

International Meeting Session I
2025 World Conference against A and H Bombs

Park Jung-soon
Hibakusha of Hiroshima/
Busan Branch, Korea Atomic Bomb Victims Association
ROK

My name is Park Jung-soon and I am from South-Korea.

Seven years ago, in 2017, I took part in this World Conference for the first time. I am very honored to participate in this conference again. I feel blessed for my great age, am I right?

I was born in 1934 in Nagoya where I grew up until I was fifth grader in elementary school. I heard that my father came over to Japan at about 16 years of age. He had obtained information about Japan from a teacher who taught him calligraphy at a library in his village where he studied after graduating elementary school. Later, at age 25, he got married with a woman from South Korea. After the birth of my elder sister and elder brother, my father came to take his wife and children to a new place.

Then the war began. The imports of cotton decreased and the knitted fabric factory where my father worked had to close. Our family moved to Osaka. My parents looked for jobs but without much success. Our living conditions got worse and worse. It was in that period that we met an acquaintance from Hiroshima. He told us that we could make a living and eat sufficiently if we went to Hiroshima where he lived and introduced my father to work at a weapon factory there. My father then left us and went to live alone in a tenement house in Uchikoshi-machi, Hiroshima City where groups of Koreans lived collectively.

In the morning of August 6, the day the atomic bomb was dropped on us, my father had gone to the factory and 6 members of our family, including my mother, sisters and me, stayed inside the house. We were taken by surprise by a flash like a lightening of thunder. At the next moment, blast and tremendous sound came and shook the whole house, lifting it upward. The house then collapsed and fell down and

all of us thought that we would die under the weight of collapsed house. It all happened in a matter of few seconds and we were unable to move our bodies.

I opened my eyes and in the dark I found myself under a thick heavy beam, pressing my head and my hips very badly. My mother pulled my hands and helped me to crawl out of the collapsed walls. I was wounded in my head, which was bleeding heavily. I still have the scar of that wound on my head. I got up on my feet and looked around me. The house next to ours had also fell down and everybody was fussing around. Many people in our neighborhood were running away, some of them badly injured, crying or shouting. The whole village was falling apart.

Our family fled the village with our neighbors.

On the way, we saw people lying on the ground, people in pain crying or shouting, people pulling carts carrying wounded or dead people. People whose back was covered with burns and suffering in pain. It was a hell on earth just like I saw in a cartoon. When we reached at last a bamboo wood in Ohshiba, many people already gathered there, and although they were bleeding from big or small wounds, they were happy to see each other being alive, because many were also dying in agony.

My father came back in the afternoon. He said that we should go back to Korea as soon as we could, but it would take some days. As we could not stay long in the bamboo forest, we went to the family house of my father's Japanese acquaintance in the countryside 4 days later. Around the end of January next year, we were finally able to get on the ship to go back to Korea. After several days spent on the ship, we took a train to the home village of our parents in Chungcheongnam-do. It was December 30 and the following day was the new year day according to lunar calendar. Korea was a country I had never known! Everything I saw or heard was unknown to me. The life there was so hard as we did not speak the local language at all.

We had little money either. Mother changed the little Japanese yen we had to Korean currency, 3000 yen per person, which mother gave to us children. Our parents were very anxious about our financial situation. We had no house where our family could safely live. My younger sisters were sent separately to our parents' relatives while my

elder sister and I went to work in a paper factory in Yesan, 15km away.

Maybe because of atomic bombing, our parents had poor health and could not live normally like others. Mother had a stillbirth in March, had no appetite and was sick for a long time. She could not tell her suffering to anybody, because if they knew that she was a hibakusha, people would treat her as if she was carrying infectious disease, so she kept her mouth shut. She repeated as a mantra “it is the A-bomb’s fault!”, but she could not go to hospital. She only infused some medicines herself to ease her sufferings.

One year later, my elder sister got married and left us. I continued to go to work, having a heavy burden to help my family. The following year, I rented a small house in the countryside and gathered my family to live together again. In 1950, June 25 Korean War began and father died. I was filled with strong anger, hatred, regrets and sorrow. I could not help crying, “if it were not A-bombing, I would not be so sad and unhappy”.

Mother passed away after suffering from diseases painfully for many years. She did not stop murmuring how bitterly she resented the atomic bombing, thinking everything went wrong because of the bomb. I guess she would have lived much longer and would not have suffered that much if she had not been affected by the bomb.

As for me, I suffered from the two wars in most important period for my life. I am now 92 years old. I know sorrow, pain, regret and anger I felt when I lost my parents and siblings by the atomic bombing. They were surely too young to die. And I could not tell anybody what I felt. I have kept it in my small heart for 80 years.

Today, the children of A-bomb survivors are suffering from various diseases and mental pain. I must not keep silence as I used to do until now, I thought.

The US that made A-bomb attacks and Japan that conducted the war of aggression must admit their responsibility for the damage caused to the Korean hibakusha and their children, should make an apology and provide compensation to them.

Since my life is not long, as a first generation hibakusha, I will try to help the second

and third generations of hibakusha in any way I can. For this reason, I have decided to participate as a plaintiff in the International People's Tribunal on the Atomic Bombings to be held in the US in 2026 to make the US accountable for the atomic bombings in 1945.

I earnestly hope and wish that such activity will help achieve a world without nuclear weapons and without war for our children and grandchildren.

Let us work together for peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Let us achieve a nuclear weapon-free world.

I believe that we will succeed for sure!

Thank you