



April 10, 2024

Interview with Kudakwashe Mapako

Citation:

"Interview with Kudakwashe Mapako", April 10, 2024, Wilson Center Digital Archive, <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/301104>

Summary:

Kudakwashe Mapako, a legal researcher specializing in international law, engages in nuclear security with a focus on Africa through the African Center for Science and International Security. His work highlights Africa's strategic role in uranium trade and disarmament, advocating for African states to leverage their positions for policy influence. He critiques inequalities in global non-proliferation treaties, particularly the NPT, and underscores the need for inclusive diplomacy. Mapako also emphasizes educating African policymakers and citizens about nuclear issues as a step toward meaningful participation in global disarmament efforts. This document summary was generated by an artificial intelligence language model and was reviewed by a Wilson Center staff member.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

Robin Möser: Okay. Hello. This is Kudakwashe Mapako, he is currently based in Pretoria, South Africa. He originally hails from Zimbabwe. And he works, besides studying law, as a Research Officer for the African Center for Science and International Security that is based in Accra, Ghana. And he's an MA candidate at the University of Cape Town, specializing in international law. And I won't list his numerous involvements in anti-nuclear and disarmament activities, because he can speak for himself. I'm happy to talk to you today and my first question would be about your own career trajectory: How did you get the point where you are, what's your background, professional training and experience?

Kudakwashe Mapako: That's great. Thank you so much for the initiative, and also just for reaching out. So, apart from what you mentioned, as you know, I'm an international law Master's candidate at the University of Cape Town. Before being at the University of Cape Town, where I'm specializing in international law, I also did my LLB in China at Zhejiang Gongshang University. So, my trajectory and how I started looking into international nuclear security related issues started off with an internship. In the pandemic during COVID. Instead of doing an internship, I was just trying to find a niche of something I can specialize in, apart from just studying international law in general. So during the internship, I was working with the very organization I'm still working with, the African Center for Science and International Security. I was particularly looking at arms control and nonproliferation related issues. Then it transitioned, as I started off my masters last year, into a role, a pretty much part time role in unison with my studies, particularly focusing on disseminating research-based output on international nuclear security related issues with a particular focus on Africa. And also looking at disarmament-related issues. So, with this part-time role, then I started to embark on more niche projects. In particular, we focused on the universalization of international nuclear legal instruments. By looking at the CPPNM and its amendments. That is one of the main projects we've been working on throughout last year until now, trying to have some form of sensitization with various stakeholders on international nuclear security issues and government departments. So, that has been pretty much my background as far as how I embarked on looking at international nuclear security issues.

Robin Möser: And after the internship were you offered a permanent contract?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yes, a part-time role. Yes, but that with my studies, obviously a full-time position wasn't going to work out. So, I was offered that part-time role. But with that part, I was able to be fortunate enough to play a big role in the project. In particular, because of my background of international law, it played much of a, you know, a fair advantage to the team that I was working with for me to contribute more. So, it was a part-time role on paper, but the responsibility about the work I was doing pretty much surpassed someone who's doing a part-time role.

Robin Möser: I mean, it's hard to draw a line. I assume that is remote work? Because when you're based in Harare, Zimbabwe, or Pretoria, then it's hard to commute to Ghana on a regular basis, I guess.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, it's remote work. But yeah, I think we're fortunate enough to have these events, especially with this project. We've been working with the CPPNM and its amendment. So, there are workshops which are hosted from time to time and so we get to be together certain points. But for the majority of times, it's strictly online and remote.

Robin Möser: And do you particularly bring in African perspectives for this to make sure to also see African voices represented in larger global fora? I mean, yeah, I assume you develop certain standpoints and that's then from an African perspective, right?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yes, indeed, indeed, I think that's the premise of the work we're doing, trying to amplify and also uplift, the African voices especially where Africa's nuclear security is concerned. So, it's not strictly just capacity building on a technical level, try to build expertise, and you know, and share knowledge, but it's also trying to galvanize a perspective or an African voice, coming from a knowledge base and from a well-informed background.

Robin Möser: No, I understand and we will come to this later on again, I just wanted to clarify this aspect a little bit. My second question is a bigger one; let me phrase it this way: How do you regard the role of nuclear weapons today? Do you see them as a stabilizing factor in global politics?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, that's great. I think that's a very, very great and very timely question. Right. I think to look at currently the geopolitics and how the Track-1 countries, the Track-2 states and the P5, some of their allies and how they've been managing to maneuver as far as international law and in bypassing the international order, based on their nuclear capability and their nuclear arsenal, is very interesting. I think it questions then, you know, you tend to look back to the non-nuclear weapon states on how then they view how things are moving forward. So, going back to your question, I would think it's a very sensitive and a very delicate time we're living in right now, especially with the proliferation of nuclear threats we have been seeing from Russia, also from North Korea, and the tension going on in the Middle East with countries with nuclear capability and also the West. So, it simply points to a time which is very sensitive. And I think it's also significant for African states to develop some form of a perspective, as far as nuclear risk is concerned and try to just internalize this issue more, rather than just look at them as if they are far removed and far removed from their concerns. I think it's a very interesting time, which is a delicate time as well, which needs to be really approached with caution.

Robin Möser: I mean, African states may not have nuclear weapons themselves or are about to develop them. But look at the global uranium trade and where the uranium does come from, mostly African states and perhaps, Australia and Canada, so they are participating in the international trade.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah. So, it goes back to the main conversation of defusing the misconception, which a lot of African countries have about nuclear weapons. Their perception of nuclear weapons has to shift completely. We have to look at the international forums, which are championing disarmament and Non-Proliferation norms, in which they have no significant role to play, which is actually not true. They have significant power based on their uranium deposits they have, which have been exploited by this nuclear weapon states. And also, they can leverage that position in order for them to, you know, to push for policy, which calls for Non-Proliferation, international nuclear security and disarmament. So, I think going back to the conversation of defusing, there's an need of defusing the misconception of nuclear weapons and their impact on African states.

Robin Möser: So, in terms of global debates you mean, not to let them be hesitant bystanders?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Exactly. We are a huge stakeholder. We are a very important stakeholder, in Africa as far as international nuclear security is concerned. We're not just, you know, parties who are bystanders in the conversation based on our lack of capability and, you know, so forth. So, I think that's one of the main issues policymakers and people who are active in this conversation need to really engage in and see to find a governance position.

Robin Möser: So, coming back to my initial question: do you see nuclear weapons as a stabilizing factor in today's political climate?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I think in this case, the whole conversation of nuclear weapons as a stabilizing factor, I think if we look at it from an African perspective, it hasn't been true. We haven't seen any recent efforts or scenarios where nuclear capability has been used as a stabilizing factor or something that ensures peace. Right. Even deterrence right now. It's almost like it's based on a premise of fear, rather than, like actual strategy, you know, and just caution. So, I think for African states, if we are looking at the states who have the capability and the way they've been moving, we've seen recently with Russia making threats several times, right, with their undermining the NPT Review Conference, and, you know, resulting in the lack of an outcome document. We see it also with the continuous attacks on nuclear installations. So yes, all these actions, they pretty much point to the mere fact that they are not looking at nuclear weapons and their capability as something that causes the deterrent and also a stabilizing factor, but as something they can weaponize to get away with, you know, with whatever they watch as far as international law is concerned. So, that's how I look at it.

Robin Möser: And when you look at the non-proliferation and disarmament field: What do you see as the biggest failure in the field since at the end of the Cold War, between when the "golden age of arms control" started and what we have now?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I think the biggest failure, there are several factors, I think one of the biggest failures of non-proliferation it's embedded in the NPT. If we look at the NPT, there is the particular provision, which seem discriminatory to states without nuclear capability, that is the non-nuclear weapon states. I think the failure to continuously address that at review conferences, is also one of the things that are championing this form of division, as far as trying to have a unified policy of non-proliferation. As far as disarmament concerned, one of the failures I think we have in disarmament is having some form of an unified understanding of what disarmament is. I think that's one thing a lot of people overlook. Because the definition of disarmament, you know, it's shaped by national policy, it's shaped by perspective. And that differs across the board for even the nuclear weapon states and the non-nuclear weapon states. Others look at it as a spectrum. Others look looking at disarmament is something that's supposed to be immediate and complete. So, I think, that form of, you know, misinterpretation of what disarmament requires and having a unified understanding of nuclear disarmament is also an issue. Another thing I think, right now, is a failure in the approach to these review conferences. I don't really know how to narrow it down into one specific thing, but I can try and explain. So, when these review conferences take place, we see a lot of African states, they take certain positions in which they don't even agree with. That has nothing to do with their own national interest, but is based on their alignment with particular powerful states. So, in other words, they're lobbying on behalf of certain states, but not making a position of their own. I think this then undermines the credibility, the process itself. So, I think one of the problems of these review conferences is, you know, failing to actually represent the interests of all states as individual states, rather than lobby on behalf of others. So, I don't really know how to put that across. But I think it's also one of the failures as part of the mechanism itself in addressing disarmament or non-proliferation. Yeah, so in other words, the issue of inclusive diplomacy. I think that's one of the issues, lack of inclusive diplomacy in non-proliferation and disarmament.

Robin Möser: I mean, yeah, the last RevCon was postponed due to COVID. And when it took place, it was the first NPT RevCon that happened against the backdrop of the Ukraine-Russia conflict. So, maybe that is further, as you said, galvanizing or making it more complicated for African states to take their own distinct stance, because they take sides, for example South Africa, on Russia.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yes, exactly. So, I think it's also hard to have some form of separation of, you know, bilateral engagement on particular issues and also just taking a bold stance on international nuclear security related issues on the other side. So, we see South Africa's engagement with BRICS. Yes, we see BRICS. And also we see South Africa's position on Israel. It just shows you the dilemma that exists when it comes to policy, right? On one side, you are aligned with a particular state, but on a particular area in which you don't agree with a state you should also show that you don't agree. But in this case, we don't see that with African states. They seem to be all aligned with whatever their allies are pushing for, which is unfortunate.

Robin Möser: You mentioned earlier, one of the biggest failures in the past 30 years in terms of arms control and disarmament was the inequality embedded in the treaty itself. But would you agree that the NPT's Article Six regarding the disarmament commitments of the nuclear weapons states and their lack of commitment, coupled with actual mechanisms to hold them accountable, is also one of the reasons that disarmament has stalled in the past decades?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Indeed, so you can reflect and look at how the infrastructure, some might even say the infrastructure exists, the legal architecture is there, right? What's only failing is political will, that is the enforcement part also of these legal instruments. So, the problem is not just reflecting or what needs to be amended, but the existing legal infrastructure they're not abiding to it. And what's happened afterwards is also another critical factor that shows the weakness, if we look at it in a bigger context of non-proliferation and disarmament. So, I agree, the burden is also on the nuclear weapon states with their failure to abide and obliged to Article 6. It also undermines everything else, you know, if we try to look at the efforts, which have been made in disarmament and non-proliferation. And another issue, I'm not sure if it's completely aligned with the question, but it concerns the decline of critical bilateral disarmament and arms control engagements, legal agreements, bilateral agreements. If we look at how they've been crumbling down, it's critical. Look at START, right, with the US, and China and Russia. Over the years, it has crumbled down and has had a significant impact on policy for both countries.

Robin Möser: I'm not 100% sure if I understood you correctly. But do you say that broadening or widening the disarmament debate, including African voices, voices from the Global South has actually stalled and delayed the debate?

Kudakwashe Mapako: No, I think the lack of inclusive development has actually stalled the Non-Proliferation and disarmament efforts.

Robin Möser: So, do you then regard the discussion and the coming into being of the TPNW as a new stimulus with the help of voices from other actors, not just the usual suspects, as a way forward?

Kudakwashe Mapako: You can say that, but I am also of the view that right now, they heavily undermine the TPNW. It's also one of the concerns that needs to be addressed. On the contrary, we have African states, countries from the Global South, who are heavily supporting the TPNW, right? If

we look at the ratio of the countries that have ratified the TPNW, they are mostly countries from the Global South, unlike the nuclear weapon states, who have heavily ignored and undermined the TPNW.

Robin Möser: Yes, and Germany, for example, was heavily criticized by them for taking the observer stance during the recent conference in New York.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Exactly, yes you can say that. We see that with African states and their participation of it. Yes, a lot of countries, especially nuclear weapon states, are heavily undermining the TPNW, but it has power as far as the moral and the humanitarian aspect of disarmament and Non-Proliferation is concerned. And with that, African states can play a very huge role in that respect.

Robin Möser: Especially, if you look like people advocating for the TPNW have also addressed the nexus of climate change, environmental impact, and the effects of nuclear weapons and bring this all together. So, the rallying of support was, I think, more thoroughly than in earlier instances.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Which is very true. So, I'm also have the view that we see clearly that nuclear weapons state, they seem not to recognize that TPNW. They seem to undermine it, but they seem to have some form of respect for the NPT. So, if possible, there is need to have complementarity of the NPT and the TPNW. If these two legal instruments can reinforce each other in certain respects, where the NPT is failing, especially recognizing the moral element and the humanitarian aspects of international nuclear security, then the TPNW can reinforce that. Because it's heavy on that, it's big on campaigns, it's big on recognizing various other aspects that need to be integrated with international nuclear security.

Robin Möser: Yes, ICAN won the Nobel Peace Prize, what more visibility can you get in that regard?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, exactly.

Robin Möser: So, I assume supporters hope it doesn't peter out, as other initiatives did.

Kudakwashe Mapako: But recently we see countries Papua New Guinea, they ratify the TPNW. There are several other countries that are ahead of the icons that have ratified that the TPNW. So, it is growing, the value of the TPNW. And I think the easing role, like what you were saying, that can be played by African states who are heavily in support of the TPNW. So, African states can actually utilize the TPNW to champion and amplify their voice as far as pushing for disarmament and Non-Proliferation.

Robin Möser: And what do you see as the most important milestones for the nuclear disarmament field?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I think one of the most important yet to be achieved is, I think we've touched on it already, but I'll just try to reiterate. So, the point I was making of recognizing the value of bilateral arms control engagement, bilateral arms control engagement and agreement is very important. If we look at START, right, we will look at that soon after the Cold War, there was some form of a race to disarm, and to recognize the value in international nuclear security among the these nuclear weapons states. The same can still be achieved if we have continued, you know, bilateral agreements by nuclear weapon states. Be it India and Pakistan, or, again with North Korea, and also with other nuclear weapon states like the US, China, Russia. So, galvanizing that form of trust and confidence and transparency, it's necessary to achieve some gradual steps as far as disarmament and also nonproliferation.

Robin Möser: Thank you. And now coming back to the African Center for Science and International Security. What can you tell me about your organization and how the nuclear portfolio fits in your organization's overall mission? Do have other peace topics you work on, because international security can be quite broad. So, I would be interested in that.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Okay, so overall, looking at the existing architecture of international nuclear security, what we're trying to achieve at AFRICSIS is mostly to provide rigorous and objective research, right, evidence-based analysis, practical recommendations around critical national and international nuclear security related issues. So, we're not solely touching on addressing the heavy issues of Non-Proliferation and disarmament. And by utilizing capacity building efforts, we're also doing other projects in relation to education. So, there are several campaigns we have been part of, which focus on just trying to amplify the young voices, pretty much similar with what Noel and others are doing with the hub at VERTIC. Right. So, it's capacity building, but at the same time, you're also galvanizing some form of support and rallying in support from African stakeholders. Be it the high level officials in government down to on the ground to just mere individuals, who are not really aware of nuclear security issues. So, I think this fits into the international nuclear security architecture and agenda. We are addressing capacity measures, right, the legislation that is in Africa, through organizing conferences, seminars, also just engaging various partners at that level. So, apart from just the capacity building aspect and also the education part of it, there is some form of correspondence. I think that is what a lot of people overlook. And oftentimes this multilateral organizations like the UNODA, UNODC, they have the funds, right, they have the contacts.

Robin Möser: OK, and does your work also translate into policy or into policy recommendations? Do you actually work towards that goal?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, very much so, it also touches that, but that is all on a consultation basis. So, it's not that we heavily just focus on. Right now, if I'm going to be honest, it has been mostly capacity building related work around critical nuclear security issues. I'll give you an example. So yeah, so last year we looked at, before the review conference, we had sensitization related webinars and also capacity building related webinars, where we engage the high level government officials, be it from energy or defence, on critical issues that are of Africa primary concern, that they need to also address at the NPT Review Conference. And also, we assisted them with drafting, not old drafted per se, like actual writing, but also the process. So, we share best practice and the lessons, which have been learned from other countries that have been doing this successfully, like Ghana for example, from South Africa. We shared those with other African countries, which were also behind, just for them to have proper understanding of the drafting process.

Robin Möser: Yeah, that's quite interesting.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah. So this way, it extends to certain issues, which, you know, need to be addressed at the highest level, as far as international nuclear security is concerned, be it at the review conference, or particular issues related to peaceful uses. In some respects, like what we're doing now with CPPNM, they try to get it, you know, ratified, protection of nuclear material storage, use, and also transportation. So, we cover some of those issues.

Robin Möser: Thank you. Can you list the five closest partners AFRICSIS and yourself work with on an international and on a regional African level? Can you tell me who they are and comment upon the nature of your cooperation?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, so partners. First we have Ghana Atomic Energy Commission. So Ghana Atomic Energy Commission is one, then Ghana Nuclear Regulatory Authority. Then the IAEA, yes, then also NTI. Then we have National Nuclear Security Administration.

Robin Möser: Thank you. And, for example, do you work with other partners in, say, South Africa?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, NECSA we've engaged with them. But in my time, right now, we haven't had a project where we've worked with them on a particular project. But I think over the past, we have engaged with them. And also, if we look at the region, we have AFCONE, we have engaged with them several times. So these are some of the partners, the international ones and regional ones, I mentioned. Ghana and also South Africa in some respects. And oftentimes even the Zimbabwean regulatory authorities, we have engaged them in certain projects as well. So, internationally, let me start off with NTI, Nuclear Threat Initiative. Yeah. So, as far as Nuclear Threat Initiative, we've worked with them in also promoting the universalization of international nuclear security across the African continent. In particular, focusing on high-level government officials with the project I mentioned earlier in preparation for the review conference. Yeah, the drafting process itself, like, you know, stakeholder awareness, and just assisting them with galvanizing national support, be it from society, from private sector, up to the government in order for them to have a comprehensive draft document. So, we went with NTI on that. Then with AFCONE, we've also engaged them in these events where we have, you know, certain high-level officials also show up to give a seminar and just put other countries to speed on the project they are working on and how they can assist various African countries on a regional level.

Robin Möser: Like to guide them through the whole process from bottom up.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah. So, another one, which is most important, I would say it's MISA [sic] and the International Atomic Energy Agency. I think we have engaged them several times, especially MISA, their mechanism on self-assessment, the important aspects in the implementation process of the CPPNM and its amendment. We have consulted them with this project of trying to promote universalization of CPPNM and also its amendment and extent, we have consulted them. And they have been very helpful in sharing these tools in which African countries can have self-assessment of their progress in the ratification process, and also implementation. They offer assistance with that: the ratification process and also implementation, and that is the domestication of the legal instruments harmonizing it with national laws. Then we've also worked with International Atomic Energy Agency, it has mostly been capacity-building related work on sensitization. We have just engaged them several times in that respect. And they have been forthcoming also in assisting African countries on channels they can utilize and how they can engage International Atomic Energy Agency projects they have going on. So, on peaceful use, this is on peaceful-use related work. Yeah.

Robin Möser: And what about the AU level, the African Union?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I think AFCONE has been part of it. So that has been mostly the work, if I'm going to be honest, we haven't had some form of huge projects where we are collaborating. But it has

been mostly reaching out for respective experts or personnel to participate in events we have going on.

Robin Möser: And how do you view ICAN and have you or AFRICSIS worked with ICAN?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Not that I know of. But the work they have done... I can't say I've worked with them. I am aware, of course. But we haven't worked with him. But I admire their work and what they are working on. I think even recently in March 2023 with the TPNW State Party Conference.

Robin Möser: You are now representing a think tank, AFRICSIS, but I am interested in how you view academics as actors in the field? Do you work and engage with them?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, heavily. How do I view them? I think they are essential in this work, especially in trying to defuse the misconception of international nuclear security in Africa.

Robin Möser: In getting the public interested in the topic?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Exactly. So, they are probably one of the key stakeholders. The think tanks, they facilitate the process. But the most important people are the people who disseminate the knowledge, who are coming from an informed place. Right, from a research informed place, and distilling that information, that is hard to consume, to the public and to the policymakers in order for them to make necessary progress. So, I think they are very critical in this area. And in our engagement with them, they've been heavily forthcoming, be it in in-person events, or even online, we have heavily engaged with them. And they've been very instrumental with sharing of information and knowledge. And the beauty of it is, when it's coming from people who have no agenda who are solely focusing on the work.

Robin Möser: I mean, the agenda is probably to get the ball rolling in terms of nuclear disarmament, but that is a good point, I believe.

Kudakwashe Mapako: You see. So, on that level, I think their contribution is very critical.

Robin Möser: Okay. And do you think that generally the global debate about nuclear disarmament recognizes that the gendered impact of nuclear weapons? I mean, women are disproportionately affected. In other words: Do you think the debate about global nuclear disarmament and the TPNW includes also gendered aspects?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I think we are seeing it now, right? We are seeing it nowadays, some form of renaissance of recognizing and amplifying the voices, which have been undermined for so long. That is recognizing the voices of marginalized groups, women included, right, across gender spectrum, right. So, the LGBTQ plus and also women, right, so the conversation is now rolling. I can say the ball is now rolling. But the disparity law is reflected in the work, the disparity of men and women, right, of boys and girls. And a higher level, in addressing international nuclear security and disarmament, is reflected in the participation of the people, you'll see in these forums. So, I also noticed this when I was in Vienna, last year.

Robin Möser: For the TPNW State Parties Conference in 2022?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yes. Okay. In our engagement, we engage with various stakeholders, right, including the UNODA, the CTBTO, you name, the International Atomic Energy Agency as well, right. The disparity is reflected in the participation of those marginalized groups, you see, there's one or two forms of participants. But that doesn't reflect the knowledge that these individuals who are heavily

marginalized have, right. It's simply representation. So, I think that's one critical area that as pushing for disarmament, if we're going to have holistic laws that ensure protection of everyone, and that also safeguards the interests of everyone at the policy level, all the stakeholders needs to be covered. And how do you do that? You need to have equal representation at that level in order for the discourse of gender and disarmament to be inclusive. Yeah. So oftentimes, and I think it happens without people recognizing it, you just overlook it. They're just overlooked the conversation. Why? Because you don't know what it's like.

Robin Möser: When you look at the debates around nuclear arms control during the Cold War, it was a male only affair. I interviewed almost 60 people for my PhD project, one was female. So, currently, it's starting to getting a bit different, but still, marginalized groups are only slowly getting represented.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, so the disparity, you know, is clear. And we need to really close that gap. Right, in order for us to deal with the issue of disarmament and just inclusivity.

Robin Möser: Yeah, I mean, that also touches the point of Africans being included in the debate, no matter what agenda.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah. So, going back to the same point I was highlighting of one of the critical failures that we have seen, I think milestones that needs to be achieved, it's going back to the issue of inclusive diplomacy, as an effective tool to galvanize and ensure a strengthened international nuclear security regime. So, inclusive development is not solely looking at the gender aspect of things. It's also reflecting on countries that have been marginalized over time, that have been sidelined in critical conversations of international nuclear security, African countries included. So, we need to recognize the value in African countries as critical stakeholders, despite our current nuclear capability status, you know, and power as far as global politics are concerned. There needs to be some form of recognition in order for us to have policies, which reflect everything and all the interests of everyone.

Robin Möser: And do you feel that through the debate starting in 2017 and 2018 around the TPNW, that the visibility of African voices but also AFRICISIS standing has increased in this heard globally more than before? How would you rate this?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I would agree, I would agree, right. The TPNW what it has done? It has given voices that have been lacking a platform, a platform. So to say, right, it sounds like a cliché, because there was the existence of all these other legal instruments even before the TPNW. But they did not really recognize and amplify the voices of, you know, countries from the Global South in a manner that this instrument values and recognizes the African countries and countries from the Global South, especially the non-nuclear weapon states in its legislature. In that respect, it has played a very huge role in amplifying and uplifting and empowering the voices of African states and other non-nuclear weapon states. Yeah, so I would agree.

Robin Möser: And now coming back to a rather big question. How would you in your work, define impact in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament? And could you give an example, by your organization, where it achieved an impact?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Impact? That's a very big one, right? It also subjective in a way.

Robin Möser: Yes, I know, but I am interested to your subjective view.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Impact? I think it's achieving the set goals, the goals, which are the objectives, right. When your intended objectives achieve, to the fullest extent, the primary objectives of what you intended to achieve. I think that's impact, right. Now, the bigger question comes: what then would you want to achieve, right? In that respect, I think when you see some form of effective change, and positive change, positive change because of the implemented work of the organization. That is impact. So, I'll give a particular example of what we have seen right now with this project has been very interesting, the CPPNM. And trying to put forward the universal ratification of the CPPNM, and it's amendment in Africa. What we have done is we really focused on 11 countries out of 25. We focused on 11 countries, so we divided them into two. We looked at the willing participants and unwilling. So, the willing was the states that have either ratified one of the legal instruments between the CPPNM and its amendment, but they haven't ratified the other one. The unwilling states that did not even ratify either of these legal instruments. And what we've tried to do is to have engagement with all of them, right, with tailoring our engagement to their particular deeds, and their focus their, agenda and what they have going on, in order to try and push for ratification. In this respect, we've seen that about three or four of those countries out of 11. They have taken gradual steps, like very positive steps. So, three almost four of them, they have ratified, the other one is almost at a later stage of ratifying, they ratified the CPPNM, right. And the other the others have shown positive steps. We have seen their engagement with big agency consulting them in with respect to what they need to do in order to ensure ratification. Mind you, for some countries, the ratification process takes a very long time. Yeah,

Robin Möser: Yeah. And I mean, the follow up question would be, and we touched on this a little, how do you define success? I'd say, interpreting a bit what you just said, that success in that case would be a positive impact or change. That could count as a success. And it's a tricky question, because the impact or the success is not always clearly measurable. And it takes time. And you hardly can determine when exactly the seeds were sown, and then suddenly, with a new legislation, they come into effect. So, would you agree that in that case, the impact is similar to the success that comes out at the end?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I would agree, I think the line is blurry, right? Yeah, exactly. What you get is impact and success. If something is impactful, if you say, Oh, this project had impact. The impact reflects the success of the work you have put in. Right. So, it can be measurable, but in certain respects, you cannot measure it because certain projects are ongoing. Like, you know, like in this case, I'm giving instances of certain countries that would then ratify after the project is done later on.

Robin Möser: Exactly. Right.

Kudakwashe Mapako: The project is in their minds, you know, seeing the benefits of ratifying. How they can benefit from the ratification of this legal instruments, and it has played a huge part for them. So, in that respect, you cannot just measure it, in a way. But, you know, certain results come later or in the near future, but you can recognize the impact.

Robin Möser: Yeah, and sometimes, early initiatives are revived at a later point in time. And then their time has come. And the transition into implementation or ratification is much more smoothly than at an earlier point in time. So yeah, I'm with you on that. And, okay. I think my last question for today would be what are your main expectations for the future of the field and where do you expect the nuclear field to go to in next, say, 25 years of even 50 years? What's your roadmap ahead?

Kudakwashe Mapako: So, with that question, you mean, the expectations as far as what exactly might happen on the ground?

Robin Möser: Exactly, your own expectations for the future of the field. Where do you see it developing? I just want your outlook. Okay?

Kudakwashe Mapako: Yeah, that's a very good one, I would say this right, just reflecting on what we have seen in, you know, in global politics and international world order how nuclear weapon states have continuously undermined right, international law based on the nuclear capability. And also, how we are having these emerging threats based on technological advancement, you can mention AI, you can mention also the interest to explore space. Now we are having, you know, we're having new domains, right, which are also creating other, you know, security gaps and concerns for various countries. And in that respect, we also have countries in Africa or the Global South, who are also lagging behind as far as industrialization and how this is also affecting them at a policy level in nuclear security, is concerned. I think reflecting on all the sectors and all the things going on, it's hard to see a world where there is..., it's also sad to be a pessimist, but it's hard to see a world where there's just complete, you know, eradication of nuclear weapons. And, you know, just complete adherence to international nuclear security and international law, international law-based order. I think we are likely to see a future where there will be continuous proliferation efforts based on fear, based on, you know, protecting national interests and so forth. So, we are likely to see a future where international nuclear security diplomacy and engagement will be based on capability, will be based on capacity, you know, rather than solely reflecting and looking at the issues for what they are. Which is unfortunate, because you then have countries, who are in Africa like us, who are trying to have some form of, you know, nuclear security renaissance in order for us to be at the table. So, there is going to be some form of continuous evolution in that respect. But I think it's interesting times.

Robin Möser: So if I understood your last point correctly, do say that if there is a specialization of the debate based on continuous evolution and developments in the field, would that then again exclude certain voices, say the Global South?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I think it already is excluding certain voices. If you look at the conversation right now, that is ongoing on the Outer Space Treaty, right, you can clearly see that the emerging of this new security domains, right, the conversation of space, how they're going to protect space from nuclear weapons, the weaponization of space. African countries, they are not they at all in the center of this conversation in comparison with Asia, and Europe. Already, it seems as if it's discriminatory based on our lack of capacity. So, the more we have continuous evolution, right, as far as technological advancement and the coming in of emerging technologies. It has its benefits, but the downside of this form of evolution at policy level, it continuously also undermines certain countries who are behind as far as development is concerned. And that is where we are as African states. So, I think there is a political conversation that needs to be..., that we need to have African countries. So, I would say, at the end of the day, African countries, they need to also, you know, try and recognize how they can make some form of impact, right, and be a key stakeholder in these conversations, despite our status right now, as far as development is concerned. So, how are we going to safeguard our interests? And also, how are we going to benefit from, you know, the development that is taking place in international nuclear security? And how are we going to utilize all these emerging domains for our benefit as well? And also how we can participate in the regulatory aspects of things where we are lacking right now?

And, you know, the most important thing we can do is to try and defuse the misconception around our role. What we can do as non-nuclear weapon states.

Robin Möser: And I mean, not being a world leader in artificial intelligence development doesn't exclude from having a normative or moral stance on it, that could further the debate on how to regulate these new emerging issues.

Kudakwashe Mapako: Exactly. So, there is the need to have collective participation, right, not based on capacity, not based on, you know, the level of development, because then it would exclude certain stakeholders, which also have a voice. The point you just made.

Robin Möser: Yes, being maybe not in the top five rank of country's most advanced in these sectors, doesn't mean you don't think as a state or you don't have experts on technical and legal issues.

Kudakwashe Mapako: And not only that, the effects of, you know, be it a catastrophe, a nuclear catastrophe, out of these emerging technologies. If we are not we are excluded from the conversation, it collectively affects everyone despite your participation or not. So, the need to have this form of collective participation and in an inclusive manner reflects the interests of both the African countries and the rest of the world, yeah.

Robin Möser: I know, thank you very much. Do you have anything to add, because otherwise that would exhaust my questions?

Kudakwashe Mapako: I think I don't have anything, it was quite an insightful conversation.

Robin Möser: Then let me switch off the recording