

Lee Bora  
Association of Physicians for Humanism/ Pulmonologist, Green Hospital  
R.O.K.

I congratulate Gensuikyo and other civil society organizations of Japan for convening the 2019 World Conference against A and H Bombs, aiming to achieve a nuclear weapon-free, peaceful and just world. I feel honored to be given the opportunity to speak in this Closing Plenary.

As we all know, we are witnessing the ever-worsening relationship between the ROK and Japan. Since the nuclear disaster, the government of ROK has suspended the import of fishery products from Fukushima. Japan filed a WTO complaint against Korea on this, but lost the case. President Moon Jae-in virtually declared the scrapping of the Japan-ROK agreement on the Comfort Women issue concluded by former President Park Guen-hye. At the end of 2018, the Korean Supreme Court ruled that war criminal companies Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Nippon Steel and Sumitomo Metal Corporation should compensate the victims of war-time forced labor. In the face of this, the Japanese government applied economic pressure on the ROK by imposing export controls and removing it from the “Whitelist”.

Now in South Korea, boycotting of Japanese products is spreading, with the slogan, “Though we were unable to stage a movement for independence, we can carry out the boycott campaign.” The candlelight campaign, which once ousted the Park Guen-hye government, is now denouncing the Abe Government in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul every Saturday. I believe that these conflicts are caused by the fact that democracy developed in the ROK without there first being a just settlement for the errors of Japanese imperialism’s colonial rule and war, as well as by the changes in the relations between North and South Korea and between the US and DPRK during the same period.

In 1945, the Korean Peninsula, the former colony of the defeated Japan, was divided. In 1950, Japan’s economy revived thanks to the special procurement boom associated with the Korean War. In the process leading to the Basic Japan-ROK Treaty of 1965, which was concluded for the benefit of the US, no consideration was given to Japan’s usurpation of Korea’s food and resources; mobilization of forced laborers and comfort women; torture and killing and other human rights infringements of independence movement activists; and the Korean Hibakusha issue. It is quite easy to explain the reason why, if you know that in the post-WWII era Kishi Nobusuke became Prime Minister of Japan and Park Chung-he, a former military officer of Manchukuo, became President of South Korea. In Japan, Kishi’s successors still hold power. In the ROK, the forces behind Park, as vested interests, continue to exploit people, though they are now in opposition due to the candlelight actions.

The forces of my country’s democracy movement, including the Association of Physicians for Humanism to which I belong, are working hard to prevent the recurrence of this unfortunate history. Upholding the slogan, “When society is in pain, medical doctors should also feel the pain”, we give treatment to homeless people, refugees and workers in strikes, and oppose the commercialization of health services and strengthen the public nature of medical care. We also work to inform the workers and people in the vicinity of nuclear power plants of the danger to their health. Every year, we send a delegation to the World Conference against A and H Bombs and have exchanges with Min-Iren (Japanese Federation of Democratic Medical Institutions) and work in solidarity with anti-war, peace movement organizations from around the world.

In May this year, the “Japan-ROK International Forum for a Nuclear-Free and Peaceful Northeast Asia” was held in Seoul. About 300 people, including representatives of Japan/ROK Hibakusha organizations, labor unions, women’s groups, health/medical organizations, took part. It started with a breakfast meeting with the Korean Justice Party and the Japanese Communist Party, followed by very significant presentations and discussion in the morning plenary and workshops in the afternoon. In the morning plenary of May 31, the outcome of the workshops was shared by all and we issued a joint statement at Gwanghwamun Square. For active exchange in the future between the civil society organizations of the two countries, we hope that such forums will be held more regularly.

Along with the development of US-DPRK relations, we are seeing the advent of an era of peace and unification of the Korean Peninsula. It is the duty of us living in the Korean Peninsula to overcome the past

history and achieve the reunification of Korea, and make it a safe, nuclear weapon-free and peaceful country where all people can enjoy freedom and equality.

And in order to reconstruct Japan-ROK relations, which are now rapidly deteriorating, we need to form a firm solidarity between the people of the two countries based on a correct recognition of history. Friends, I sincerely call on you to work together with us to that end. Thank you.