Award.

Through #Youth4Disarmament, we will continue to connect geographically diverse young people with experts to learn about current international security challenges, the work of the United Nations and how to actively participate. In doing so, we see our work as complementary to other youth initiatives and look forward to actively collaborating with them, including through cross-pollination.

By placing youth engagement and empowerment at the core of its disarmament education efforts, UNODA aims to support Secretary-General Guterres’ recommendation to improve youth access to technical support and capacity-building while providing space for their participation. In support of youth in the development of the skills and knowledge necessary to engage with peace, security and disarmament issues UNODA has established a number of efforts under the disarmament education portfolio.

To the panelists, I congratulate you again on your achievement and I want to particularly highlight how pleased I am to see how the values of inclusivity and diversity are already embedded in the EVN through the regional and gender balance on display today.

I very much look forward to hearing your policy proposals and initiatives and I have no doubt that with your insight and passion we can take much needed steps towards our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

I thank you very much for your attention.