

# BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE

Conference n°3 | Thursday 28 September / 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. / Plenary Room



Sundeep Waslekar, Jody Williams, Ulysse Gosset, Hadja Idrissa Bah and Stefan Löfven

A number of prestigious guests were invited to debate by Ulysse Gosset, journalist and editorial writer, who was pleased that there was almost perfect parity with three women and three men around the table. So much has happened in the world since the manifesto was drafted four years ago, starting with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which have turned the world upside down. As we prepare to celebrate the

80th anniversary of D-Day, is this manifesto still on the agenda?

In his book, *A World Without War*, Sundeep Waslekar used Albert Einstein's clock as a reference, counting down the seconds left to the Apocalypse, 100 seconds according to the famous physicist. *'Since then,'* said Sundeep Waslekar, *'scientists have got together and adjusted their calculation to 90 seconds. This is humanity's most peril-*

## MODERATOR

**Ulysse Gosset**, Journalist

## HOSTS

**Frédérique Bedos**, founding President of the NGO, the Imagine Project

**François-Xavier Priollaud**, Vice-President of the Normandy Region

## INTERVENANTS

**Hadja Idrissa Bah**, Activist and President of the Young Girls Leaders Club of Guinea, winner of the 2023 Freedom Prize

**Stefan Löfven**, Former Prime Minister of Sweden, Co-Chairman of the UN High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, Chairman of the Board of SIPRI

**Oleksandra Matviichuk**, Ukrainian lawyer and activist, Nobel Peace Prize 2022

**Vadym Omelchenko**, Ukraine ambassador to France

**Sundeep Waslekar**, Co-founder and Chairman of Strategic Foresight Group

**Jody Williams**, Nobel Peace Prize 1997

*ous moment. In three or four years they'll get together again and I predict they'll go down to 80 seconds to midnight'* he opined, decrying the focus of major powers like Russia, the – United States and China on developing cutting-edge missiles, even as the pandemic hit the entire planet.

## 'We are the present'

For her part, Oleksandra Matviichuk, 2022 Nobel Peace Prize winner and human rights lawyer, questioned the relevance of the current rule of law system, given the circumstances in which she is trying to do her job in Ukraine. *'The answer, she said, 'will define not just Ukraine's future but everyone's.'* The Russian invasion has pushed Ukrainians, *'ordinary people'*, she points out, *'to do extraordinary things'*, like pulling people out of ruins, helping people survive under shelling or breaking blockades to deliver humanitarian aid. In Ukraine, the war has brought back a well-known scourge of conflict zones: anti-personnel mines. Jody Williams, recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997 for her international campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines, is very familiar with the subject. *'We're the ones who allow our leaders to do this'*, she declared. *'I come from the United States, the most warlike and imperialist country, and we think we're a pacifist country, when we spend 57% of our annual national budget on the Pentagon and armaments, and barely 5% on education.'*

Hajda Idrissa Bah also deplored this lack of investment in education on the African continent, mainly in Guinea, where she has set up the Club of Young Girls Leaders of Guinea. *'Famine, lack of hospitals and lack of education are pushing these young people to cross the Mediterranean to come to Europe'*, she noted sadly. *'I reject the notion that we're the future of a country, no, we're the present.'*

Stefan Löfven, former Prime Minister of Sweden, is committed to the defence of effective multilateralism. At a time when the right of veto at the UN has become

## The Russian invasion has pushed Ukrainians, 'ordinary people', she points out, to do extraordinary things

Oleksandra Matviichuk

almost systematic, and many countries are asking to be included, does the organisation still have the capacity to reform itself? *'We need to switch to collective security; today's security being built on continuous military spending is not sustainable security. We need to come together under the UN flag and bridge the gaps between north and south'* he replied, adding the need to improve representativeness within the Security Council, for it to have more parity because *'a large part of the world is not represented as a permanent member.'* Stefan Löfven also proposed a moratorium on nuclear weapons by 2045, almost a century after of the concept of *'mutually assured destruction'*, believing that it should be replaced by a concept of *'mutually assured survival.'*



Sundeep Waslekar



Oleksandra Matviichuk

## War is not inevitable

Ulysse Gosset noted, before giving the floor to Sundeep Waslekar, that while there is indeed a general public awareness of the climate, there is none for nuclear power. Yet Sundeep Waslekar warns of the consequences of a global nuclear war that would come on like a heart attack, suddenly, whereas the climate crisis acts like a long and painful cancer. At the United Nations, 22 out of 139 countries have abandoned their military defences, more than 10%, and 122 voted in 2017 to ban nuclear weapons. But with the advent of artificial intelligence in every sphere of the system, killer robots are now emerging as a new threat on top of the nuclear one. Jody Williams expressed deep concern about this, especially as within the UN, if all but one country agrees to stop progress, then they will continue to develop these new technologies. But Hadja Idrissa Bah was optimistic. In her view, young people have the power to advocate and oppose armament, particularly if the UN proposes greater inclusiveness within the Security Council. Ulysse Gosset insisted on this point, arguing that in some African countries, young people represent up to 70% of the population. He went on to quote a passage from Sundeep



Watch the full debate on YouTube

Waslekar's book, *'War is not inevitable, it is a choice.'* To which Stefan Löfven added that we need to work on preventing wars by preventing situations that can lead to conflict. At the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), of which he is a member, he assured us that resources are being deployed to try to understand the deep roots of new conflicts. *'The African continent will continue to grow and reach almost the same level as Asia. So, if we mobilise the people in favour of peace, that can change the mindset of a dictator.'*

***I reject the notion that we're the future of a country, no, we're the present.***

Hajda Idrissa Bah

In conclusion, Oleksandra Matviichuk stated her belief that the current, ambitious challenge is to reform the system of international peace and security, and that young people have a very important role to play. As a Ukrainian, she added that a victory for Ukraine is necessary: *'This could lead to a democratic future for Russia and would impact the whole world.'* For her part, Jody Williams asked the young people in the room to try to change this world, *'even for those you don't like.'* Hadja Idrissa Bah ended with a message of hope: *'A world without war is indeed possible. We young people are ready and equipped to go for it and take action – just give us the space.'*

## ZOOMING IN ON

# Vadym Omelchenko

Ukraine ambassador to France

'Ladies, gentlemen, dear students, dear friends, thank you for this opportunity to be with you today and to participate in your very interesting and informative exchanges. Mr Waslekar, you said that we have 100 seconds left before the apocalypse according to Einstein's clock. Ukraine, my people, are already in the apocalypse. The question is whether this is reversible or not, whether peace can be restored or not. When you say that we must lay down our arms and demand that dictators disarm, my people have never wanted anything but peace. Yet the barbarians have razed our towns to the ground, destroyed our educational facilities, almost 1,000 of them. And now your peers, the Ukrainian students, are on the frontline putting up resistance, including 40,000 girls. Forgive me, but Ukraine is the first to want and seek peace, but on what terms? There are many formulas for finding peace, and we in Ukraine have our own. Let me read you some of the key points:



Vadym Omelchenko and Hervé Morin

- Radioactive and nuclear safety
- Food safety
- Energy security
- Release of prisoners and deportees (19,000 Ukrainian children have been deported according to the UN)
- Implementation of the United Nations Charter and restoration of the integrity of Ukraine and world order
- Withdrawal of Russian troops and cessation of hostilities
- Restoration of justice (80,000 war crimes in Ukraine according to some experts. Should we forgive this?)
- Preventing the escalation of war and repeated aggression
- Fixing the escalation of war.

***You said that we have 100 seconds left before the apocalypse according to Einstein's clock. Ukraine, my people, are already in the apocalypse***

Vadym Omelchenko

I repeat, Ukraine is the first country to want and seek peace. Thank you very much.

# Manifesto for peace



The Normandy Manifesto for Peace is an initiative of the Strategic Foresight Group and the Normandy Region, inspired by the Russell-Einstein Manifesto of 1955. At the height of the Cold War, mathematician Bertrand Russell and physicist Albert Einstein published a plea highlighting the dangers of nuclear weapons. Supported by several renowned scientists, they called for peaceful solutions to international conflicts by challenging people's consciences with the following question: 'Are we going to end the human race or will humanity give up war?'. In the face of new threats to humanity in an increasingly uncertain world, this question unfortunately remains relevant.

In 2019, Denis Mukwege, Nobel Peace Prize 2018, Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Prize 2011, Mohamed El Baradei, Nobel Peace Prize 2005, Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize 1997, Anthony Grayling, phi-



Sign the Manifesto for Peace online

osopher and Sundeep Waslekar, President of the Strategic Foresight Group, wrote the Normandy Manifesto for Peace and called on everyone to take action for a sustainable peace, from citizens to representatives of civil society and governments. Indeed, the Manifesto stressed that war is a choice. If men and women everywhere become aware of their common humanity, they would make the right decision to cooperate for a better world.

Five years later, Jody Williams and Sundeep Waslekar were again present at the Forum this year, inviting every citizen of the world to take ownership of this text by signing and sharing it.



**Jody Williams**

I'm very impressed by the way that Normandy is taken on this issue of peace and all of the ways it is engaging. It's a lot of effort, a lot of commitment, and I think it's awesome!

**Pramila Patten**

For me, the best protection against sexual violence is peace. We find ourselves with the highest number of conflicts since World War II, so I think this Forum is very important.



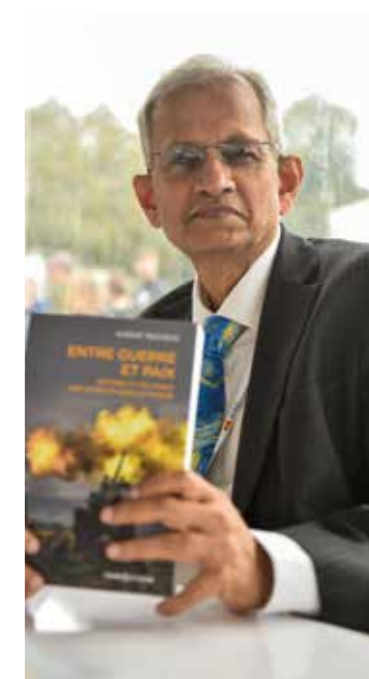
**Jean-Pierre Raffarin**

It's very important to understand that peace is work, that it requires resistance, willpower and above all, continuity. The Normandy Region created this dynamic, bravo!



**Nathan Law**

I think there is a particular historic value and importance of having a peace Forum in Normandy. It reminds all of us how precious and important peace is.



**Sundeep Waslekar**

What Normandy is doing is of tremendous historic significance. The region is taking active part in promoting peace. And I think it is really necessary for all citizens in the world to promote this work of Normandy for Peace.



**Emilie Aubry**

We listen to the world and we meet the world! This Forum which is taking place in Caen is very coherent. We're in a place that has been marked by war, and where we're trying to understand today's wars in order to invent tomorrow's peace.