

**Kate Hudson**

**General Secretary**

**Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament**

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### **Grass roots activism across the world**

On behalf of CND I am honoured to bring greetings to this conference, and to the peace and disarmament movement internationally. On today of all days, our thoughts are with the Hibaksha, 75 years after the terrible crime committed against your cities. You continue to inspire and motivate our work, and in your name we will continue until our shared goal of global abolition is achieved.

Today our world is facing a number of severe interlocking crises which make nuclear use more likely. These crises expedite the degradation and destruction of human life, our health, the environment and natural world, and indeed the future of our planet. But the pandemic, climate catastrophe and environmental destruction are not natural disasters – they all result from the way society and production are currently organised. As we have seen, the pandemic is not just a global health crisis: it also exacerbates the economic and social crises which follow from almost forty years of neo-liberal globalisation.

So the degeneration of late capitalism is wreaking havoc, not only in environmental and economic terms, but politically and in terms of onslaughts on democracy, the ascent of fake news, the brutalisation of communities, the rise of the far right and destruction of our rights. But at the same time we are heartened by the upsurge, particularly from young people, who refuse to accept this wave of barbarism, both in the United States itself, and across the world. The Black Lives Matter movement has shown that people power is a force to be reckoned with and we share their goals – of an end to discrimination and of peace and justice for all.

In the UK a spontaneous movement of tens of thousands of young people has taken to the streets opposing racism, police brutality and calling for social justice and social change. As in the United States the movement is black-led and is multi-racial and it is growing. What the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd by US police have revealed is that millions of people are no longer prepared to accept the structurally racist and unequal system that confronts them.

There is a huge international outcry about police killings and the culture of police impunity and violence which goes along with it. It's time for this culture to end. This is a moral issue and a human rights issue and our communities must stand together, work together to bring change: to end racism, oppression and discrimination and ensure that a better life for all is won, out of the suffering and tragedy of the times we are living through.

Earlier this year, the hands of the Doomsday clock were set at 100 seconds to midnight, closer than they have ever been to catastrophe, even at the height of the Cold War. The scientists who set the hands identified the two great existential threats that we face as nuclear weapons and climate change. We have taken on that challenge, by linking our anti-nuclear campaigning with a strong stance against climate chaos, demanding action from our government – and recognising the role of

the military and weaponry, including the carbon footprint of nuclear weapons - in the crisis that we all face.

We wholeheartedly support the movement that is demanding action on climate change, including protesters from Extinction Rebellion and the school strikers such as Swedish student and activist Greta Thunberg. Students across the UK have joined in these actions over the months prior to coronavirus and CND has been there with them. We have self-organised with other groups as XR Peace, carrying out many non-violent direct actions to highlight our issues. Now of course we are planning new ways of protesting, taking into account the public health restrictions that we face.

But the truth is, our security and well-being are being severely challenged. Not only by climate change, but also the start of a new Cold War against China and the huge and widening gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. The systematic destruction of arms control treaties and disregard for international law by some world leaders have led to a new nuclear arms race and widespread concerns about national and global security. These problems are interlinked with a growth in the politics of nationalism, self-protection and prejudice.

Yet it is precisely because we face such major challenges, that this is the time to strengthen, celebrate and build our movements, with new creativity and inclusivity. We may be limited in travel and outdoor actions but we are able to join across continents in an instant – through the technology you are using here today – bringing me to Hiroshima in the comfort of my own home. Let's make the most of these opportunities.

To ensure our survival, humanity must come together, organise and cooperate on a global scale never seen before. Activists from across the world can show the way and we must link the struggles across movements and borders to help us achieve a global voice. The rapidity with which we have seen these challenges emerge is startling, but the response is accelerating too, and people are finding their power.

The last time I spoke at your conference in Hiroshima was in 2003, when the movement against the war on Iraq was a mighty global force and the terrible impact of the illegal US and UK war on Iraq was clear for all to see. At that time we discussed the factors that had enabled the movement to grow and strengthen in the way it did and to play a significant political role. The three essential elements for the movement at that time were unity, diversity and international cooperation. They remain essential today. If we are to succeed in our goal of nuclear abolition, if we are to help ensure the survival of humanity and usher in a new era of peace and justice, then those are the principles on which we must found our work.

The struggle for peace and nuclear disarmament belongs to us all, to our diverse communities, across all borders – there are no national solutions to the problems we face, only international ones. And in unity, together, we will prevail.