

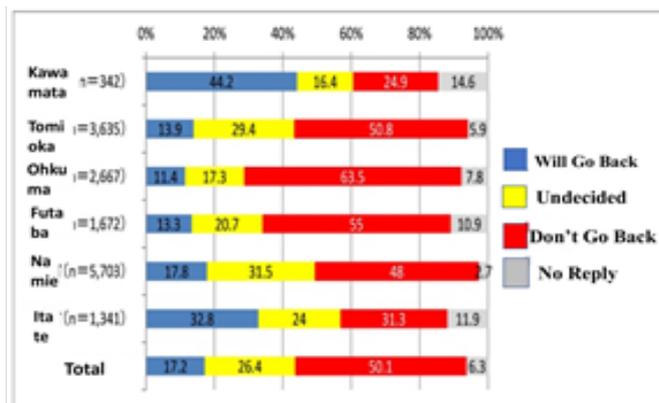
International Meeting
2019 World Conference against A and H Bombs

Session 1: Damage and Suffering from A-Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Inhumanity of Nuclear Weapons; Struggle of the Hibakusha

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My name is Sakamoto Magumi, professor at Fukushima University. I wish to express my sincere respects and extend a warm welcome to all participants in the International Meeting. Today, listening to the introductory speeches to this session, I have realized that the enormity of the damage from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is beyond words and that the survivors have been forced to endure aftereffects and even discrimination over the past 74 years. This makes me realize how inhumane nuclear weapons are! I believe that the existence and use of such weapons cannot be justified for any reason whatsoever. It has become clear to me that human lives cannot coexist with nuclear weapons. If Japan stands at a crossroads, the question should be whether we want to build a country that protects people's lives at any cost without the use of force in dealing with international conflict, a country that stands with people and supports them when their lives and health are at risk, just as was the case with the nuclear disaster in Fukushima. That's the crossroads facing us today.

Eight years four months and 22 days have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and the nuclear accident at the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant on March 11, 2011.



In the areas affected by the nuclear accident, in particular the municipalities that host the nuclear plant, the evacuation order has been partially lifted in Okuma Town, which has been designated as a highly radioactive "difficult-to-return" zone.



"2018 survey on residents of nuclear disaster-affected areas" published on <https://minnanods.net/soil>, a Website providing data based on the radiation dosimetry established by the citizens. The graph and the map were created by FoE Japan.

In Futaba Town, an evacuation order is expected to be lifted soon. In these areas, radiation levels are still extremely high. In the 2015 opinion survey, only 10 percent of the respondents in both towns said they would return to their towns, 20 percent said they were undecided, and 70 percent said they will not return. Municipalities where an evacuation order has already been lifted have already reopened their primary and junior high schools. The number of children attending these schools was several hundred before the nuclear accident. But less than 10 students have returned to their schools. A number of schools have closed again because no student has enrolled after their reopening. The disaster-affected municipalities are now on the verge of disappearance due to declines in the number of children.

Both the national government and the Fukushima prefectural government are pressing residents of the affected municipalities to return to their homes by arguing as if returning to homes in the affected areas would help in the post-disaster reconstruction. They even say that those who refuse to return after an evacuation order is lifted should be regarded as "voluntary evacuees" staying out of their towns on personal judgment. They do not even know how many such people there are. They have stopped paying special housing allowances to evacuees. These allowances were created to help people who had to move away from radioactively contaminated zones to pay rent for accommodation. They even penalize through a rent increase those "voluntary evacuees" who have chosen not to leave public housing. The rent has doubled or increased six-fold in some cases. After eight years of evacuation, people are in mental and economic distress and find themselves more and more helpless, being unable to earn a living, without a source of income and isolated. Asking the evacuees to return to their homes in areas where there still is no public transportation, no supermarkets, no health services and no homes for the elderly is inhumane policy. It is tantamount to abandoning people. Compared to radiation levels in the air, radioactive contamination of the soil poses a serious threat. However, the national government and local governments have not conducted any adequate statistical study of radioactive contamination of soil. No such data has been made public. On the other hand, TEPCO, the nuclear plant operator responsible for the accident, has so far refused to make any amicable settlement of the dispute on compensation demanded by the victims, although such alternative

dispute resolution (ADR) is the very foundation of the compensation system in place. Such government policy that neglects people's lives and health must be condemned by the international community. What is needed is to allow for a dual resident registration system, at the original address and the place of evacuation, in order to provide the evacuees with public support fully adapted to their individual needs and respect of their human dignity, so that they can live without economic concerns and embark on the road to reconstruction. In Fukushima, the victims themselves have risen to demand that the state make necessary policy changes. The support from across Japan that they now enjoy must continue in order to build without delay a support system that respects the dignity of each citizen.

Since July 2017, the world has undergone big changes as a result of citizens' initiatives. One such change is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was adopted in New York on July 7, 2017. This important treaty was made possible, despite adverse conditions, by citizens' movements that have been committed to the abolition of nuclear weapons over the many years since the WWII.

Japan is the only A-bombed country and can play a major role in changing the world trend by encouraging the world's countries to sign and ratify the treaty. The task now is for us to establish as soon as possible a government that will sign the treaty.

On the Korean Peninsula, inter-Korean dialogue began in April 2018. The dialogue has taken place four times. In addition, despite difficulties, dialogue has also been held between the United States and North Korea, the third and the latest being US President Donald Trump's blitz visit to Panmunjom. The tension peaked when North Korea fired ballistic missiles and when the United States deployed three aircraft carriers around Japan. Today, apparently, a phase of peaceful dialogue has begun with China and Russia joining in. These new developments around Japan have been led by South Korea's Moon Jae-in government, which came into being as a result of the citizens' movement known as the "Candle Revolution." Indeed, it is clear to everyone that the dialogue for peace and other initiatives we witness now on the Korean Peninsula have been made possible and sustained by a broad movement of citizens in each country, a movement that aspires to peaceful coexistence and the elimination of all nuclear weapons. With North Korea agreeing to sit at the negotiating table, the Japanese government no longer has its largest hypothetical enemy. This is why it has spread the unconfirmed information that South Korea is secretly providing semiconductor technologies to North Korea. In addition, on the pretext of China's intrusion into the South China Sea, it has adopted a policy of countering South Korea and China as hypothetical enemies.

Japan may join a US-led coalition for missions in the Middle East and the Strait of Hormuz. The

real aim of Prime Minister Abe's extreme-rightist government is to turn Japan into a country that can use its force and engage in war anywhere around the world. The possibility that the US-led coalition could use nuclear weapons cannot be completely excluded.

However, the political forces that advocate revising the Constitution lost some seats in the House of Councilors election last July and fell 4 seats short of obtaining the two-thirds majority needed to initiate a process of constitutional revision. This is the result of joint struggle of citizens and opposition parties to stop Abe's ultra-rightist ambition for constitutional changes and it marks the beginning of an era of full-fledged joint struggle of opposition parties in the Japanese political arena. Despite this, as if nothing has happened, Prime Minister Abe has dared to declare that he will propose the revision of the Constitution in the Diet while he is in office.

I would like to conclude my presentation by reassuring you that the people of Fukushima are resolved to do all they can to make the World Conference, and in particular the International Meeting, a first step toward building a world that listens to the voices of the A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and strives to ensure that no one in the world is exposed ever again to the horrors of nuclear weapons. Thank you for your attention.