

# United Nations Association

Westminster Branch

Campaigning for a strong, credible and effective UN



## 'Sowing the Whirlwind': Nuclear Politics and the Historical Record



Organised jointly with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London Conference to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic age which has overshadowed humanity

**16 July 2015**

10am to 5.30pm

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**The Chancellor's Hall  
Senate House, University of London  
Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU**

The decision taken 70 years ago to use untried technology to speed the end of the war introduced Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the international lexicon. "Yesterday we clinched victory in the Pacific, but we sowed the whirlwind" wrote Hanson Baldwin in the *New York Times*. That whirlwind touched all humanity, redefining fear, fuelling misinformation and secrecy and encouraging denial. It led to unlikely alliances of nations, some of these of sworn enemies and others joined only by that new fear borne of inability to imagine their own worlds after another Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Over these years, efforts have been made to return us from the brink, to wind back from only minutes to midnight, the hands of the historic Doomsday Clock. From the chambers of the United Nations where states, the powerful and the powerless, have sought to drive the narrative, from regions, towns and individuals, people have cried out for rational debate. This most dangerous period in the ascent of humankind has been variously recorded but can we now assemble the facts into a coherent historical record?

The conference considered the contestation over knowledge about nuclear bombs and warfare, including the impact and roles of misinformation and secrecy, from the start of the Second World War until the present day. The last 70 years have seen a number of moments – such as the Cuban Missile Crisis – when it seemed that the horror of Hiroshima would be repeated, but the key actors pulled back from the brink. These issues were explored, as well as efforts by campaigners and the UN to prevent such a great catastrophe. A concluding Round Table offered all participants opportunity on reflection on others' contributions and for the knowledgeable audience to contribute also.

# PROGRAMME

0930 Registration

1000 Session 1

**After Hiroshima: redefining fear, living in denial**

*Chair: Professor Philip Murphy*, Director, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London

**Professor Peter Kuznick**, Professor of History, Director, Nuclear Studies Institute, American University, Washington

***"The 'Greatest Thing in History' or the Most Reckless? Reflections on the 70th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki"***

**Professor Matthew Jones**, Department of International History, London School of Economics and Political Science

***"The legacies of Hiroshima for US-Asian relations in the early Cold War"***

1050

Q and A

1120

Coffee

1140 Session 2

**Back from the Brink – So Far**

*Chair: David Wardrop*, Chairman, United Nations Association Westminster Branch

**Andreas Persbo**, Executive Director, Verification Research, Training and Information Centre (VERTIC)

***"From the Methodist Central Hall to the IAEA"***

**Bruce Kent**, Vice-President, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

***"Opposition voices, national and international"***

1230

Q and A

1300

**Keynote address**

*Chair: Dr Sue Onslow*, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Commonwealth Studies,

**Dr. Akiko Mikamo**, President, US-Japan Psychological Services, author of *Rising from the Ashes: A True Story of Survival and Forgiveness from Hiroshima*

***"Rising from the Ashes - Under and Beyond That Mushroom Cloud"***

1330

Q and A

1400

Lunch

1500 Session 3

**What is the historical record? The contestation over truth**

*Chair: Dr John Y. Jones*, Director, Voksenåsen Networkers South, Oslo

**Dr Susan Williams**, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London

***"Blank pages of history: Congolese uranium and the Manhattan Project"***

**Dr Walt Patterson**, Associate Fellow, Chatham House, Founding Member, International Energy Advisory Council, Visiting Fellow Science Policy Research Unit, University of Sussex

***"Whose history? The nuclear kaleidoscope"***

1550

Q and A

1620

Tea

1645

**Round Table**

*Chair: Professor Henning Melber*, Director Emeritus, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala

**Dr. Knox Chitiyo**, Associate Fellow, Africa Programme, Chatham House

**Professor Peter Kuznick**, American University, Washington

**Andreas Persbo**, Executive Director, VERTIC

**Joe Lauria**, UN Correspondent, Wall Street Journal, New York

1750

**Open discussion**

1820

Ends

1830

**Reception** to 1930