

August 8 Forum

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In this World Conference, we renew our determination to work to make the year 2020 a decisive turn toward the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

Why is 2020 so crucial? It marks the 75th year since the atomic bombing. Please imagine those who died in agony and those whose lives have been full of suffering. Their desire is to “get nuclear weapons abolished in their lifetime”.

Focusing on the 5-year NPT Review Cycle, we have challenged nuclear weapon states to fulfill their obligations under Article 6 and under agreements to abolish their nuclear arsenals. The NPT Review Conference is due in April 2020. The nuclear weapon states are trying to forgo the implementation of their obligations, saying that these obligations are “way behind the times”. This backward step must not be allowed.

Above all, the danger of the use of nuclear weapons is being heightened. The Trump Administration set out a new “Nuclear Posture Review”, aimed at developing small nuclear weapons and lowering the threshold of nuclear weapons use. It also unilaterally pulled out of the INF Treaty and the Iran Nuclear Deal (JPCOA). In response, Russian President Putin suggested the development of new-types of nuclear weapons and missile deployment in its allies’ territories. China, too, is engaged in increasing its nuclear warheads. These developments are eliciting growing concern about a resurgence of the past nuclear arms race between super powers.

Any nuclear weapon detonation will inflict long-term catastrophic consequences beyond borders both for the environment and for humanity. As long as nuclear weapons exist the risk of nuclear weapon explosions, whether intentionally or by accident, is unacceptably high.

What actions will we take towards 2020? This is the challenge before us.

However, I am confident that the global trend for peace and against nuclear-weapons will never allow such a countercurrent to prevail. We have the TPNW at hand. It in itself piles the heaviest pressure on nuclear powers. Besides, we have the power of the movements and the public support that gave birth to the TPNW, as well as broad cooperation with like-minded governments.

In the US, local governments such as California State and Washington DC adopted resolutions urging the government to join the TPNW. The same activities are carried on in nuclear umbrella states including Australia, Spain and Japan. In our country, so far 407 local governments have adopted resolutions to urge the Japanese government to sign and ratify the treaty.

If we develop these activities, we are confident that we can overcome the rollbacks and advance towards a nuclear weapon-free world.

In addition, the high-handed actions of nuclear powers such as the USA have evoked new criticism. This criticism generates momentum for enhancing public opinion and movement.

We see the same situation in Japan. In spite of being the only A-bombed country, the Abe government has adopted a shameful attitude, unabashedly refusing to sign and ratify the TPNW. Before the NPT PrepCom started, we visited the Japanese foreign ministry. They did not even hesitate to say that a change in the Korean situation towards denuclearization and peace was brought about by the US nuclear deterrence. Needless to say, we all severely condemned this comment.

In order for Japan to be protected by US extended deterrence, including nuclear weapons, the Abe government is rushing to make Japan a war-fighting country through the reinforcement of the Japan-US military alliance, the reinterpretation of the Constitution to have resort to “collective self-defense”, legislation of war laws and the state secrecy law, construction of the new base for the US Marines in Okinawa, and revision of the Constitution. Throwing away the position of exclusive defense, it has been promoting an unconstitutional military buildup, as seen in the record-high defense spending, transformation of the Izumo-class destroyers to aircraft carriers and bulk-buying of F35 stealth fighters. The people are left to bear the burden through consumption tax rate hikes and cutoff of

welfare.

Naturally, Abe's bad politics is faced with severe criticism from the people. Signatures collected in support of the Hibakusha Appeal for the elimination of nuclear weapons exceeded 9,410,000. The number of mayors and governors who signed it reached about 1200. Some 50 anti-nuclear and peace organizations, which had worked separately before, are now overcoming their differences of opinion to develop joint work.

In the House of Councilors election held recently, pro-constitutional revision forces, such as the Liberal Democratic Party, could not obtain the two thirds majority required for proposing a bill for the revision of the Constitution. This shows the people's aspiration for nuclear abolition and peace. Cooperation with opposition parties is developing. Some of the united candidates between the Civil Alliance for Peace and Constitutionalism and opposition parties started to make signing and ratifying the TPNW by the Japanese government their campaign pledge. In Okinawa, those who oppose the construction of the US base in Henoko have won in straight sets, from the election of Governor Denny Tamaki through the prefectural people's referendum and the House of Councilors election.

There is good news on the Korean Peninsula issue. Two years ago there was a crisis with the potential to lead to a nuclear exchange. The efforts of the countries concerned and civil society, however, shifted this in the direction of peaceful settlement, denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula. This year's Hanoi summit meeting ended without any agreement and North Korea again started to fire missile objects, making the situation unstable.

In the midst of this situation, civil society in Japan and South Korea worked together to hold the Japan-Korea International Forum for a Nuclear Free Peaceful Northeast Asia. We cooperated with 13 Korean NGOs and movements and 25 Korean A-bomb victims also took part. In spite of difference of opinions, even on the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons, we reached an agreement to work together in international joint actions planned around the time of the NPT Review Conference in April 2020 and in demanding that both governments join the TPNW for its entry into force.

We are calling for building up a movement powerful enough to open up the way to the abolition of nuclear weapons from now towards 2020. In particular, we must do our utmost to make the Japanese government join the TPNW and change its policy towards nuclear abolition and peace.

In this context, we are encouraged to have received a proposal from friends from the US, Europe and IPB to hold the World Conference against A and H Bombs in New York.

Since the first one was held in 1955 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the World Conference against A and H Bombs has upheld 3 main goals: Prevention of nuclear war, a ban and the elimination of nuclear weapons and support for the Hibakusha, A-bomb victims. It has mobilized movements and individuals of the world who support these goals and worked together with like-minded governments. It is highly significant that inheriting its basic spirit, the world conference will be held in New York, the major city of the USA. I was very impressed by this plan. We will do our utmost in Japan so that the Hibakusha and a broad range of Japanese movements can work together for the success of the planned actions.

If there is one more essence of the World Conference, it comes from the fact that it was born from the massive protest of the people against A and H bombs that occurred in the wake of the damage from the US H bomb test at Bikini Atoll in 1954. Returning to the starting point, we have to make the people stand up from the grass-roots for the achievement of a world without nuclear weapons.

The Hibakusha Appeal signature campaign set a target of collecting hundreds of millions of petitions worldwide, aiming at creating the "Second Super Power" working for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The submission of the petitions is planned as a part of the joint actions. We will do our utmost to develop the signature campaign within and outside of Japan. I ask you all to cooperate with us in collecting signatures in the remaining one year. Standing on the starting point of the World Conference, let us take a leap forward towards 2020.