

FILM SCREENING "THE MAN WHO SAVED THE WORLD" IN COMMEMORATION  
OF THE UN INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PEACE, AND THE UN INTERNATIONAL  
DAY FOR THE TOTAL ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Tuesday September 22, 2015, 15h00/18h00

WELCOME REMARKS BY

H.E. MARIA FERNANDA ESPINOSA GARCES

AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ECUADOR TO THE  
UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests, Dear Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva to co-host this event to commemorate two very important United Nations celebrations: the UN International Day for Peace on September 21, and the UN International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26.

When Alyn Ware from Unfold Zero approached our Permanent Mission with this idea and looking for support, we immediately gave him a positive response because Ecuador and all Latin American and Caribbean Region is very committed to the causes of peace, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and our common goal is a World free of nuclear weapons through their total elimination.

The film which we are going to watch soon, can impact us because shows the big threat posed to the survival of all Mankind by the existence of the nuclear weapons and the great risks of intentional, incidental or accidental use associated with the existence of these weapons and their operational systems. Therefore, in order not to continue to live under this threat, it's an imperative to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the establishment by the UN General Assembly of this 26 September International Day enhances public awareness and nuclear risk education to mobilize international efforts towards achieving this goal.

In the troubled times that we live today, the World needs strong and wise global leaders committed to peace, to the promotion of international cooperation and solidarity, to the strengthening of friendly relations and better understanding among countries and peoples. But we also need a profound reform of the United Nations System and the international economic and financial structure, in order to create favorable conditions for world peace and wellbeing of the people.

The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons that were widely and in depth discussed at the previous three international Conferences held in Oslo, Nayarit-Mexico and Vienna, pose a serious doubt on whether these weapons could ever be used in conformity with international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

The Vienna Conference concluded that the risks of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional use of nuclear weapons are evident due to the vulnerability of nuclear command and control networks to human error and cyber-attacks, the maintaining of nuclear arsenals on high level of alert, forward deployment and their modernization.

These risks increase over time and the dangers of access to nuclear weapons and related materials by non-state actors, particularly terrorist groups, persist. As nuclear deterrence entails preparing for nuclear war, the risk of use of nuclear weapons is real. Although de-alerting and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines can reduce the risk, it does not remove the possibility of their use nor does it address the risks stemming from accidental use. The only assurance against the risk of a nuclear weapon detonation is the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Pending the total elimination of the nuclear weapons arsenals, the Nuclear Weapons States should take effective measures to reduce the risk of a nuclear weapon detonation and to increase their transparency and accountability in this regard. Such measures can be the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the universalization of the safeguards system under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency and lowering nuclear risks i.e. the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems so as to increase decision-making time.

The Latin American and Caribbean and other regions have made an important contribution to the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons by establishing the Nuclear Weapons Free Zones and should not be distracted by the discussion approach on how to take forward nuclear disarmament: step by step approach, building blocks or comprehensive approach. With no doubt the most important issue is the urgency to move forward regardless of the approach taken, because at the end of the day the achieved goal will be the same: a nuclear weapon convention on the ban and total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Unfortunately, in this year, both the NPT Review Conference and the Conference on Disarmament, did not reach consensus to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. Next year, 2016, will mark 20 years of the Conference on Disarmament deadlock without concrete results in terms of negotiations conducive to multilateral disarmament agreements. The need to unlock these negotiations is therefore a moral imperative.

Let me conclude by expressing my gratitude to the organisers and all participants in this event. I would like to thank UNODA, Unfold Zero Campaign bravely chaired by my fellow WFC Councillor Alyn Ware and the NGO Committee for Disarmament.

**Thank you very much for your kind attention.**

