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Interview with Walusungu Mtonga

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Summary:

Walusungu Mtonga, a Zambian medical doctor and IPPNW board member, advocates for nuclear disarmament by connecting local and global initiatives. Inspired by his late father's work in disarmament, he emphasizes the need for grassroots education and incremental steps toward total elimination, such as promoting "no first use" policies. Mtonga highlights the challenges of engaging communities with immediate socioeconomic concerns and underscores the role of treaties like the TPNW in revitalizing global disarmament efforts. 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, great. And I'm speaking today to Walusungu Mtonga. He is a medical doctor based in Lusaka, Zambia. And his interest is in global health, peace and nuclear disarmament. He's currently serving on the board of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, IPPNW. And he also played an active role in various events, and traveled the world for this purpose. For example, he participated in the first IPPNW Congress in Africa, in Mombasa last year. And I think you chaired a panel and I also look forward to hearing more about this. Having introduced you, my first question would be how did you personally get here? How did you reach the position you are in, what's your background and why the IPPNW? Thank you.

Walusungu Mtonga: Thank you so much once more for hosting me. There's a long vision to the to my answer and there's a summarized version. I'll try to maybe summarize.

Robin Möser: Or mix it up.

Walusungu Mtonga: Or I'll mix it up. Yes. I think that's even better. Okay, so, how I got involved with my work with IPPNW. It goes way back to my dad, actually, who's dead now. My dad was a medical doctor. And he did a lot of work around small arms and eventually he joined IPPNW where he served.. So he served as co-president of IPPNW, if I'm not mistaken that was in 2014. Somewhere around that time. However, I was very young. I was a little boy around that time and did not understand most of the work that he did. And I remember each time asking him because he was always away attending to different meetings and the like. And each time I asked him why he did what he did, his answer was, well, the world is a dangerous place and I'm trying to make it a lot safer. And, yeah, so it's something that, you know, as a young boy, as a little boy, I didn't really understand. Okay, and so, yeah, in 2017, that's the year he passed on, I began my medical journey in medical school. So that was in my first year, I began to question a lot of things, you know, I was a bit more mature at the time. And I began to ask myself questions as to why my dad did what he did. And so in my third year of medical school, I took an active role in browsing through my dad's work. And, yeah, what caught my eye was the fact that he was involved in a number of works that didn't make sense to me at the time. You know, I wondered why he was involved with nuclear weapons. Apart from nuclear weapons, he was involved with weapons such as landmines, small arms, which made sense, you know, because my country had those things. We had issues to do with gun violence, we had landmines. So it made sense that he would be involved in such work. But what I didn't understand was why he got involved with nuclear. We come from a place where we don't have nuclear weapons. So it was it was very odd. It was very strange that he was involved in such work. He was practicing in Zambia as a medical doctor. He was a general practitioner. Yeah. But apart from that he spent a lot of his time in disarmament work, doing a lot of disarmament work. Yeah. He worked with the UN on various projects, actually, including projects such as control arms, among other projects. So I found myself in that space where I began to explore why he ventured into such a field, you know, so I began to read about nuclear weapons and the consequences of a nuclear war. And what I found was actually, I found it quite astonishing, if I could say, I couldn't believe what I was reading. I couldn't believe that this wasn't a topic that was common back home. I mean, even up to today, very few media houses were reporting nuclear weapons and nuclear war. And for me, it was strange, because understanding the danger that is posed with the existence of these weapons for me, you know, I would have expected a better response from the locals here home. Yeah. But there's nothing, there's nothing literally. We don't get to hear anything about nuclear weapons on the news and whatnot. And so, for me, having had that information, I felt the need to begin to share it with my colleagues whilst I was still a student. And so I got in touch with and I

wrote an email to IPPNW central office, expressing my desire to grow a student movement at the time. And they did get here, so they did get back to me. Lucky for me, there was a practicing doctor he is still around, who was part of it, IPPNW Zambia, at the time. So IPPNW central office connected me with this doctor. And we began work at my university at the time, so we opened a student movement, where I began to share on different platforms, I would speak on the university radio or during seminars. I would host seminars on the dangers posed by the existence of nuclear weapons. So towards the end of my medical school that was in 2022, I applied for a program known as the Hiroshima ICAN and I was fortunate enough to be selected as a participant. And I got the opportunity to travel to Hiroshima in 2022. And for me that was the time that really changed my whole perspective of life. We got the opportunity to have conversation with the Hibakusha, we visited Hiroshima Memorial Park, the museum, and throughout my stay there, it was very, very touching. It was depressing to some extent, but also encouraging, you know, it encouraged me to continue the work that I was doing. I couldn't believe that, you know, I found myself shedding tears, you know, for people I did not know. And for me that was a turning point, I felt the need to influence at an even higher stage. And so in 2023, which was last year, I decided to stand, and that was my final year in medical school, IPPNW we're having their Congress, the one in Mombasa, the very first in Africa. So, I took part in that Congress actively during the planning process. And then during the Congress itself, where I decided I will run for a board position, you know, because I felt the need to have a different platform. I felt I needed a bigger platform to influence, because I struggled a lot with trying to convince the locals back home that the nuclear weapons, you know, that we must eliminate them. It wasn't something that I was very successful at, because most of the people back home are more concerned about where they will get their next meal. You know, that's the majority and issues to do with global security have been difficult, you know, most people won't resonate with you, they won't reason with you. And so I felt the need to influence at a bigger level. And that's how I managed to get a position on the on the governing board. And ever since, I've been privileged to give talks to different medical students across the IPPNW community, and our partners, including IFMSA, they usually invite us for their conferences, as well as the Federation of African Medical Students Association. So we've been creating these partners, who've been inviting us to give different talks with regard to nuclear weapons and global security. So yeah, so basically that's how I found myself in in the IPPNW space. I've also had the privilege to attend a number of our Medical Association conferences, which they do invite us. I attended the first one in Kigali, Rwanda, last year, that was the WMA General Assembly. And then more recently in Seoul, South Korea, which was two weeks ago, where I attended the Council Session. And during these conferences, I was given the opportunity to speak about nuclear weapons, and just appeal to physicians as to why they should respond to the growing danger that nuclear weapons pose. So yeah, that's how I found myself in this space.

Robin Möser: Thank you. That was a very interesting journey. Thanks for sharing. And my next question would be, how do you view the role of nuclear weapons in the world today? Do you ascribe any stabilizing value to them or do think they matter internationally?

Walusungu Mtonga: Okay, thank you. Well, of course, I know there's this whole concept of nuclear deterrence, which most nuclear armed states use as an excuse to continue developing and maintaining their nuclear weapons. However, I believe that just the fact that nuclear weapons exist, it means that they can be used, just the fact that that possibility is there is reason enough to have them eliminated. Yeah. So to quote Melissa Parke, the ICAN's Executive Director, she put it this way. She says deterrence

works until it doesn't. And so I think, to summarize my answer, I believe nuclear weapons should be eliminated. I don't believe deterrence works, because eventually, especially with the way the world is behaving today, if we continue on this trajectory, we will definitely have a nuclear war. Yeah, thank you. So, in a nutshell, deterrence doesn't work.

Robin Möser: Thank you. And how should we address this issue? Where do you think the focus of the civil society should be - on total elimination? And what could be practical steps to achieve this?

Walusungu Mtonga: Okay, well, firstly, we know that total elimination of nuclear weapons won't happen overnight. And so as IPPNW and also as an individual, I appreciate campaigns that lead towards total elimination. I'll give an example. There's a campaign run by Physicians for Social Responsibility in the USA. It's called back from the brink. In that campaign, they are now promoting what is known as no first use. Now, no first use, which I'm sure you're aware about, is the concept that nuclear armed states will not use nuclear weapons first, okay. Now, that doesn't lead, I mean, that doesn't directly lead towards elimination of nuclear weapons, but it's a step in the right direction. And so we know that we won't eliminate nuclear weapons overnight, so we applaud such steps, you know, that sort of ease the tension. And then we can build on from such small steps. The other campaigns that ICAN run, for example, that don't bank on the bomb campaign. Again, those are small steps that ultimately will help us lead towards total elimination of nuclear weapons. So in short, civil society organizations should begin to find ways, you know, small steps, that will help us achieve our ultimate goal, because we know that nuclear weapons won't go away overnight. Apart from that, we have to keep promoting the TPNW, which now provides a pathway towards total elimination. So even as we incorporate these other campaigns, we know that the TPNW is that is a Treaty that will help us get in total elimination.

Robin Möser: Okay, I see. And touching on a related issue. What do you see as the biggest failure in the field of nuclear Non-Proliferation and disarmament since the end of the Cold War? And why do you think so little was done? We still have nine nuclear weapons states.

Walusungu Mtonga: Um, so yeah, I mean, to answer that question I'll give a twofold answer. On one end, I mean, there are some positives things that we can take away from the disarmament movement. Like you've mentioned, we do have nine nuclear armed states. However, we've managed to dismantle about 50,000 nuclear warheads. Apart from that, we've seen the establishment of nuclear weapon free zones. And all these are steps in the right direction. However, what will be the biggest failure for me in this disarmament fight, is the fact that the world for some reason after the Cold War, forgot about the danger. Because initially, just after the Cold War, we had a situation where the world knew about the dangers of nuclear war, the world knew the dangers, and so much effort was put into ensuring their elimination. But somehow, after the Cold War, the world forgot about the dangers. We thought the danger of nuclear war had gone away. When in actual fact it had not. And so if we look at it from today, we have seen a situation where we've got more nuclear armed states compared to before and the main reason for me, is that the world for some reason forgot the danger that was posed. And on our part as disarmament experts, I think we have the job of having to educate people once more, to remind them once again, of the danger that that is posed by the existence of nuclear war. So somewhere in between the Cold War and now, that message was no longer passed on to people. If I can put it that way. And I think, yeah, so I feel that was a failure, maybe from us disarmament experts, for some reason, that message was lost in between. And so we have to bring that message again once more.

Robin Möser: So could the discussion and the ratification of the TPNW be seen as such a renewed interest or focus on the issue? I mean it created a lot of support over the last years.

Walusungu Mtonga: Yes, yes, it did. It did actually with regard to the TPNW, the conversation has changed, you know. Prior to the TPNW, we began to educate policymakers, fellow physicians, and the general public at large of the medical consequences that would result from a nuclear war. They turned the conversation and began to talk about those effects, the environmental effects, the medical effects, and that sort of, you know, boosted the TPNW. So I do believe that the TPNW has changed the narrative, once more. Nuclear weapons are now back on the scene, people are beginning to realize how dangerous they are. And I think the war in Ukraine has made that even more evident to us today.

Robin Möser: Yeah, from a Western Europe perspective definitely, it brought is actually closer to us. And it's not a distant thing anymore like in North Korea. It's actually very close. Okay, but be that as it may, what do you see as the most important milestones for the field for nuclear non-proliferation field besides the renewed focus on disarmament by academics and civil society? What do you see as something that should be achieved in order to drive the issue further? What factors would you list in that endeavor?

Walusungu Mtonga: Okay, well, what I think would be an important milestone is to begin again, if we were to introduce this nuclear issue into our school syllabi. Yeah, you know, I believe, because oftentimes, you ask individuals about nuclear weapons, and they have no idea. I thought, for so long, I thought this was just an African thing. But I've met people in the USA, for example, who have no idea about their history, they've got no idea about the nuclear testing, and all those issues, they really have no idea. And I think we have to tackle the nuclear issue from the grassroots. Once you begin to educate our children, you know, about the grave danger that is posed by the existence of these weapons, and also to teach them about the nuclear testing that was done and the effects that was felt on individuals, some of whom are still alive today. So we need to begin to talk about these things at an early stage, we need to begin to incorporate them into our school programs. And for me, once that is done, I think we have public opinion on our side, because right now, if you sample out the majority of, for example, Americans, they will they will side with deterrence. I mean for them, it will make sense, because they don't understand the great danger that is posed with the existence of those weapons. And so for me a milestone would be to get public opinion on our side as disarmament experts.

Robin Möser: You actually did a good job in bringing the discussion to my next question. What can you tell me about the IPPNW? And how does the nuclear portfolio fit into your organization's mission?

Walusungu Mtonga: Okay, great. So, IPPNW when it comes to local affiliates, we have different names. So for example, the affiliate back home is called *Zambian Health Workers for Social Responsibility*. So as an affiliate, there are a number of local issues that we sort of work on, small arms, mostly gender-based violence. And then on an international scale, we do a lot of work with regard to nuclear weapons. So as I'm speaking to you right now, we actually have a workshop tomorrow with the Ministry of Defense. Yes, tomorrow itself. So I was actually running around earlier on. So, we do have a workshop with the Ministry of Defense. This workshop will be partnered with ICAN, we have the International Committee of the Red Cross Society. And the objective of this workshop is the ratification of the TPNW. Finally, we've been working around this with IPPNW central office for years, and it's been very difficult to get our ministries at the table. But what we did started last year, thanks to IPPNW central office, they helped us assemble a team. And so they invited ICAN, International Committee of

the Red Cross and there's one other civil society organization, it's called... I forgotten the name, but we've come together. And then finally, we have our Ministry at the table. So, as I'm speaking, tomorrow, we will have that workshop. And hopefully, we'll see through the ratification process, My country has signed the TPNW. And now we are hoping that they ratify. So, in that sense, IPPNW has aligned with our goals as *Zambian Health Workers for Social Responsibility*, which is promoting peace within our country, as well as within the region itself. So yeah, in that case, our goals are aligned with the central office.

Robin Möser: Okay. And because it's quite fitting, touching on the nature of that cooperation: Could you tell me more about how you interact with ICAN and other civil society organizations and NGOs working in the field? And can you list maybe your five closest partners in Africa and on a global scale?

Walusungu Mtonga: Okay, well, it's pretty much the same, both in Africa and on a global scale, because we've worked very closely with ICAN. We've worked with the Council of Churches in Zambia. Yes, that's the other group that is working with us. The International Committee of the Red Cross Society. And yes, the Disarmament and Arms Control, we are working with those as well. And we've been working with them. So yeah, those are the groups that we've worked with. And apart from that, the other organizations, of course, the WM, who we've worked with, as well, even though that's more of the international board, but on a local level we've worked with those are just mentioned, so that's ICAN, Disarmament and Arms Control, the Council of Churches in Zambia, and ICRC, which is the International Committee of the Red Cross Society. So those are the organizations that were there.

Robin Möser: How would you describe the cooperation with them? I mean, with ICAN, I assume it started around to TPNW campaign in collaboration with IPPNW, but could you elaborate a bit more on the process?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah. Yeah. So with ICAN obviously, ICAN is one of the goals, if not their major goal, is to see universalization of the TPNW. And so when we focused our efforts as a local affiliates towards ensuring, the initial goal was to ensure that my country attends the second meeting of state parties as a country that has ratified in New York last year. Yes. So, however, due to, you know, the ministry was able to dodge us a few times, each time we had proposed workshops, they would postponed such workshops. We couldn't meet the deadline. And so, initially it was just IPPNW with ICAN. And so we had to strengthen our efforts and that's how these other groups came in: the International Committee of the Red Cross Society, the Council of Churches in Zambia. That's how they came in, because most of those groups already had a relationship with the Ministry of Defense. So it was easier for them to bring them to the table than it was for us, as a coalition. Yes, so it was easier that way, because these were groups that had worked with the Ministry of Defense before, for example, Disarmament and Arms Control had worked with the Ministry of Defense many years ago on a treaty, it's called the Control Arms Treaty, many, many years ago. So, after we brought in these different groups, you know, this coalition, it became easy for us to bring the Ministry to the table. And so most of these civil society organizations that I've just mentioned, prior to the TPNW, we didn't do a lot of work together, but we came together, mainly because of the TPNW itself. That's what brought us together in a nutshell.

Robin Möser: And how do you perceive other experts besides the ones you mentioned, be they academics or think tanks. Are they useful for your work and do you cooperate with them? Do you draw upon their research outputs?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah. So, just recently, as a local affiliate, we were going through the Nuclear Famine Report, for example. We've had different seminars as well, that have been held with different experts within our local affiliates. So, what we usually do for our students is at the start of the year, we have what we call a medical student series. And so during that medical students series, we invite different experts. And these include academics, disarmament experts, who give different talks to our students. So, in that sense, we also have skills workshops, by the way, where we have, again, writers, disarmament experts who talk to our students and help us improve on our disarmament skills. So in that sense, yes, we do need all these actors, we do need people who can write, we do need people who can speak, so all these players are very important to us. And they've helped us grow as a movement.

Robin Möser: And is your advocacy work and the campaigning is it informed by scientific studies that are done by think tanks and researchers? Do you use these as credible sources?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah, I would say so. Because right now, even for my presentation tomorrow, at the workshop that we will be having, it'll be based on the Nuclear Famine Report. So, yeah, we have to provide proof, you know, especially in a setup where you have different academics and whatnot, they won't just take your word for it. So you have to provide proof of what you're saying. So, we actually have print, we printed out the Nuclear Famine Reports to give handouts during the workshop itself. And so yes, to answer your question, we do use such material, our work is evidence-based. So we have to provide the evidence.

Robin Möser: And you have touched upon this, but my interest would be how do you engage with think tanks and academics. Do you approach them? You said you invite them from time to time, but is this more Zambia domestically or do you also reach out to other think tanks in Africa or globally?

Walusungu Mtonga: In the IPPNW family itself we do have affiliates, for example, from Kenya, who have done a lot of work in this field, and oftentimes we do engage them. We do have other affiliates, for example, from the USA, who've done a lot of work as well in this field, and we do engage them as well. We do have a local approach to things as well as an international approach to things. Yeah. And we also have former IPPNW members within the country itself, those who were part of IPPNW and affiliated many years ago, but for some reason they left. Yeah. So oftentimes, we engage them as well to just get their expertise on certain issues.

Robin Möser: Could you mentioned briefly the partner in Kenya and the ones you cooperate with in the USA?

Walusungu Mtonga: So, in the USA, we cooperate with Physicians for Social Responsibility, there is Dr. Ira Helfand, who is usually a speaker. And the Kenyan affiliate, I forgot its actual name, it's IPPNW Kenya, but they have a specific name, which I've just forgotten.

Robin Möser: Does the name Victor Chelashow ring a bell?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yes, yes. So he's part of that. I'm guessing you've met him?

Robin Möser: We met virtually. I also interviewed him.

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah, he's a great guy. I actually took over from him in his position on the board. He was leaving and I was coming in.

Robin Möser: He was very happy to have organized the Congress in Mombasa, his homeland. He told me.

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah, he did a great job. He did a great job.

Robin Möser: Let's continue. How do you view ICAN? Did you find the corporation with them useful? I think IPPNW Zambia is an affiliate of ICAN, right?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah, we are partners here. Like I mentioned, I mean, there's been a lot of good work that ICAN is doing with the different campaigns. Every year, for example, they produce their nuclear spending report, which shows how much nuclear-armed states are spending on their nuclear weapons. Yeah. And that helps, really, because we've actually used that to campaign back home to say, look, there's a lot of money that has been wasted on developing and modifying nuclear weapons. When such money could be used to sort out the climate crisis, you know, to help us combat the climate crisis. And it has actually helped. And apart from that, they do, even though we haven't yet applied, I know, ICAN does provide some project grants, which we do plan on applying. And I think that will help us advance our work. Because, like I mentioned, it's a bit difficult back here in Zambia to talk about nuclear weapons, because that's not like the primary issue. People are going through so, so much, you know, and when you talk about nuclear weapons, they feel like it's not the most important thing. Yet, it's probably the gravest danger that we face today. And so funding is a bit difficult. You know, we've tried to approach different civil society groups and the concept of nuclear weapons, doesn't really motivate them that much. And so, yeah, we look to organizations like ICAN to help us with funding in such works.

Robin Möser: So just to interrupt, what you say that this is due to some African countries having more pressing, issues that they should tackle, like environmental degradation, climate impact and these kinds of things, so that nuclear issues are somewhat not on their radar on a day-to-day basis?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yes, most definitely. I mean, I'll give you a practical example. Last year we experienced one of the worst droughts that my country has seen in years. Okay. Currently, the country is experiencing up to eight to 10 hours of load shedding. Now what that means is for eight to 10 hours, you do not have access to electricity, because 80% of the country relies on hydroelectric power generation. And so when you have a drought, it affects your capacity to generate electricity. And so right now, most people are focusing on the current climate crisis. And they're like, look, we don't want to talk about nuclear weapons now. Let's address this issue. But then they don't realize that actually nuclear war would worsen the climate crisis. And that's something that we've been trying to raise awareness about, you know. A it's very difficult, it is very difficult. But we've seen some success when dealing with fellow medical doctors, those in the health professions, they seem to resonate a little bit more with our message as compared to the general public. And so yeah, that's a challenge that we have in our work.

Robin Möser: I see. And speaking of ICAN, do you think that through the debate around the TPNW and through IPPNW's interaction with ICANN, do you think that African perspectives are reflected in ICAN's campaign and decisions around the TPNW campaign? Are African voices heard more than before?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah, I mean, that's a very good question. That's a very good question. Well, I know historically, African nations have supported the TPNW. And most of them are in the process of

ratifying the Treaty. But whether their voices are louder now than before, I'm not so sure. I'm not so sure about that. I'm really not so sure.

Robin Möser: But do you feel that generally, through your engagement with the issue and the attention the issue has received, do you think that IPPNW's visibility has increased?

Walungu Mtonga: Yes. Most definitely, most definitely. Yeah. And again, historically, IPPNW led the efforts, you know, that ended the Cold War arms race, somewhere along the lines between that period. And now, I would say, as the nuclear issue sort of went away or at least people thought it went away. IPPNW sort of, you know, also went off the scene for a bit. But I think now, with the growing nuclear threats, IPPNW is beginning to sort of reemerge on the scene and their influence is beginning to go back where it used to be. So, yeah, in that sense, I think the visibility of white IPPNW has improved, or has become better now than it was a few years ago. So in that sense, yes.

Robin Möser: Do you think that generally, the debate about global nuclear disarmament includes a recognition of the gendered impacts of nuclear weapons that women are disproportionately more affected by conflict?

Walungu Mtonga: Well, yeah, of course, IPPNW hosts a number of virtual seminars on the effects of nuclear weapons. And that's one of the focuses: the gender issue. Yeah, we know that nuclear war or radiation sickness is more pronounced in women than in men. I mean, that is something that is spoken on within the network. And I'm not quite sure if that message has been well delivered to the general public. So I think that is an area that we should concentrate on. I mean, within the network, yes, I've heard that message being preached so many times, but I don't think we've used that message, you know, to raise awareness to the general public. And I think we should, I think it should be a message that we should begin to explore a bit

Robin Möser: Okay, closing in on my three final questions. The first one is how would you define impact in your field? And could you please give a concrete example of how you or IPPNW achieved impact?

Walungu Mtonga: Okay, so impact really, in my field, would be where we get policymakers at the table, which I believe through the example which I gave you, tomorrow, we will be hosting a TPNW workshop, I believe we've done that impact. You know, we've been seen, we have been given a chance to speak, it means that our work has been recognized. You know, it's been very difficult to bring different ministry officials from different ministries at the table. And so for me, that is impact when people are willing to listen to you. And the fact that we are medical doctors, I think it also gives us that extra bit of, you know, people get to believe what medical doctors say, it gives us that extra bit of credibility. So I think that's impact. I think we've, especially if we get this ratification through, I think we would have made a huge impact on the peace and security of our society.

Robin Möser: Yeah. Okay. Thank you. And related to that, how would you define success in your field? And can you give an example of success and how do you know something was successful from the perspective of your organization?

Walungu Mtonga: Okay, so success historically, again, my organization Health Workers for Social Responsibility, played a huge role in advancing the Control Arms Treaty in my country. Actually, my dad played a pivotal role in that process, so that the Treaty had been signed and ratified. That was success.

We were successful in ensuring that it was ratified. And we're hoping to be successful, even with the TPNW.

Robin Möser: What are your main expectations for the future of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament field? Where do you expect to develop the field into in the next 5, 10 or even 50 years?

Walusungu Mtonga: Okay, of course, I expect, first of all, to see a dramatic or drastic reduction in the current nuclear stockpiles that we have. But in so doing, we need more hands. We need more young input and get involved. Oftentimes, you know, especially as a student, I did a lot of work as a student, and most people look at me and say, I mean, you're young, you're supposed to be playing basketball. I mean, why are you doing this? You know, I think we need a renewed energy. In the next three or four years, we need to have young people taking up these roles, you know, in advancing disarmament. I mean, our disarmament experts, the current disarmament experts, you know, are aging, some of them no longer have the energy to keep advocating. So, we need the youth, the world now is becoming youthful and leadership is becoming youthful. So, for me in the next four to five years, I mean, I would call it a success if we saw young people join the field and actively take up these roles. Yeah, I think that's my response to that.

Robin Möser: So you would describe yourself as an optimist?

Walusungu Mtonga: Oh yes. I would, actually.

Robin Möser: That's good, because I consider you still being part of the youth. So passing on that message to your peers is very valuable.

Walusungu Mtonga: Yeah, it is, it is. I mean, I've learnt a lot a lot during my advocacy work. And I'm still learning. And that's one thing I appreciate at IPPNW, because what they usually do is, for most events, they pair up an old IPPNW member with a younger junior doctor or medical students. That way you sort of have that mentorship, you sort of learn from them and pick up a few things from them. Yeah. So recently in Seoul, I was in Seoul with the board chair, Dr. Ruth Mitchell. And I really liked a lot. You know, she taught me a lot of things that I didn't know. And, yeah, it's a way of passing down, you know, that experience too.

Robin Möser: I wouldn't know. And I know this in June or July, the global week of action on nuclear spending will take place, driven by ICAN. Are you involved these activities?

Walusungu Mtonga: Yes. So I am involved. Actually, I signed up for it. I signed up for the event. We have done something similar before, we had what we called a bike for the ban week in 2022, where we raise awareness through cycling around our cities. This time around, we are not quite sure. We need to brainstorm around what we actually want to do. We may still do a bike tour, because it worked out last time. You know, people were wondering why these guys cycling around what message do they bring? You know, it sort of gave us the attention that we needed. And yeah, so to answer your question, yes, I'm actively involved and I'm hoping to participate in that program,

Robin Möser: Will you go to Geneva?

Walusungu Mtonga: No. So I mean, I think there should be virtual options for participating. Yeah, not everyone will be in Geneva. But IPPNW will have a delegation in Geneva, that much I know. But I won't be part of that delegation.

Robin Möser: Okay. I think that exhausts my catalogue of questions. If you want to add something, just go ahead. If not, I will switch off the recording now.