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Interview with Daniel Ajudeonu

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Summary:

Daniel Ajudeonu, a Nigerian activist and member of Young Pugwash, discusses his journey into nuclear disarmament, inspired by experiences such as a UN summer school and involvement with Effective Altruism. He focuses on youth capacity-building in Africa, addressing nuclear disarmament and peaceful applications like energy and medicine. Ajudeonu highlights nuclear weapons as destabilizing and advocates for eliminating them through global treaties like the TPNW, improved dialogue among nuclear states, and enhanced public awareness. Despite challenges like restrictive visa policies and limited representation of Global South voices, he emphasizes the need for inclusivity, knowledge-sharing, and long-term commitment to disarmament and global security. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

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Robin Möser: Okay. This is Robin Möser interviewing Daniel Ajudeonu. I'm very glad that you're here with me today. Daniel is an activist from Nigeria, currently based in Lagos, if I'm correctly informed. He's involved in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament work. And he's also a Young Pugwash board member. And I'm also interested to hear more about this. Yes, let us start with how you personally got into the position that you're currently in. What's your background in terms of activism and academic work? And why did you end up in the organization you're currently in?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate the privilege of talking to you. My background in the nuclear field kicked off during my time at a United Nations summer school, where we were exposed to the critical themes of weapons of mass destruction, climate change, peace and security efforts. And I was concerned about how I could play a role in the field. And I decided should I pursue a career in the nuclear field or should I just focus on international development, you know. But at that point in time, I was at an inflection point, but I'd mentioned that, but I got involved with the Effective Altruism Movement. At the time, they were working significantly in nuclear risk. That was 2021. And there was this movie, the autobiography of Stanislav Petrov. And you might be interested to know that I almost started shedding tears while watching that movie and I asked myself, this is your call, and this is what you can do for humanity at this time. And at that point in time I decided to pursue, I'll spend my career solving nuclear risks. My passion drove me to research about organizations working in the field and I identified Youth for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. And I got on board, and I began serving as an operations, policy and partnerships associate. And within a three month time frame, I think, because of my passion and work, I became the deputy partnerships coordinator, where I spearheaded partnerships and outreach efforts for the first youth meeting of state parties to the TPNW in Vienna. That was in 2022. Yeah. And after that, ISYP got in touch with me, that's the International Student Young Pugwash: "Would you like to join our board?" I guess they had seen sort of my engagement within the field and there were some vacancy on the team. And they wanted to also diversify the geographical representation of the team. I don't think there was any African based in Africa on the board at the time. Then, they asked that if I could come on board. And for me, it was, I will come there with open arms, because I'm like, that was my passion. That is what I wanted to do for a living throughout my lifetime, and then I began my role as a leadership team member, you know, at the International Student Young Pugwash. As you may know, our focus is on reducing the risks of the intersection of science, ethics, society and technology, cuts across weapons of mass destruction, such as nuclear weapons and biological weapons. We do some work on climate change and other global security risks. And at ISYP I also coordinate external partnerships. Yes, and I lead the Africa project, which is quite a new project that will soon be launched officially. The project is focused on capacity building for young Africans in the field of nuclear disarmament and peaceful nuclear applications. So, I think that's my background so far within the field, and as you may have seen in my LinkedIn profile, so as a result of my nuclear disarmament engagement, I am also a Future Generations Global Ambassador with the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. And I am also on the Next Generation Advisory Committee of the European Leadership Network and Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs multi-year nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty project where we are going to develop recommendations for the next NPT Review Conference in 2026. Yeah, so that's my background. So

Robin Möser: So, that's very interesting and super broad. I would like to hear more about one point you said, the capacity building you're involved with ISYP. Does this extend to West Africa only or the whole of Africa? Can you elaborate a bit of the geographical scope and what's planned in this project?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, thank you very much. You know, we recognized Africa's growing role in the global nuclear landscape, though Africa may not have nuclear weapons. But Africa plays a significant role, especially as the largest voting bloc in the UN system, and also given the increasing impacts of climate change within Africa. And not just the West Africa alone, the entirety of Africa and the potentials for nuclear energy. Right. And also Africa's role in ensuring the universalization of the TPNW - that's the Nuclear Ban Treaty. So, we looked at all this and said that we have work to do in Africa. And as Pugwash in general, we have not really had significant work been done in Africa, originally, with the African population. We felt this was a gap. So, the work, the capacity building project is not focused on a particular sub-region in Africa, but the entirety of the African region, although it's focused on young people within the ages of 18 and 35, currently. And just to add, I mentioned we're not just focusing on nuclear disarmament alone, you know, topics of disarmament education. We are also focused on topics within nuclear energy, such as nuclear medicine, talk about electricity, talk about food security, water desalination, talk about safeguards, you know, just the entirety of peaceful nuclear applications and nuclear disarmament education. Yeah. Thank you.

Robin Möser: So, you're addressing the whole range of issues connected to nuclearity.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Exactly.

Robin Möser: Just one follow up. Have you also been to the 2nd State Party meeting of TPNW in New York last year?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay. Thank you for that question. Let me begin by saying that it is very sad for us, where we should have underrepresented voices, they are not represented adequately, we have very few of them. Why? Because of the restrictive visa system operated by most of the Global North countries. And for example, in Nigeria, the last time I checked, which was sometime late last year, the waiting time to obtain a US visa, a regular B-1/B-2 was, yeah, I think about 400 and something days. And I'm like, you know... So, at the time, it was impossible to attend the 2nd State Party Meeting, even if I wanted to, it was impossible for me to attend. Also Samuel Olamide, who works for the European Leadership Network, he wrote an article in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, kind of expressing his grievances around the system. So, it impacted a whole lot, despite the fact that he's based in the UK. So, regardless of your location around the world, it's like the visa system of some Global North countries is targeted at restricting access of citizens of the Global South to their countries, and it is very sad. So, I wasn't at the second meeting. Okay.

Robin Möser: So, Austria has less strict rules concerning the visa than the US I gather from this...

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, actually, Austria has a less restrictive system, because in fact, I know some people who attended the 1st State Party Meeting in Austria. Although I actually did not attend that meeting for several reasons. And I would think that I was very glad that in 2022 ICAN actually, you know, funded some people to attend that. And so there was an application open, but at the time, I think one of my colleagues mentioned that I should not have done that, but there were just two funding spots, and I was like: I can either choose to go, and also keep on doing my work, or I can keep on doing my work remotely and allow other people to go. And I chose the latter. Right. So, I didn't

want to apply in order to kind of reduce the potentials of others who may not have an opportunity to engage, so that they can go other than myself already working on the theme. And given that this funding spot was actually limited. So, I decided to stay back, but from behind, right from where I was, I was doing my work effectively. So, I think and I was happy about the outcome. At last, I think it also goes to kind of emphasize the fact that we need more funding for youth participation in these activities. Yeah.

Robin Möser: Okay, no, I heard this call repeatedly. But even funding doesn't always help to overcome the visa restrictions, as are very difficult to fulfill. Okay, let's take up a little bit broader view. How do you see the role of nuclear weapons in the world today, and what kind of impact do you ascribe to them? Do you see them as a stabilizing factor? I would be interested in your view on that issue.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay, yeah, thank you very much for that question.

You know, nuclear weapons. I want to use the word they are devilish... Like, you know, rather than providing security guarantees they actually exacerbate the risks. It is very, very terrible. I don't believe the nuclear weapons are a stabilizing factor. I rather believe they are destabilizing elements that the world must eliminate. And for several reasons, I think history tells us the impact of nukes in Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, tells us about the impact of testing on the Marshall Islands, you know, other places in the Caribbean.

Robin Möser: And also closer to your own country Nigeria, when under colonialism the French government tested in the Sahara.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Algeria, yeah, true. Very, very correct. And I think one of the worst part of this is that nuclear weapons kind of manipulatively and asymmetrically shifts the balance of power, if I can put things that way. For example, you can easily have a nuclear weapons state coercing a non-nuclear weapon state, right. Which is the case between North Korea and South Korea, and today, there's actually quite a large population in South Korea saying "Yes, we should have our nuclear weapons". In fact, I was at a meeting where a retired (can't remember is he's still in service or retired) military officer in the South Korean army, you know, came to us. And he was of the opinion that it's high time South Korea develops its own nuclear weapons, and without any doubt, that is connected to the fact that North Korea has been coercing South Korea for quite some time now. And recently, the US decided to station nukes in South Korea, and what we see constantly is increasing coercion from North Korea, and that is terrible. The risk in the Indo Pacific is also increasing from other parts in Asia. We have Taiwan as well as China. I wouldn't be surprised if tomorrow, Taiwan stays with a nuclear weapons in the soil so that China will not invade the same way Russia invaded Ukraine. When Russia invaded Ukraine, quite a number of Ukrainians were of the opinion that if we had nukes deployed on our soil controlled by us, and not the USSR, probably Russia would not have done that (invaded us). So, you know, it increases the desire of other states to also possess such weapons. And imagine we have a growing trend of states possessing nuclear weapons. I think it would only lead to so many and many more states possessing that, and we can talk of the effects of the test, we can talk about how many billions of dollars is invested in the industry that could have been diverted to other productive uses: solving economic issues, solving climate issues. ICAN, you know, produced a report on nuclear weapons spending last year 2022/2023. More than \$80 billion are spent by the nine nuclear weapons states. Yeah, so you know, there are just so many reasons to disbelieve that nuclear weapons have no positive effect on the world. They are terrible, and they should not be tolerated. Thank you very much.

Robin Möser: I mean, it's not just the manufacturing of them, that costs money, also the maintenance over their lifespan, and that is not to speak of the environmental impact. Okay, don't get me started. But, I mean, what I gathered from your response is that, rightly or wrongly, they do matter, but rather not as a stabilizing factor, but as a source of threat. Something like that, right?

Daniel Ajudeonu: You're definitely right about that. Yeah.

Robin Möser: Where do you think, and this is now targeting your work and your activism experience, where do you think the focus of the civil society: should it be on elimination? And what could be practical steps to achieve it - normative pressure? What do you believe?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay, let me mention that I'm engaging in this interview, you know, in my personal capacity and not on behalf of ISYP. So I would speak from my personal perspective.

Robin Möser: I make this explicit in the transcript.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Thank you. I think that first of all, the work of nuclear disarmament, from my perspective, should be focused on number one: increasing the acceptance of the concept of the universalization of the TPNW, because the more states would get to ratify the TPNW, the more pressure is posed and employed on states to reduce their warheads and proceed with ultimate disarmament, which is the, you know, a core focus of the NPT. But we have many new open stages, the US posture review this summer looking at increasing their warheads. There's a race currently on. I think, another focus should be in improving relations between nuclear weapons states. While I hate nuclear weapons, and I think they should be hated by all, you know, we can't just say throw them away without trying to bring those that have them to the table to start dialogue like in the START treaty between Russia and the US which was a significant improvement and improving, you know, Russia's and US relations vis-à-vis their nuclear warheads reductions. But after the invasion of Ukraine and the whole terrible dwindling of the relationship between both countries, Russia actually put a pause on that Treaty. And one thing that we have seen is that there has been, should I say some form of this escalatory dynamics, you know, the US clearly increasing defense spending, expanding their nuclear weapons programs. And, of course, we recently had the news about Russia thinking about putting nuclear weapons in space. They're very clever. So, improving bilateral relations between countries, the nuclear weapon states, you know, I think so much more efforts should we put into that. Also, I think so much more work should be put into getting the public to accept the concept of disarmament, and that we don't need nuclear weapons to keep us safe forever. They add to our insecurity. I had a meeting with a US citizen, I think sometime last year or last two years. And in fact, he engages with the UN, he was not explicitly of the opinion that nuclear weapons should be eliminated. And in fact, he had little knowledge about America's nuclear weapons programs. It was very, very displeasing to hear. So, how do we educate people in nuclear weapons states about the impact of nuclear weapons and why they should, you know, push their government to reduce their spending on them and ultimate elimination. We see the work of Nuclear Threat Initiative currently, putting up billboards about make nukes history and things like that, and getting celebrities campaign on that. That's massive. Then huge participation in developing the next generation of nuclear arms control experts. I think that field and that aspect is lacking so much work. In fact, I know a particular philanthropy that's putting some money into improving this bilateral relations between nuclear weapons states, but probably they are not really concerned whether to channel the funding to youth participation. It's just very terrible, because if we don't create those talent pipelines, we will have a situation tomorrow, where the nuclear risks will be

faced with little or no one to tackle them appropriately. Many Experts are actually at the twilight of their career. And we the younger generation, we don't have adequate access to capacity building activities, which is one of the reasons why ISYP launched this capacity building program (the Africa Project). In fact, Africa has never had this kind of capacity building program that ISYP is set to launch. Imagine Africa has never had such. So, there's so much gap in the area of capacity building for the next generation of nuclear arms control experts. And also, I think that these areas should be invested in massively, and I hope that answers your question.

Robin Möser: Yes! You were speaking about that capacity. And this is despite the fact that a lot of uranium that feeds nuclear weapons program globally comes from the African continent; Congo, South Africa, Namibia, I think Gabon. So, there's a need for this knowledge. And actually, another point you raised about the approval rates of nukes in certain countries, I recently read a book by a Ukrainian scholar. And I think she mentioned that since the conflict, I think even since the Crimea invasion, in 2014, approval rates of nuclear weapons in Ukraine increased. And people say, Why did we give them up? We would have had them today. And I think that's also in my view be addressed. I'm going a bit off topic here, but there's the whole nexus of knowledge and capacity.

But going back to a little bit to the end of the Cold War – What do you see in terms of arms control and nuclear disarmament, as the biggest failure in the field since the end of the Cold War?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Thank you very much. I think the biggest failure in that realm, and this is a personal perspective, is the inability of the nuclear weapon states, especially the P5, to manage their personal or individual aspirations along with protecting the future of humanity. I think that is the biggest failure.

Robin Möser: Would that involve their commitments under NPT Article Six, steps towards nuclear disarmament?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, so like, I was trying to say, of course, that perspective, I just said that was quite broad. And let me break it down a bit. That includes their commitments to the NPT, specifically, and also enhancing bilateral relations among them. It also includes their commitment to reduce the risks in the international waters. I talk about Russia, I took about China. Some time ago, there was this info published, something around dangerous Chinese maneuvers, and in fact, even firing water cannons at a Philippine vessel. That is terrible. Talk about what's going on between China and Taiwan. I think some years ago, China was even conducting battle ready exercises, a kind of a simulation in case of an attack on Taiwan. All this encompasses dwindling relations between these countries. And why is the relation deteriorating? Because they are unable to manage their personal aspirations for the greater good. So, I would call it greediness, I would call it selfishness. We have Russia invading Ukraine. Why? What is the question some people say. There's an agenda for expansion of back to the former USSR. If that was the case, why? I'm not saying that is the case. So, we'll see. That could be the case. Let's talk about the US. Why increase defense spending to almost a trillion dollars? Also a huge part involves revitalizing the nuclear weapons programs and modernizing your nuclear weapons. We have China, China is currently increasing its warhead massively. We talked about Iran. I think, late last year, some of the IAEA officials mentioned that Iran had enriched its uranium to near weapons grade level, you know, all just goes to show dwindling bilateral relations. During the Cold War, we had leaders who are sensitive to the plight of the people; we had leaders who were concerned about the future of humanity. They knew that any mistake could cost the world an irreversible catastrophe. But I don't think we have so much rational leaders today. I think most of the leaders today of the nuclear power states are mainly concerned

about not even their country, but their ego, their personal aspirations. I think that's what it's all about. We talk about their commitment to global security regimes, to our nuclear regimes, the NPT, it is terrible. During the last Revcn, there was no outcome document. During the first PrepCon, there was not outcome document. I think at the previous Revcon, I think it was Russia that actually blocked it. The recent one, the Prepcon it was Iran that actually blocked it, I wonder who would block the next one? So, there's a question about why is there a dwindling commitment to some of these global security regimes? I think one of the reasons is, I would say, the ego of most these leaders, because we had leaders like Kennedy, you know, of the US. He decided not to take action, even when Russia's nukes were at doorstep, you know, he had to come down and make a decision. We had leaders like Gorbachev of Russia. Can Putin please be like Gorbachev, that's a question, please! We need leaders like that into in today's world. And of course, I think nuclear communication is as well, of course, at massive risk. And with the massive advancement in AI and potential integration of AI into nuclear weapon systems, I wonder where we are going to. And also note that most of these nuclear weapon states are at the forefront of technological advancement, military technological advancement. So, I wonder where we're gonna go. So, I think in my perspective, the inability to manage their personal aspirations and ego for the greater good for humanity has been the greatest failure and I believe that what I broke down shed more light on that thinking.

Robin Möser: OK, thanks. And coming back to one point you mentioned or many points, actually. You focused on states and state actors, but what do you think the civil society could have done differently since the end of the cold to address what is being addressed right now with ICAN and the TPNW? How do you account for this lack of movement or action in the interregnum?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay, thank you very much. You know, I think that to some extent, we would also cut the civil society some slack, because after the end of the Cold War, I think things were peaceful, maybe not complete peace. And to some extent also, you know, within the nuclear arms race landscape and everything. But then, in the 21st century was when we began to witness the sudden hostilities again in perspectives and aspirations. Of course, the civil society one thing that it could have done was to kind of spread the knowledge more broadly. For example, imagine if we had the TPNW at an earlier time, and we had ICAN having steering groups and some of these national groups and bodies in these various countries, even from the Global South, as early as the 2000s, I think that they would have been increasingly knowledgeable about nukes and the harmful effects even within the Global South. And that would have spurred more pressure on the P5 states or the nine nuclear weapons states of the international community as a whole. To bring home the point: to be careful of its approach and all of the nuclear journey. But what we saw is that when after the Cold War things look better, everyone relaxed. And as time went on we saw the issue between the US and North Korea. North Korea, left the NPT, then it started flexing muscles, and that was one of the periods when also we had the case of Iraq, probably false, you know, the US said, Iraq was developing some nuclear weapons and things like that. Then people began to get more concerned, then we had organizations come out talking about it. And of course, I think, increasingly conversation more broadly around the global South would have been very, very helpful, because it could have placed at least some form of pressure on the nuclear weapon states.

Robin Möser: You just referred to what some people call “the golden age of arms control”, the period around the ending of the Cold War and the immediate post-cold war years, there were lots of things going on: the 1995 NPT indefinite extension, these kind of things. But as you said, after that, nothing

really followed. So, to conclude that part of our interview, what do you see as the most important milestones for the nuclear field, in the next years to come? What should be done or overcome?

Daniel Ajudeonu: I think that, although a very daunting task, I think one of the most important milestones that I really reckon will be a milestone, if we did achieve that would be getting the P5 states to commit to nuclear disarmament. Getting them to come back to nuclear disarmament to reduce their nuclear weapons spending, and walk the talk of pursuing nuclear disarmament. But with the current geopolitical landscape, I think that's going to be quite difficult. But I think that within the next 10 years, if we can achieve that, not just these states talking, but when I mean walking the talk, they are walking the talk of their actions reflect their words. So, I think that'd be a huge milestone. Another milestone, of course, would be, probably not ratifying it yet, but the nuclear weapon states become a signatory to TPNW. And I think some people may say is that possible? But I think that's gonna be massive. You know why I see these two points and big steps? We have, for example, China coming out to say that, originally China was like, nuclear weapon states should pursue the No-first-use Treaty. Right. But we have China behind the scenes massively modernizing its nuclear weapons and so I think their actions contradict their words. So, walking the talk would be very, very significant. And, of course, if there are no improved relations between the US and Russia, and the US and China, I think that'll be difficult to achieve. Because you have the UK, France and Italy as US allies, but if the US can achieve some good relations with China and Russia, I think we are well on our way to making that almost a reality. Yeah.

Robin Möser: OK, thank you. And now, in the next part, I focus more on your actual work as an activist. And you already hinted that your organization is kind of doing work from the scratch with this building capacity initiative, and Africa in general lacks expertise on nuclear issues and disarmament, and arms control issues even more. Nevertheless, I would like to know, what are your partners ISYP works with, both on the regional level and on a broader global level. With whom do you team up? Moreover, are there organizations that oppose your work that sort of sit on the other side of the fence, actually campaigning for nukes and whatnot? So maybe you can tell me more about that.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Thank you. I think, let me start by saying in Africa, we haven't seen anyone opposing our work. Rather, two of our projects advisors, currently, Hubert Foy, the director at the African Center for Science and International Security, is a renowned nuclear scientist. And also, we have Olamide Samuel who, you may know, is one of the project advisors as well, works here and he's also a special envoy with the African commission on nuclear energy. So, because we haven't launched officially yet, we haven't really initiated concrete partnerships with organizations, but what we've done is to survey the landscape and have identified potential organizations we could partner with. And also, we are already benefiting from the expertise of some of the officials of the potential organizations, which is Hubert Foy and Olamide Samuel. But we are definitely looking at partnering with more organizations once we are set to launch officially. And of course we also can partner with organizations in the West, and outside of Africa. One major thing we are looking to get from that scope is funding. There's little or no funding for nuclear scholars from Africa. So, we are looking to get funding from some of the organizations in the Global North that are curious about that. But some of our funding applications got rejected twice now. But we keep hoping we can fix it. But if we are not able to secure funding for an in-person program, we would do it virtually. So, either way, the program's still going to hold. And yeah, I think that is that for that question. And from the West, so far, we haven't had any organization tell us "hey, we hate your work, we don't like your work." But, of course, there are some people in the West

who support nuclear weapons. But our focus is empowering the African youths to be promoters of the greater good. So, I guess that answers the question.

Robin Möser: Yes, thank you. And do you also cooperate and perceive as beneficial the exchange with other actors, such as academics, think tanks and people from this field? Do you actually cooperate with them and draw upon their research output?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, sure, definitely. Of course, we have a very wide range of research, researchers in the nuclear field from all over the world. We have some in Africa, especially at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. So, we benefit from some of their research, in fact, in developing some of our project documents. We have benefited and maximized some of the research. So, of course, I think the research being done in other parts of the world has been used and has been very useful.

Robin Möser: And how do you see ICAN in that regard? I read on your LinkedIn profile that you worked with them.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, when I first joined the nuclear field, I think I found out about ICAN. ICAN had the room for people to sign up as members and probably participate in some campaigns and things like that. So, I think that's the room where engaged with ICAN. But when I was an official executive of the Youth for TPNW , I engaged with ICAN more deeply. We met with the former executive director, we had a lot of partnerships with ICAN and other strategic players in the field, and tried to increase the engagement of the Global South in the nuclear disarmament movement. I think ICAN has conducted several meetings or workshop on nuclear issues in Africa. And I guess that there are not much organizations founded in the West or Global North that do such things. And let me also say that: we have so many organizations in the West who are concerned about nuclear education, but participation in their events, for Africans, is very limited. So, you see, there's restriction in so many ways. If we talk about job opportunities, work authorization, you know, I'm like, there's a question: Why can't you support sponsoring work visas - private organizations do that. And I guess what we are doing is more critical than that of profit making institutions. So, why can't they (organizations in the nuclear field based in the global north) take the pain to sponsor these work visas also? With also capacity building opportunities, the restrictions are limited to certain countries, and just few organizations that have done activities that permits for people from African countries. I think some activities would be a clear example of them trying to promote diversity, geographically, academically, and otherwise, I think that's a fantastic example of, you know, diversity in capacity building activities, but there are not really much programs like that. So, I think, another challenge are these things, individuals should also challenge organizations in the Global North to tackle these issues, because you cannot say that we should be concerned about nuclear disarmament, but your opportunities to build capacity to tackle those issues are not available to the Global South. While we are criticizing governments to walk the talk, organizations must also take this up and walk the talk. We've had also cases where you see most of the rank of leadership of these organization how many people from the Global South do you see? If an organization can say that in our hiring system, we would ensure that we have a certain percentage of people from the Global South. And not just the Global South, okay, let's just say just Indians or just Pakistan, no, they should be able to say that from specific regions, we must have representation because it also brings diverse perspectives, diverse expertise, and experiences and contributes to certain sectors of that organization. They can take the pain. I think that until they begin to take the pain to do that, it's difficult to believe that quite a number of the big guys, that is big organizations in

the nuclear field are really concerned about diversity and the plight of non Global Northerners involved in the solving of nuclear issues. I know that's quite hard, but I think that's a very bitter truth.

Robin Möser: I mean, we all, and especially people in the Global North, have to face the reality. We have to open up in terms of perspectives, the diversity and composition of boards of organizations and leadership structures. But this actually leads me to my next question: do you think the debate about global nuclear disarmament in general, includes recognition of the gendered impact of nuclear weapons? And how does your organization address this - if at all?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, thank you. Thank you very much. Let me start with how ISYP addresses that. At a point in time, we had a Chair and two Deputy Directors and a Secretary. Currently, we have a Chair and a Deputy Director, and a Secretary, and all three are females. Right. So, ISYP have quite a number of females on the team. And for the ISYP Africa project, one of our main focus, which is included in our project documents, is to ensure adequate representation of females in our programs. So, we are looking forward to having a situation where our events and our programs wouldn't be dominated by male applicants. We would strive to ensure that there is adequate female representation. So, we are committed to that. We are very conscious about it. And we are looking to implement that. And ISYP is an organization that's also gender friendly. And I believe it's going to be replicated in the project. And talking about the gender impact of nuclear weapons. I think that there's not so much publicity around that. I think that the knowledge around that is not so diverse, not so broad or spread across board. But I acknowledge that there are people working on those issues, someone like Erik Melander, the director of the Alva Myrdal Center for Nuclear Disarmament at the Uppsala University, I think that's his focus area. But I think more work needs to be done on that, because any form of insecure activity affects the female more than the male; I think that's the truth. And I think that needs to be taken into consideration. And also, I think, in recent times, we have seen females at the helm of affairs of some organizations more than the males, and I think, let's see more of that. But let me also use this opportunity to talk about what I call "male discrimination". I think that is not quite a popular opinion, but I am part of this, I actually think that the world, not just a nuclear field, the world should not only promote female rights, promote female inclusion, promote the rights of girls and women and forget also improving the plight of the male child. I think it is very, very important. For example, we have the IAEA Marie Curie Fellowship for females. I can imagine young men from the Global South, particularly from the nuclear field who are interested in graduate study in the nuclear field - what similar opportunities are there for them to pursue graduate study in the field? There's not! While it is good to empower the young girl, young woman, let's not forget the male child. So, I think that's very important to state here and I think the world needs to be very wary of that.

Robin Möser: Thank you. And my next question would be: do you think that your organization's voice is represented in, for example, the work around to the TPNW and ICAN's leadership decisions concerning its campaign? And do you think that through your engagement, the visibility of ISYP has actually increased?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay. Okay.

Robin Möser: In other words, do you feel that Nigerian or African voices for that matter, are represented in for example ICAN's campaign to establish the TPNW and get it ratified on a global level?

Daniel Ajudeonu: I think that's a very tricky question.

Robin Möser: It's a tricky question, yes, but I'm trying to address the problem of lacking African voices or voices from the Global South. They slowly being heard, yes, and more diverse voices in general. But do you actually feel particular African perspectives are reflected in such things as the TPNW or the NPT PrepCons and RevCons?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay, thank you very much. I appreciate that question. Let me reiterate that this is my perspective and I am not speaking on behalf of ISYP. But I think that one of our main focuses as ISYP is bridging the divide. So, ISYP is engaging in track II diplomacy and the like. So, we're looking to bridge the divide in the nuclear space. And I think in 2022, we held the 3rd Nuclear Age Conference for young nuclear experts in Berlin. And that was very significant, you know, the young experts were encouraged to write papers to publish some of their work with Bulletin of the atomic scientists. And, for example, with our Africa project, we are also looking to increase the voices of young people, and African voices or African voices in the TPNW. I think that in the past that was something that was neglected. But currently, ICAN is trying, and of course, ICAN can try more, ICAN can try harder, but I think ICAN is trying. I think that if you talk about representation of civil society and individuals, not governments now, I think that there's a long way to go, not because of ICAN, but because of the restrictions with the travel into some of these countries, whether it's events or else. If we can have climate conferences in countries that are accessible, why can't we have nuclear conferences in countries that are accessible? Some people would say, because of the proximity to the nuclear countries, you know, and probably decision-makers in Washington DC. ICAN can do more to lobby to make sure that the locations of these conferences are more accessible to people from the Global South. So, I think there's just been improvement in the representation of the voices of African people, but I think there needs to be more effort. And one of the critical ways is by creating more capacity building programs, because there is no knowledge that is waste; our desire for knowledge should not be limited as well. So, creating that opportunity would give the African young people wishing to expand their knowledge a voice, and add increased value to the field, which would of course improve the quality of the message being passed across by these voices. Then these voices are much more taken into consideration in decision-making spaces across even the Global North. We don't really have much African researchers on this topic. Maybe if we have more capacity building programs aimed at improving the research capacity of these young people, and improving their knowledge about the nuclear topic, in order to improve their research capacity, we would have them do much more research much, much, much more, and which would, of course enable that their voices are much louder. And of course, people cannot say that they will not hear it - it will be heard. So, I think these are some dynamics that need to be worked around.

Robin Möser: Thank you very much for your perspective on this one. And now I have two questions that are connected to each other. But I would like to start with your personal definition of impact in your field, both from your organization, but also from your personal perspective, is there an example you can give where ISYP yielded an impact and how was it achieved?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Okay, thank you very much, I think impact is value. To me, impact is value addition. Value addition is impact, you know, sometimes little drops of what make the mighty ocean. You don't need to get the attention of the entire world before your work is impactful. You just need to be able to add value to what will cause a chain reaction that could propel the end result which every one desires. And again about ISYP, of course ISYP has, you know, added value in so many ways and has achieved impact in so many ways. One of the ways in recent times has been our Third Nuclear Age Project, right,

where we gave young experts in the nuclear field an opportunity to learn and do some research on third nuclear age issues. And not just that, we then help them to put their voices out there. How? By giving them the opportunity to publish through the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, which is one of the renowned organizations in the nuclear field. And for myself, how I achieve impact? Let me start from the latter. I believe strongly that the ISYP Africa project is, you know, on course for a huge impact, because it's caused already a huge impact. Then let me talk about my own personal impact. One of the ways which I have achieved impact within the field was to the second Meeting of State Parties to the TPNW by leading the partnerships team, coordinating the partnerships for me was really invaluable, being able to bring organizations together in order to make sure that the young people are at Vienna. And not just that, also supporting to ensure that these young people are able to present policy recommendations to the main meeting of state parties, which was one of the highlights of our work for the TPNW event in Vienna. That was massive impact for me, that was massive. And I think one of the most, in fact, you know, one of the highlights of this follows that some of our perspectives were included in the outcome document. So, I can see some of the perspectives that we shared in the decisions of policymakers, I think that is some impact that we have had. Personally, I've also had so much impact in the field by encouraging people to pursue the field here in Nigeria, including the conversation about nuclear issues, as well and existential security. And of course, I look forward to greater impact within the field. One thing that propels good impact is having a position through which you can make impact. So, that's why we ask that Africans are given the opportunities in some of these nuclear organizations to also play a role and contribute to their success. Thank you very, very much.

Robin Möser: And my follow up would be, and it's probably a little bit connected, what would be a success for you and what's your definition of success? How do you know that your work actually achieved success? So, it's similar to impact, I'd say, but is there actually something that you can measure as a success in your work?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, for me success is achieving your desired outcome. That's it, achieving your desired outcome. I believe before anyone embarks on a journey or on a project, you have your set goals and objectives. And if at the end of that activity or project, you can go back and say that that defined objective was achieved, I believe that's a success. And sometimes what the world defines as success may not be what you define as success. So, the world may say it is inconsequential. But that's where as individuals, it's very important that your value is not in the perspective of people. The value is not in what people say about it, but your value should be defined by you and be seen in what you know that you add as value to the world. So, for me, my success has been in several ways. I think being able to come through since 2021 when I started pursuing a career. And the next level actively to date and expressing consistent growth in working with significant organizations. And despite the challenges, despite the intimidation, sometimes experiencing racism, sometimes experiencing discrimination, not walking back on my decision to spend my career solving nuclear issues, in so many facets, for me, that's huge success so far. Also, personally, at ISYP, one thing that we have done with me as external partnerships coordinator was broadening our partnership space. And what we did was to identify more organizations that we could partner with in the nuclear field and beyond, to make impact. And I led that effort. And within a very short period, we're able to achieve about 21% increase in that. And to what has that led? That has led to promotion of opportunities in the nuclear field amongst young people, it has also led to increased publicity in some ad campaigns, which, of course, have been very useful for promoting knowledge and scholarship on nuclear issues. For me, a success, you know, they

are little drops of water that makes the mighty ocean and also let me emphasize that from the process of conception, to process of almost now launching the Africa project, I think that's massive, massive success. But the ultimate success will be, of course, not a call for applications for the project, but the feedback from people afterward. But I think also the hard work - I have volunteered in the nuclear family for three years, you know, without pay, you know, and being able to keep on pushing, while you know, living in Lagos, Nigeria, where there are no nuclear weapons and no conversations about nuclear weapons. I think that is massive success for me in my desire to solve nuclear issues. Thank you very much.

Robin Möser: Thank you very much for giving such a personal take on this. And I forgot one thing to ask earlier, when we were talking about the lack of disarmament in the last 25 to 30 years since the end of the Cold War. I was wondering, could you or do you think there's a specific actor, an organization or state that blocked this? And that could be blamed for this like a coalition of states?

Daniel Ajudeonu: Thank you for that question. You know, I think that all the nuclear weapons states are to be blamed for where we are today. I don't think there's any particular states. And of course, some non-nuclear weapon states, you know, may not be out of the picture, but I think all nuclear weapons states have played a role. Because sometimes the best way to defeat your enemy is to become their friend and not fight back. Most times, the one who is stronger, is the one who does no revenge and who does not offend is the one who pursues the greater good. But can we say that that has been the action of the non-nuclear weapons states when they've seen potential threats from their fellow states? I don't think so. But it's been a journey of power tussle; it's been a journey to see who is geopolitically more influential. And that is sad. So, I think all of them are to be blamed. But you know, I would say this with some reservation concerning organizations. I mean with limited knowledge available to me now as to the actions of these organizations, organizations that collect funding from pro-nuclear weapons companies. Indirectly, it means that you are endorsing their work. That is just the bitter truth, you know, they may say that we had limited funding, we had no choice. But there are times when, I'm saying this based on limited knowledge available to me, as to the motive behind the actions, or there are times when, even if the devil gives you food, and haven't eaten for 10 days, you can tell the devil, I don't want your food, because I know, your end goal is never in my interest. You know, so that's it.

Robin Möser: I see. I see. And this brings me to the very last question. And this is not to be confused with the one I asked earlier, when you said the important milestones are that getting the P5 to act towards disarmament. Now, it's a little bit different and there's a certain twist to it. Because what are your expectations for the future of the field and where do you expect the nuclear field develop towards to in the next 5 to 50 years? Let me know your view, please. And this concludes then the interview with you.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, sure. First of all, let me be idealistic. In the next 50 to 100 years, I look forward to a world without nuclear weapons. That's maybe an idealistic thing. But on the flip side of things, probably not explicitly, not being explicitly realistic. I would also say that next 50 to 100 years, I want to see the world a more honest place, better protected, and less vulnerable to dangers of nuclear weapons use, particularly. And of course, that's a little philosophical: a world that is less vulnerable to, you know, to nuclear dangers. And of course, we can achieve disarmament, but it will have to take political will as well from leaders of the nuclear weapons states, because honestly, I look to see a world

where young experts of today are at the decision making tables of tomorrow doing the work that they have been passionate about from their youth and achieving the desired outcomes they have been advocating for from their youth. And then they'll be able to beat their chests and say, I fought a good fight. I've run my race, and I'm looking forward to receiving the crown. Thank you very much.

Daniel Ajudeonu: Yeah, okay. Yeah, thank you very much. So, we are seeing a growing trend of the divergence from the three greatest existential risks or threats of our time. In popular opinions there's just a one or two of these threats which are most pressing. The initial three threats are nuclear weapons, climate change and AI. But now, there are perspectives that the most pressing ones are climate change and AI, which is one of the reasons why the nuclear field is getting less funding and most funders are moving to climate change and AI. If today, we stop funding the nuclear field adequately, we may get to that stage tomorrow when we have tried to reduce AI risk, we have tried to reduce climate risk, then nuclear will pounce on us, and it may be too late. So, funders must realize that. Personally, I don't believe that climate risk or AI risks are more important to solve than nuclear risks, I believe these are three existential threats. And they must be dealt with equally, because if we leave one out it's not gonna work. So, it's important that funders take that into perspective. And also in the area of impact, I think I was supposed to mention this that, as a Future Generations Global Ambassador, an initiative of the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales and Foundations for Tomorrow, I have tried to, you know, increase the inclusion of nuclear issues in the discussions around future generations protection. You know, it's a very, very political issue, you know, many states are worried about using the language of nuclear disarmament in the issue of future generations. And there's not so much work being done on the intersection of nuclear disarmament and future generations. But there's several documents that we've had to put together, you know, in the lead up to the summit of the future, and other events. I've tried to ensure that this is included. And I'm glad that it was accommodated by my colleagues, because it's a very, very critical issue. So, thank you for returning back the correct reading.

Robin Möser: Thank you. Yes, I think this exhausts the questions I had and I will turn off the recording now.