

# Youth Hotline Campaign - Negotiating Nuclear Risk



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Presented by Camilla Braitto and Ayleen Roy

# Motivation and Relevance

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## The context

- Renewed nuclear salience
- Geopolitical tensions
- Accelerating pace of technological change
- Erosion of traditional arms control frameworks

## The gap

- Systematic exclusion of youth from nuclear decision-making
- Logistical and financial barriers to participation
- Unequal access to opportunities due to geographic and cultural disparities
- Limited mentorship to translate knowledge into operational competencies

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# Project Goal

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 **Enabling youth to co-create solutions to reduce nuclear risk**

 **Skills and Capacity Building**

- Nuclear literacy
- Negotiation skills

 **Resource Sharing**

 **Network Building**

 **Advocacy and Awareness-raising Outputs**

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# Project Overview

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## Participants

15 youth (ages 18-26) from diverse regions and academic backgrounds

## Format

Primarily online, ensuring accessibility and global participation

## Phases

- Peer-driven training
- Mentorship/Networking
- Interactive negotiation exercises
- Public facing outputs

## Timeline

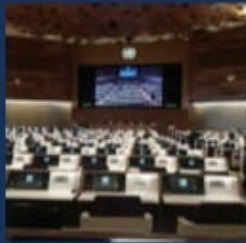
October - February | Weekly sessions + intense weekend (for the simulation game)

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# Notions



## Nuclear Non-Proliferation

The goal is to limit the spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear technology both to additional countries (horizontal proliferation) and within a single state's arsenal (vertical proliferation)



## Disarmament

The goal is to completely eliminate the category of nuclear weapons



## Risk Reduction Measures

The goal is to decrease the likelihood of accidental or intentional use of nuclear weapons



## Arms Control

The goal is to quantitatively and qualitatively regulate the arsenals of nuclear weapons. It alleviates the security dilemma →

# Risk Reduction Measures



## Crisis Hotlines

- Washington–Moscow Hotline (1963)
- India–Pakistan Nuclear Hotline (2004)



## Early-Warning Notifications and Monitoring

- US–Russia Pre-launch Notification System (2000)
- India–Pakistan Agreement on Ballistic Missile Test Pre-Notification (2005)
- US–Russia discussions on shared early-warning data (1998)



## Joint Political Statements

Reagan–Gorbachev statement (1985)  
“A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”  
(Reaffirmed again by the P5 in 2022)



## Doctrinal Restraint Measures

- China’s No First Use (NFU) policy (1964, reaffirmed repeatedly)
- India’s No First Use (NFU) policy (1998, formalized in 2003)
- NATO’s “weapons of last resort” formulation (1990)

# Notions



## Security Dilemma

A structural dynamic of international anarchy in which states’ efforts to increase their own security, even through defensive measures, unintentionally threaten others. Anarchy generates uncertainty and fear, pushing states toward self-help and power accumulation, which fuels mutual competition and arms racing, often producing unintended, tragic, and self-defeating outcomes



## Negative Security Assurances

Commitment made by a Nuclear Weapon State (NWS) or a nuclear-armed state not to use or threaten to use NW against a Non-Nuclear Weapon State (NNWS)



## Positive Security Assurances (No First Use)

Commitment to never use nuclear weapons first, either as a first strike, as an escalatory move in a conventional conflict, or in response to a non-nuclear attack

## Nuclear Taboo

Normative inhibition/stigma against the use of NW due to their destructing consequences. Perception that NW are illegitimate

# On a positive note

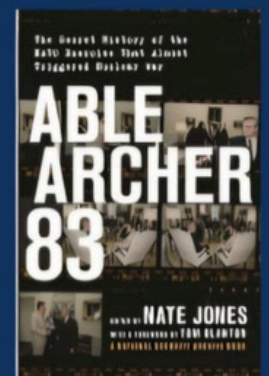
Historically, some crises urged and presented an opportunity for arms control and risk reduction measures



Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)  
→ LTBT (1963)



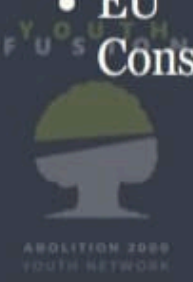
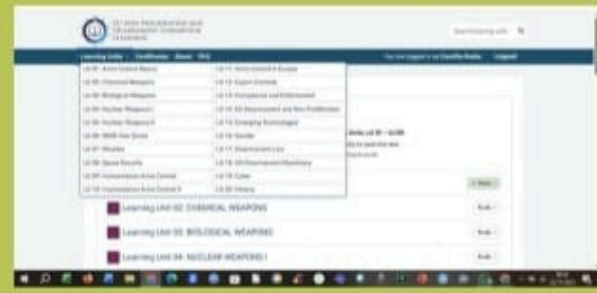
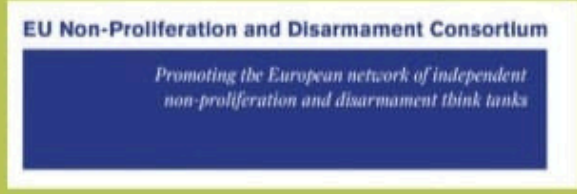
Soviet invasion of Czech Republic (1968)  
→ SALT I (1969)



NATO exercise Able Archer (1983)  
→ INF (1987)

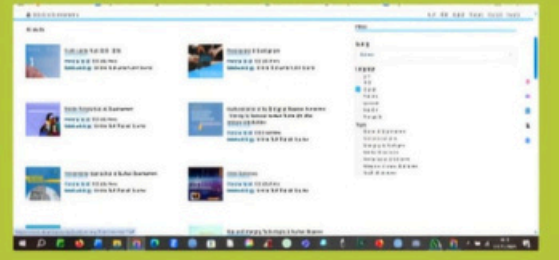
# EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament eLearning Course

- 20 learning units and video lectures to build capacity and knowledge about EU arms control, NPT, international law, export control, etc.
- For students, young professionals, no strong technical background required
- Free access + certification (if you pass the exams)
- EU Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Consortium (EUNPD) every autumn since 2018



# UNODA Youth4Disarmament

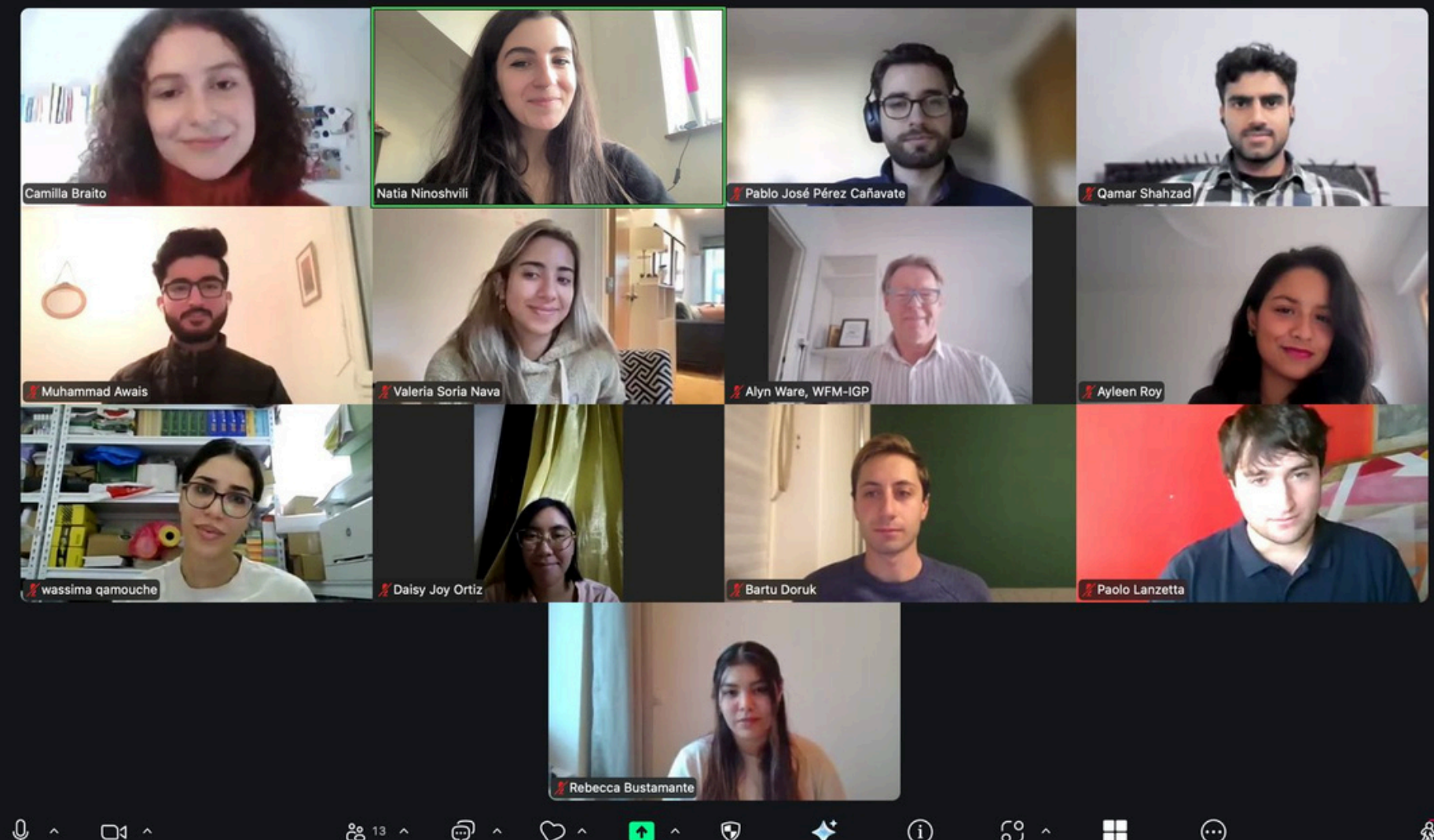
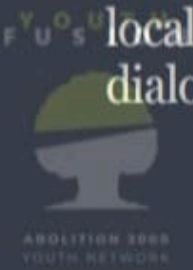
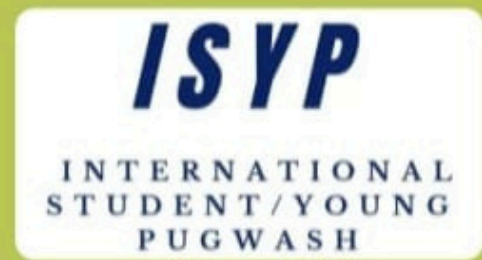
- An initiative to connect young people globally with disarmament experts, raise awareness, and empower youth to contribute to policy
- Hybrid modality
- Youth aged 18–29, both policy- and technically-interested participants (!!)
- Funds provided
- Applications open in the spring
- UN Y4DForum focused on the nexus between nuclear weapons and emerging tech (October 2025)



## UNODA Online Courses

# International Student / Young Pugwash (ISYP)

- A global, interdisciplinary (!!)
- network of students and young professionals focused on science, ethics, IR, and security, inspired by Pugwash conferences
- Network-based, events are both online (webinars) and in-person (national / regional groups)
- You can join ISYP as a member, propose/organize local group, attend events, contribute to policy dialogue



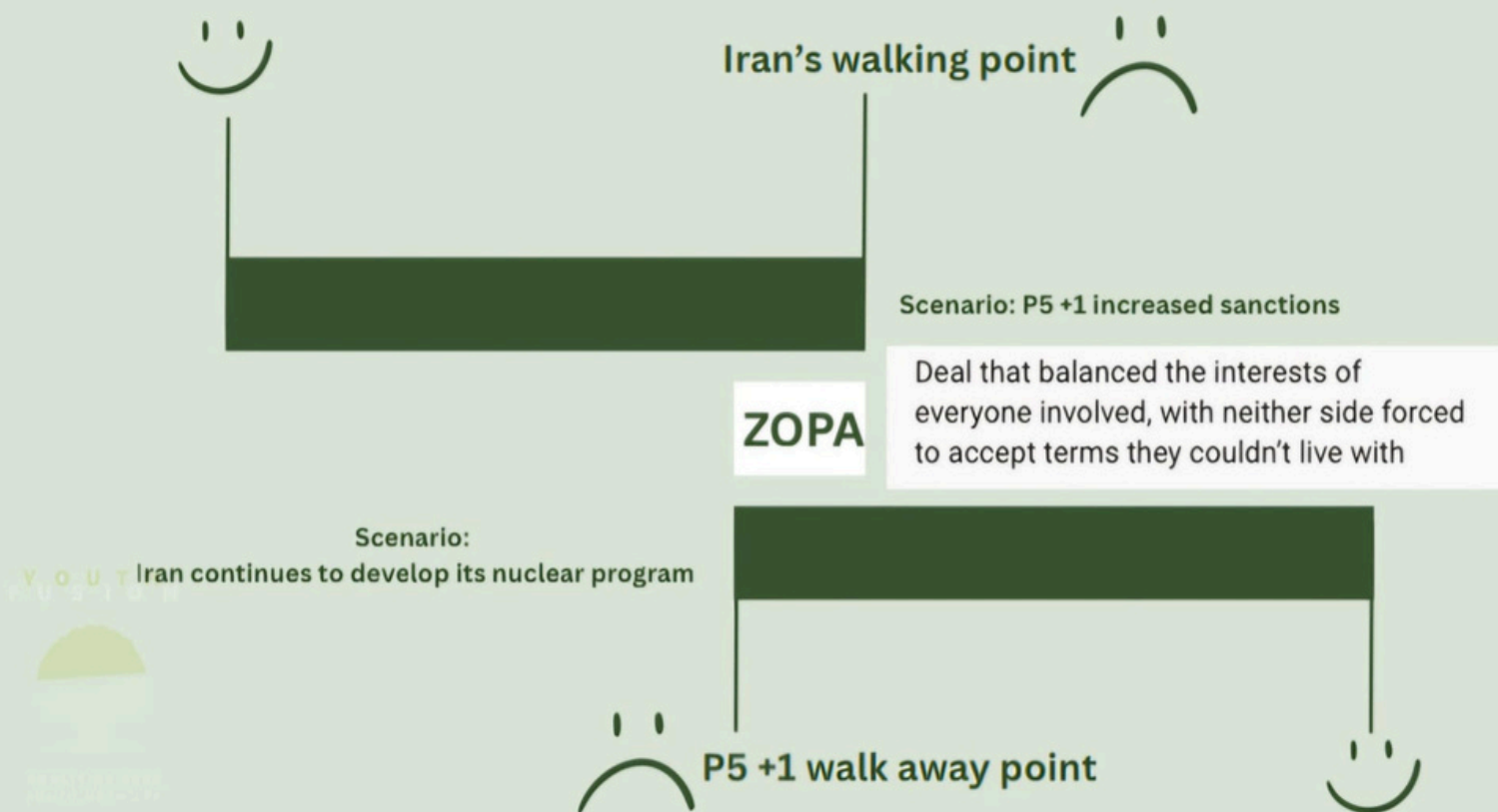
# What is so special about negotiating nuclear risk?

- Fictional crisis scenario
- Participants as state delegates
- Consensus-building under pressure
- Negotiations within the UN OEWG

- Extremely high stakes → agreements influence national security and global stability
- Technical complexity (verification, enrichment levels, delivery systems, monitoring)
- Multiple actors involved: governments, militaries, IOs, scientific experts
- Time pressure during crises
- Domestic politics can heavily shape bargaining positions
- **Even small wording changes can shift strategic commitments**



## BATNAs in Nuclear Diplomacy: the JCPOA



Extraordinary session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament - Dec 2025

### Joint Document "Addressing the emerging cyber threats to nuclear stability in the Indo-Pacific"

Chair: India  
Co-Chairs: China, United States  
Present: Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia,  
Absent: France, United Kingdom

We, the representatives of States participating in the OEWG on Nuclear Disarmament, convened in an extraordinary session under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly,

Recalling the OEWG mandate to consider practical measures to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use, and recognizing the continued relevance of such measures in the current security environment,

Expressing grave concern over reports of anomalous cyber activity affecting nuclear command, control, and communications systems in the Indo-Pacific region, and noting that such disruptions, even absent confirmed hostile intent, may increase the risk of miscalculation and inadvertent escalation,

Recognizing the urgency of defusing the present crisis through restraint, dialogue, and coordinated action, and affirming that immediate, cooperative nuclear risk reduction measures can enhance crisis stability and support longer-term disarmament efforts,

We therefore agree to adopt the following measures, in a spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility, to reduce nuclear risk, de-escalate the current crisis, and prevent its recurrence.

#### Cluster A: De-escalation and Risk Reduction Measures

- I. We urge to explore practical, voluntary, and reciprocal nuclear risk reduction measures during periods of heightened tension, consistent with national security requirements and deterrence commitments, with the objective of minimizing miscalculation and inadvertent escalation.
- II. We welcome the consideration by all states of reducing nuclear-related exercises to levels deemed necessary to maintain national sovereignty, at their own discretion. We also support exploring a potential joint political statement with the aim of minimizing risks of cyber-related incidents during the next 6 months.
- III. We call upon all the Open Ended Working Group members (OEWG), on a voluntary basis and consistent with their respective national decision-making structures, to develop or

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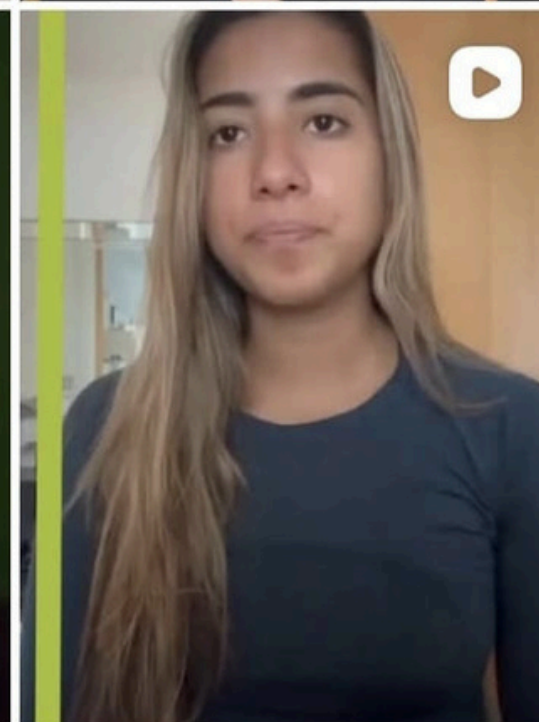
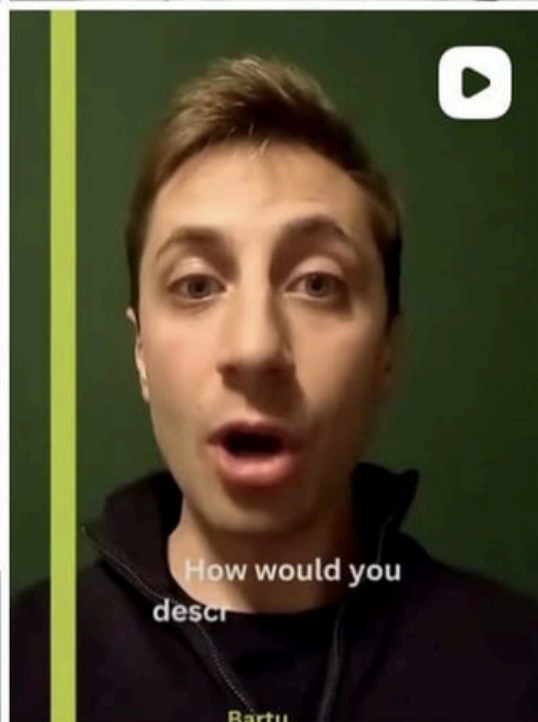


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"The Youth Hotline Campaign Negotiating Nuclear Risk strengthened my belief that reducing nuclear risks is a shared responsibility and that, as young people, we must engage in meaningful dialogue to prevent escalation."

"The training session equipped me with relevant tools for dialogue, negotiation, and responsible communication, because how we talk about nuclear risk matters for peace."

New



# YOUTH HOTLINE CAMPAIGN NEGOTIATING NUCLEAR RISK

A project created and implemented by Youth Fusion

**RELEVANCE**  
The threat of nuclear escalation remains a serious concern in today's international security environment, characterised by the accelerating pace of technological change, rising geopolitical tensions, and the erosion of traditional arms control frameworks.


**MOTIVATION**  
Despite these growing challenges affecting their present and their future, young people are too often excluded from the critical conversations shaping nuclear policy and left with limited avenues to express their perspectives.

**HOW**  
The Youth Hotline Campaign builds on the success of its 2023 pilot, developed in direct response to the renewed nuclear salience following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, a reminder of the critical need for open dialogue and cross-border cooperation in nuclear policy. This second edition goes further by fostering intergenerational exchange and focusing on realistic, forward-looking solutions to today's nuclear challenges.

**WHAT MAKES IT SPECIAL**  
What sets the Youth Hotline Campaign apart is its youth-led, peer-driven approach. Designed by young people for young people, the campaign breaks away from conventional, top-down education models and cultivates a collaborative environment in which youth shape both content and format.

The Second Edition, titled Negotiating Nuclear Risk, responds to the urgent need to prepare a new generation of nuclear experts with the knowledge, skills, and networks necessary to drive meaningful change. Through a mix of training, mentorship, simulation, and creative output, participants evolve not only as learners but as co-creators of solutions to reduce nuclear danger.

Rather than relying on passive learning, the programme emphasises active participation and practice. Participants step into the roles of diplomats, negotiators, and bloc coordinators, learning by doing and collaborating to build consensus. Inspired by the historic hotline established in 1963 between the United States and the Soviet Union to prevent catastrophic escalation through dialogue, Negotiating Nuclear Risk empowers young people to build trust, engage across divides, and practise diplomacy in high-stakes scenarios.




# What sets the project apart

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## Designed by young people for young people

- Shared language and perspectives = effective communication
- Supportive and low-pressure environment = active participation

## Learning-by-doing

- Bridging theory with practice in a realistic way

## Future-oriented

- Participants equipped with a practical toolkit
- Pathways for long-term involvement in nuclear risk reduction

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# Lessons learned: Youth are...

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**... driven to engage,  
cultivate expertise, and  
assume leadership**

**... thriving when provided  
with inclusive pathways  
and structured guidance**

**... resilient ambassadors for dialogue  
in an increasingly fragmented  
status quo**

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# In short

**Relevant**

**Impactful**



**Resourceful**

**Empowering**

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# Thank you for the attention!

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We look forward to your questions and comments

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