

March 1 Bikini Day Gensuikyo National Conference
Workshop II: For a nuclear weapon-free peaceful Asia

For a nuclear weapon-free peaceful Asia – Japan should join the TPNW!

Yayoi Tsuchida

Japan Council against A and H Bombs (Gensuikyo)

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) came into effect on January 22 this year, making nuclear weapons illegal for the first time in human history. The Japanese movement against A and H bombs started in the wake of the Bikini incident and has upheld a goal of banning these weapons from the beginning. It is deeply emotional to have Bikini Day under the new circumstances of nuclear weapons beginning to end.

On that day, being delighted with the entry into force of the treaty, we carried out standings and signature campaigns at more than 150 locations nationwide. Actions are taking place around the world. We are encouraged by widespread support for the treaty and increasing momentum for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In the UN General Assembly held in 2020, a resolution of "Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons" was adopted by support of 130 countries. This number accounts for two-thirds of the UN member states, which shows that support for the treaty is the overwhelming majority of driving force to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, 42 countries are opposed to this resolution. They are nuclear weapon states, NATO member states, and allies of the United States such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia. Except for nuclear powers, Japan and South Korea are the only countries in Asia that oppose the treaty. Despite being isolated, they say they are not legally binding unless they join the treaty.

Asia is at risk of nuclear annihilation due to their clinging to and reliance on nuclear weapons. Above all, in Northeast Asia, the US-North Korea conflict intensified over North Korea's nuclear issue, and in 2017 it reached the brink of a nuclear war. The historic summits between North and South Korea and the US and North Korea seemed to bring great progress to the denuclearization and peace of the Korean

Peninsula, but the future of solving this problem is uncertain, and the region is still a nuclear flash point.

Furthermore, what is currently putting Asia in immediate danger is the conflicts and the arms race between nuclear powers, especially US-China hegemonic rivalry and Japan's dangerous moves to help the US as its ally.

Claiming sovereignty over the South China Sea and the East China Sea, China is reinforcing its effective control in violation of international law, such as the construction of military bases. On Feb. 1, the Chinese government enforced a new coast guard law that included unilateral expansion of China's territory and strengthening of authority such as the use of weapons, escalating its hegemonic acts. In response, the US, along with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, has conducted joint military exercises even with nuclear-powered aircraft carriers being dispatched. Based on the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" strategy, they are strengthening to lay siege to China from Japan through Southeast Asia to India.

We must shift this situation toward the abolition of nuclear weapons that ensures the survival of humankind and the realization of a nuclear weapon-free peaceful Asia. To this end, we have an effective means in our hand. It is the TPNW. The treaty presents the world a common alternative to shift from "security depending on nuclear weapons" to "security of a world without nuclear weapons." The struggle to make governments to join the treaty is crucial especially in nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-umbrella states. We must bury their false idea of "protecting world peace and security with nuclear deterrence."

On October 29 last year, we launched a signature campaign to urge the Government of Japan to sign and ratify the TPNW. This initiative has great significance both internationally and for peace and security of Japan and Asia.

While the Japanese government said that it would lead the abolition of nuclear weapons as the only atomic-bombed country, the reality is that it has become a mouthpiece for nuclear-weapon states.

The Japanese resolution "Joint Courses of Action and Future-Oriented Dialogue towards a World without Nuclear Weapons", submitted to the UN General Assembly in 2020, distorted the agreements of the NPT's past Review Conferences and deleted the word "implementation" of the agreements. It received

strong criticism from the international community. As a result, compared to the status of adoption on the Japan's resolution in the UN General Assembly in 2019, the number of co-sponsoring countries decreased by 18; that of supporters decreased by 10; and that of abstentions increased by 14. Even some of nuclear weapon states and their allies have abstained due to Japan's extraordinary subordination to the US. In talks with Japan's Foreign Ministry I attended in early February, they admitted that the removal of the word "implementation" was to get the US and the United Kingdom to become co-sponsors of the resolution. It is a shame that the government throws away the authority of the A-bombed country and cannot conduct diplomacy as an independent country in subordination to the US.

Japan is also playing a bad role in US-China wargames. The Armitage-Nye Report issued in December last year highly praised the effort of former Prime Minister Abe, urges Japan as an equal partner to strengthen cooperation with the US to counter threats of China and North Korea and engage in the Taiwan issue. The Suga government has not made any diplomatic efforts that Japan should make. Instead, it agreed with US President Biden to apply Article 5 of the Security Treaty (Japan's Defense) to the Senkaku Islands. This way leads to making Japan a war-fighting country and endangers peace and security of Japan and Asia with a possible nuclear war.

ICAN Executive Director Beatrice Finn said that If Japan joins the TPNW, it could have a tremendous impact on the world; that decision would trigger other countries following nuclear-weapon states to reject nuclear weapons. I am convinced that if we can establish a government that will sign and ratify the treaty through enhancing public opinion, it will bring a major shift to Japan's dependence on nuclear deterrence as well as security policy, and contribute significantly to peace and security of Asia.

Starting the signature campaign, I realized that there is widespread interest and support for the treaty among the people. A total of 137 prominent people from all over the country, including world-famous musician Ryuichi Sakamoto and former Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka, have become joint proposers of the campaign. In opinion polls, 72% of the population said the government should join the TPNW. So far, 153 local governments have adopted resolutions to urge the Japanese government to join the treaty.

The world is now facing serious crises such as the corona pandemic, nuclear weapons and climate change, but at the same time, I think we are in an era where there is hope for change if the grassroots movements of the world work in solidarity. It is greatly encouraged that the American people removed President Trump from office and the Biden administration is at least moving in the direction of international cooperation. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council, which must have a major responsibility for international peace and security, are the five nuclear powers (P5). So, if they continue to turn their backs on the TPNW, they will face a great deal of criticism and challenges from the world.

There is a strong trend in Asia seeking non-nuclear weapons and peace, represented by the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, Mongolian nuclear-weapon-free zone, joint efforts of Japanese and Korean citizens, and increasing signature and ratification of the treaty in Asia.

I conclude my presentation, expressing the determination of the Japanese movement: We will develop the movement to promote the effectiveness of the TPNW and contribute to creating a nuclear weapon-free peaceful Asia and the world. Let's work together.