

## **CLOSING PLENARY: INTERNATIONAL LAW NEEDS PEOPLE: HUMANITARIAN ARMS CONTROL AND THE PEACE MOVEMENT**

The Closing Plenary was convened at 10:30 a.m., Saturday, April 9, 2022, with opening remarks by Catherine Amirfar, President of the American Society of International Law, and Saskia Bruines, Deputy Mayor of The Hague. Convenor, Janne E. Nijman, Chairperson of the Executive Board and Academic Director, T.M.C. Asser Institute for International and European Law (The Hague, the Netherlands), introduced the theme of the Plenary and the moderator. The moderator, Thilo Marauhn, Endowed Chair of International Arms Control Law, T.M.C. Asser Institute/University of Amsterdam, gave brief opening remarks and introduced the panelists: Angela Kane of the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation; Ambassador Alfredo Labbe of the National Academy for Political and Strategic Studies, Santiago; and Jody Williams of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

### **OPENING REMARKS BY SASKIA BRUINES, DEPUTY MAYOR OF THE HAGUE** doi:10.1017/amp.2023.20

Ladies and gentleman, it is an honor to have the floor at the final session of the annual meeting of the American Society of International law. It is great to see that this year's conference has seen a return of in-person attendance. I really wish I could have been there with you all in person!

The theme of this year's annual meeting—personalizing international law—has been a fitting one. Not just because we ourselves feel the need to reconnect face to face after two years; but also because we see that respect for international law is on a downward slide. The economist intelligence unit's democracy index shows more people feel alienated from democracy than ever before. And that trust in international institutions is at a low point.

While the pandemic has only just ebbed down to a level allowing us to come together again, the next ugly crisis has reared its head in Ukraine. International legal mechanisms have been doing everything in their power to bring the conflict to a close. But international law is also in need of new ideas. A renewed sense of trust. And for that, international law needs people. In times like these it is easy to be critical. To be against something. But in my view, international law works only if we choose to make it work.

As the international city of peace and justice, The Hague knows what this means. We have a long history as city where the ideas of peacebuilders come to fruition. At the end of the nineteenth century, the first Hague Peace Conference was hosted here. A platform needed to give the development of international law a much needed impulse. Since then, The Hague has grown to host hundreds of international organizations, knowledge institutes, and NGOs working every day to uphold the rule of law. To provide access to justice. To protect human rights defenders. And so many of the other pressing challenges to the freedoms and liberties we hold so dear.

I want to thank the Asser Institute for organizing today's discussion. I hope it will help raise awareness of the need to further enhance international law. And in what ways we can work together to get there. Just like those human rights defenders did at the Peace Conference in The Hague all those years ago. I wish you an inspiring session. Thank you.