

**Forum I: Dialogue between governments and citizens for a nuclear weapon-free,
peaceful and just world**
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Russia's aggression in Ukraine and killing in Gaza continues, especially the starvation of the people in Gaza and the killing at relief material distribution centers is unacceptable. There is also growing concern about the escalation and expansion of the conflict, with Israel's attack on Iran and the Trump administration's defense of Israel and the U.S. own attack on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Above all, in the midst of these wars and conflicts, threats to use nuclear weapons are repeatedly made, and we are facing a critical situation that is said to be on the brink of nuclear war.

We are strongly indignant at the arrogance of these great powers. These powers should take the lead in observing and implementing the UN Charter, which defines the international order of peace, including the abolition of nuclear weapons, the use and threat of force, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and sovereign equality.

The third use of nuclear weapons must never be allowed. The abolition of nuclear weapons has become an increasingly urgent task.

The world's leading trend toward realizing this goal is the trend of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). At the Meeting of the States Parties in March of this year, the treaty was described as a "beacon of hope in turbulent times" and as playing an important role in the revival of the international order based on the UN Charter.

Around the world, people are also rising up. Five million people in 2,000 locations in the U.S. and abroad are protesting Trump's "America First" and "divide and conquer" rhetoric. The people of South Korea have defeated the South Korean president's plan for martial law. The world today is not a world where the dictatorships of major powers have their way.

In Japan, we have been campaigning for a nuclear-weapon-free Japan to get the government to join the TPNW.

As the A-bombed nation, the Japanese government should take the lead in achieving the elimination of nuclear weapons. While it claims that the abolition of nuclear weapons is a common goal, it is complicit in the U.S. nuclear strategy and adheres to nuclear deterrence. The government has voted against the UN resolution on TPNW for seven consecutive years, and the countries opposed to the treaty are the nuclear weapon states, NATO members, and South Korea and Japan only in Asia. Japan has even refused to participate as observers in the state party meetings. If Japan joins the treaty, the abolition of nuclear weapons in the world will make great progress. The Japanese movement is responsible for achieving this task.

Then there is the issue of East Asia. In East Asia, we have North Korea, which is developing nuclear weapons and missiles, and China, which is building up its nuclear arsenal and making repeated military threats over the Taiwan issue and other territorial disputes. The strengthening of the military bloc has increased confrontation, division, and tensions in the region, raising the risk of war or even nuclear war.

The Japanese government is itself on the side of increasing this danger, yet it justifies its clinging to nuclear deterrence by saying that "the security environment is severe," and it is pursuing a policy of massive military expansion and the creation of a war-fighting nation.

Japan has been made a frontline base for the U.S. policy of containment of China. It has also promised to engage the Self-Defense Forces in the event of an emergency in the Taiwan Strait. And the government is promoting a massive military buildup, especially in Okinawa and the Nansei Islands, and the integration of U.S. and Japanese command and control system. Prime Minister Ishiba, at the behest of the U.S., is aiming to increase military spending to 5% of GDP and wants to introduce nuclear sharing with the U.S.

Japan, both as an A-bombed nation and as a country with a constitution that renounces war, should resolve disputes through dialogue and diplomacy rather than by military means. Japan should play its role as the A-bombed nation to prevent nuclear war in the region. In this regard, I am convinced that Japan's participation in the TPNW will lead to a change in Japan's security policy and will contribute to the realization of a nuclear weapon-free peaceful East Asia.

In order to bring Japan into the TPNW, we have been campaigning to inform the public about the A-bomb experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to enhance public opinion that "peace and security cannot be protected by nuclear weapons" and to make it a people's choice to realize Japan joining the TPNW". The basic activities of the campaign are spreading A-bomb testimonies through A-bomb exhibitions and hibakusha's testimonies, signature collection and having local governments adopt opinion notes to urge the Japanese government to join the Treaty.

The award of Nobel Peace Prize to Nihon Hidankyo at the end of last year drastically increased people's support and interest in our campaign. We have received a great response from the public through our street actions and signature collection.

The number of signatures reached 1.78 million. The local governments that have adopted resolutions calling on the government to join the TPNW have reached 41% or 726 of all municipalities. According to a recent public opinion survey, 73% of respondents said Japan should ratify the treaty, 55% said nuclear umbrella is unnecessary, which is much more than 38% saying it is necessary.

In the election campaigns since last year, we worked so hard to make it an election agenda, asking the public "Do you choose nuclear sharing or the TPNW?" and calling for "Japan's participation in the TPNW". In the recent election in July, I believe that through our campaign on nuclear issues, we were able to contribute to making the Liberal Democratic Party and Komei party government lose the majority in the both houses of the parliament.

However, there is still more work to be done. In the recent election, a winning candidate said, "Japan should go nuclear. It is safe and cheaper". Many people voted for that candidate. We must do more to raise public opinion that nuclear weapons cannot protect our safety and that Japan should join the TPNW.

On July 23, Nihon Hidankyo (Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations), Gensuikyo (Japan Council against A and H Bombs), and Gensuikin (Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs) issued a joint appeal on the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings. This appeal received a great response from the media and the public. It calls for a national movement to inherit and spread the testimonies of Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Spreading inhumanity of nuclear weapons through the real damage of the atomic bombings will be a major force in overcoming nuclear deterrence, and will help to drive the nuclear weapon states and other countries depending on nuclear umbrella into corner.

I was moved by the words of Mr. Terumi Tanaka when we issued this appeal. He said, "Spreading the Hibakusha's testimonies is not just a matter of passing it on to young people and the next generation, but it is a task that must be carried out forever until nuclear weapons are eliminated. I felt that this is a challenge for humanity. We are determined to do our utmost to spread the real damage of the atomic bombings through Hibakusha's testimonies to every corner of Japan and to develop a national movement which the people of Japan will take over.

So far, in cooperation with Nihon Hidankyo, we organized the Hibakusha speaking tour with movements of Spain and France to raise public awareness about inhumanity of nuclear weapons and urge their governments to join the TPNW. We hope to expand this collaboration further with peace movements and governments overseas. And we propose to organize an international joint action in New York on the occasion of the NPT Review Conference next spring. Of course, the cooperation of the U.S. movement is essential, but we hope that the peace movements around the world will bring their efforts together to put pressure on the nuclear weapon states and the countries under the nuclear umbrella.