

OPENING REMARKS BY JANNE E. NIJMAN*

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Thank you, Catherine, for your kind introduction. And a big thank you also to Mark and Wes for the wonderful collaboration over the last seven years. We will miss you, Mark!

Good morning! It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this 2022 Closing Plenary. Also on behalf of the City of The Hague. We just listened to the deputy mayor, who kindly supports this Plenary. Like Saskia, I would have loved to be with you in person today. Next year, I hope.

Inspired by the overall theme of our annual meeting this year, “Personalizing International Law,” I have articulated my strong conviction to Mark and Wes that international law needs people. We agreed international law is not a natural phenomenon that shapes our lives without human intervention. International law is a social construct, it is initiated, developed, interpreted, contested, and applied by *people*.

If there is one area in which over time this has become very clear, it is disarmament and arms control. In The Hague, the Peace conferences of 1899 and 1907 took place. These were initiated and organized by highly committed people, one of whom I mention here: Tobias Asser, who gave our research Institute in The Hague its name. The American Society of International Law is itself a product of the American peace movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Jane Addams, who was granted membership posthumously to the American Society four years ago while denied during her lifetime, was a major international peace activist and the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931. Today on the panel there is another Nobel Peace Prize winner: Jody Williams, who campaigned successfully against land mines, which lead to the conclusion of the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. These are women who take action and therewith contributed to the development of international law.

International law needs people—words articulated while a devastating war of aggression is waged against the Ukraine. The International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court, the United Nations, and other international institutions respond, each on the basis of their own jurisdiction and mandate. But it is also a war that challenges multilateralism as such, and at its core. At the end of the nineteenth century, Russia—its tsar—was one of the main initiators of the First Hague Peace Conference. How the world has changed. We may soon need another Hague conference to address the current challenges of the multilateral order.

This morning, we gather while we are acutely aware of the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, which would be disastrous for humanity. It is high time to talk about what is needed and what we as individuals in different roles and responsibilities can do. Do we need another mutual assured destruction system or a reinvigorated international peace movement to raise a question close to the Society’s origins? What legal actions are needed for humanitarian arms control?

To discuss these questions with us, I have asked my colleague at the Asser Institute, Professor Thilo Marauhn to moderate this roundtable. Thilo Marauhn holds the endowed chair of international arms control law at the University of Amsterdam in the context of the Asser Institute’s recently launched research project on international arms control law. Which he is leading. Thilo will introduce our highly distinguished speakers. As it goes these days, we had some last minute changes for medical reasons; also to her great regret Angela’s plane has been delayed. Obviously, I am extremely grateful for today’s speakers being here in person and online.

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