

International Meeting Session III  
2025 World Conference Against A and H Bombs

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Dear friends and colleagues,

We are truly living in unprecedented times, in what seems like a parallel universe where people have forgotten the horrors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki from 80 years ago; where we have forgotten the promises of the post-second world war era, when global powers moved to prevent any future war; and where nuclear-armed states in 1968 signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty included article 6 – with a commitment to good faith efforts towards complete nuclear and conventional disarmament.

Instead, we are now witnessing the unprecedented proliferation of nuclear weapons and indeed active preparations for nuclear war. From the nuclear modernization program underway by all nuclear-armed states to the expansion of nuclear sharing to Belarus and a return of US nuclear weapons the Lakenheath Airbase in the UK, global leaders are driving the nuclear arms race to new heights during a global climate of unprecedented threats. Earlier this year, we witnessed the US and Israel – two nuclear armed states – attack the nuclear facilities of Iran under the guise of preventing proliferation – despite the fact their actions make the likelihood of Iran deciding to create a nuclear weapon more likely.

In fact, just a week before the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversaries, Japan and the United States – the only victim and aggressor countries of the use of nuclear weapons in wartime – held discussions on extended nuclear deterrence where they discussed a scenario in which the US military would use its nuclear weapons again (<https://japantoday.com/category/politics/japan-u.s.-discussing-scenario-for-nuclear-weapons-use-sources>). This comes on top of the growing tension in East Asia and in Europe where the Western Alliance, including global NATO, has set the stage for military confrontation with their perceived enemies, and nuclear-armed states Russia, North Korea, and China. Similar discussions are underway in South Korea, too.

As global tensions continue to rise – now many years underway – we would be wise to recall the haunting quote of Albert Einstein: “I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.” – underlining that any global war will likely become a nuclear war and cause mass destruction for the entire planet.

The tendency of global leaders is to take advantage of the ongoing geopolitical shifts to achieve strategic advantage through competition, in the process eroding international law, weakening human rights, destroying the environment, and driving us closer and closer to nuclear war. Nationalism and authoritarianism are on the rise and global inequality accelerating.

Our struggles for nuclear abolition, an end to war, a just green transition, and global cooperation go hand-in-hand. They are part of the same struggle and we must address them together, on a global scale - but also from the grassroots level up.

To do so, we need to shift the paradigm on security – away from militarized, nuclear-reliant, and zero-sum game understandings of security to an inclusive, human- and planet-centered, and nuclear-free definition of common security.

Common security thinking understands the interlinkages of our struggles across silos and across borders – the realization that we are in this struggle together and can only achieve security together, not against one another. It is a tool that directly challenges that status quo of militarization and nationalism; a dismantling of the myths of deterrence theory and military advantage. And if it is embraced, both within our societies and in political spaces, it holds the potential to facilitate nuclear disarmament through the framework of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In the current geopolitical climate, nuclear-armed states and their allies make empty gestures and statements toward nuclear abolition – they attend the commemoration ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, they attend yearly NPT meetings, and they proclaim a vague long-term goal for nuclear abolition – all while increasing their own nuclear capacities, justifying it by emphasizing the threats they supposedly feel from their adversaries in this era of strategic competition. As long as that competition continues, nuclear abolition remains but a distant dream to our political leaders, one that perhaps they never really intended to reach to begin with – instead driving the nuclear arms race onward, somehow aiming to achieve a military and nuclear strategic advantage.

Common Security reveals the fallacy of this way of thinking – history has shown us that arms races, nuclear or conventional, decrease the overall security of all actors, and indeed the entire planet. Indeed, it is impossible to realistically achieve a strategic advantage and to increase the security of one bloc of states against another through nuclear modernization. From the common security lens, we can also see that the ongoing nuclear arms race and strategic competition will necessarily deny our societies the things that really make us safe – funding for a green transition, public education, quality work for all, social safety nets, and strong international institutions to name a few – while increasingly the likelihood of violent conflict and nuclear weapon use.

The alternative offered by common security is trust-building, solidarity, and diplomacy and dialogue – fostered by and through disarmament procedures, especially the abolition of nuclear weapons. It is a concept that unites our all-too-often-divided movements to push for an overhaul of international and interstate relations.

This vital shift to a focus on common and human security will support the testimonies of the *Hibakusha* – our most valuable resource in nuclear abolition - by re-centering human security and the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapon usage. Rather than priority being given to ‘national security’ doctrines which ignore human security by focusing on militarized and political security, common security is based in the individual’s inalienable right to feel safe and secure – to have a freedom from fear and a freedom from want. We know that this

type of security is not possible as long as nuclear weapons, which are indiscriminate and have widespread consequences far beyond any military targets, exist.

Moreover – history shows us that disarmament and trust-building are interlinked and mutually reinforcing processes. The reductions in nuclear arsenals and banning of entire classes of nuclear-capable missiles during the Cold War served to reduce tensions between the Eastern and Western blocs. Common Security thinking can and must lead to a new wave of mutual reductions in nuclear weapons and trust-building and verification measures. Through the rebuilding of trust and reduction of global geopolitical tensions, the doors open up to new possibilities for nuclear disarmament and push us back from the brink of nuclear war.

This is an essential shift – from the vicious cycle of militarism, nuclear threats, and increasing competition, to a virtuous cycle of disarmament, trust-building, and cooperation. We see how badly this shift is needed when we look at the NPT meetings today – opposing nuclear blocs launch accusations at each other, for their perceived breaches of international law and lack of good faith discussions. Imagine what the potential for nuclear disarmament would be if instead of accusations, opposing military and political blocs could come together over the shared vision of nuclear abolition, acknowledging that the mere presence of nuclear weapons puts their citizens at greater risk. Imagine if these political and diplomatic leaders acknowledged that it is possible to build trust with one's adversaries, to build in verification measures – such as those included in the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – to ensure that all states eliminate their nuclear arsenals entirely.

Common Security is not separate from the TPNW – indeed, the TPNW is a treaty based in Common Security thinking. But our world leaders have not yet adopted this thinking, and choose instead to attack the treaty or ignore it entirely.

And that is why it is so important to use the language, rhetoric, and concepts of Common Security in convincing our governments to sign and ratify the TPNW – and why it is important that this be a truly global and diverse movement.

The Global South in many ways is already taking the lead on Common Security. From Colombia's Total Peace policy, to the Hague Group's defense of international law, and of course the overwhelming ratification of the TPNW by states in the Global South – these geopolitical changes already underway hold a chance of helping to reshape how we view security. But of course there is still much work to be done – and this work must be led by global civil society, with support from and cooperation with governments where possible.

Firstly, we must continue the trend of bringing movements together, revealing the interlinkages of our work, our common goals, and acknowledging that only through convergence can we hope to solve the overlapping crises that we all are facing. We have seen a historic uniting of trade unions, human rights organizations, climate activists, and peace activists around the topic of common security and nuclear disarmament, including in the July 28 publication of a joint statement by the International Peace Bureau, International Trade Union Confederation, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Greenpeace, Oxfam, and 250.org which highlights the need for universal ratification of

TPNW on the occasion of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Now we must bring our coalitions forward for joint actions and campaigns.

Secondly, we must center peace education and outreach. As we have done this past year, this importantly includes the spreading of the Hibakusha testimonies – as well as those of all nuclear survivors from Kazakhstan, Mā'ohi Nui, the Marshall Islands, Algeria, and beyond – as widely as possible – to make known the world over the inhumanity of nuclear weapons and war, and how close we are to again seeing such disastrous events play out before our eyes. We must make clear that our struggle for nuclear abolition is a struggle based in our shared humanity of the peoples of the world and is strongly linked with the struggles for climate justice, for greater global equality, for workers' and human rights, and to paint a clear and coherent picture of what the alternatives are. We did so in Berlin this with the vital visit of our Gensuikyo colleagues and Kunihiro Sakuma-san and where similar events were held in cities around Europe and beyond.

And thirdly, we must take joint action – altogether. Yes, pushing our governments to sign and ratify the TPNW, but also taking mass action for a larger geopolitical shift – away from confrontation and militarism, away from competition and zero-sum thinking, and away from deterrence – towards common security, towards cooperation, trust-building, and disarmament. Towards the centering of human security. This will only come from a shift first within civil society and pressure directly on up to decision-makers and global leaders. And it is our responsibility to join together to do so – building on the coalition forming around common security and nuclear disarmament, building on the education and messages of survivors.

Together we can redefine security away from nuclear deterrence and put greater pressure on our governments to join the TPNW and global disarmament networks. Together with the global south, with climate groups, trade unions, human rights activists, and beyond, our strength and impact is greater.

We already have the answers for nuclear abolition – what is left is the continued work. Let Common Security be one more tool in our collective toolbox for nuclear disarmament. Let us raise our voices together for a paradigm shift in security and global relations – one that emphasizes clearly that nuclear weapons cannot and will not make us safe and therefore must be eliminated from every corner of the planet – for a new security where the devastation of nuclear weapons that was displayed clearly 80 years ago in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is never again repeated.

Thank you.