

International Meeting
2019 World Conference against A and H Bombs

YASUI Masakazu
General Secretary
Japan Council against A and H Bombs (Gensuikyo)

I welcome all of you, dear friends coming from Japan and abroad to this 2019 World Conference against A and H Bombs.

In the Opening Session today, I was very much encouraged by Mr. Gallhofer of Austria when he said, “While these are challenging times, they are also inspiring times.” I want to express my resolve to play a due role in the civil society movement.

This year’s World Conference is being held at a very important juncture for our movement to achieve a world without nuclear weapons on the eve of the 75th commemoration of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 50th anniversary of the coming into effect of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) and the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

The average age of Hibakusha now exceeds 82 years. Their desire to see nuclear weapons eliminated while they are alive is impelling. In order to respond to their pressing call, our movement must achieve a big leap forward.

The world is at a decisive crossroads in the process towards the abolition of nuclear weapons. At the third Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference held this year at the United Nation’s Headquarters in New York, the forces promoting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) challenged the nuclear weapon states over the implementation of their past agreements and commitments, in particular the NPT’s “Article 6” obligations and the “unequivocal undertakings” for achieving the complete elimination of nuclear arsenals.

The focus of their confrontation was whether nuclear weapon states continue to cling to their nuclear arsenals that can only lead to catastrophic consequences as seen in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or on other hand, they put a definitive end to the nuclear threat by engaging in the path towards a world without nuclear weapons.

The Trump Administration strengthened the U.S. strategy for the use of nuclear weapons

through the “Nuclear Posture Review (NPR)” released last year by developing “small” nuclear weapons and unilaterally leaving the INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces) Treaty, leading to the treaty’s expiration just two days ago.

The Russian government of Putin has also embarked on the development of new types of nuclear weapons and is enhancing its strategy to pre-emptively use tactical weapons. The current new nuclear arms race between these two nuclear powers clearly shows that “nuclear deterrence” does not bring security but a threat to humanity.

Globally, the world is advancing towards the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons as demonstrated by the broadening extent of support for the TPNW. The resolution of the U.N. General Assembly on the TPNW was in fact supported by 126 countries, accounting for more than two thirds of U.N. membership.

Two years have passed since the TPNW was adopted in July 2017. Seventy countries have signed it and the number of countries that have ratified the treaty has steadily increased to reach 24. This fact allows us to expect the treaty’s entry into force in the near future. Equally important is that the TPNW is putting substantial pressure on the nuclear powers.

At the third PrepCom, the five nuclear weapons states made a hostile declaration saying that they were opposed to the TPNW because it is contrary to the NPT and may weaken the NPT regime. The fact that the nuclear weapons states have to form a joint front to oppose the TPNW despite the contradictions and conflicting interests among themselves demonstrates the power of the TPNW. Its entry into force will surely put further pressure on these nuclear powers.

In order to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, we must defeat the obstructions posed by the nuclear powers. The key for this is the mobilization of public opinion and the movement as well as the strength of cooperation between civil society and national governments that led to the adoption of the TPNW. If we can develop it further, we will surely open the way for a further advance.

The “Hibakusha International Appeal Signature Campaign” calling on each national government to support the conclusion of a treaty or a convention on the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons continues to spread: in the last year alone, the number of signatures has increased by 6 million to reach almost 10 million. 1,135 heads of municipalities, accounting for two thirds of the total have also appended their names. Anyone who wants to see nuclear weapons eliminated supports the TPNW regardless of

the difference in their positions. To develop public opinion and the movement, let us give a pair of strong wings to the Hibakusha International Signature Campaign in Japan and the world. Let us act around the world for making the year 2020, the 75th anniversary of atomic bombings, the year of decisive turn towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Dear friends, at the International Conference held in New York last May, “Growing Nuclear Risks in a Changing World: New Thinking and Movement Building”, our friends from the U.S., Europe and the International Peace Bureau (IPB) proposed to organize a “World Conference against A and H Bombs in New York”.

The World Conference in New York will be held inheriting the fundamental spirit for the prevention of nuclear war, a total ban on and the elimination of nuclear weapons and support for and solidarity with hibakusha, the principles that we have dearly observed since the very first World Conference against A and H Bombs in Hiroshima, as well as the New York Actions staged on the eve of NPT Review Conferences in 2010 and 2015.

The World Conference in New York, the venue of the 2020 NPT Review Conference, is a very important opportunity to join our voices to those of Hibakusha to spread a call for the elimination of nuclear weapons from the U.S., the largest nuclear power, and to develop globally public opinion and the movement. I call on the Japanese movement as well as our friends around the world to work together to make this event a success.

Friends, it is an international duty for the Japanese movement to make the Japanese government assume a role worthy of a country that has Article 9 in its Constitution.

In the House of Councilors election that took place on the eve of this World Conference, we campaigned to achieve a change in politics to make them commensurate with a country that experienced the atomic bombing. We demanded that the government place the endeavor for peace provided for by the Constitution at the core of Japan’s politics and take the lead of the effort for the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons by signing the TPNW.

Although the Abe government focused its campaign on the revision of Article 9 and tried to maintain two-thirds of the seats in the House of Councilors, the Liberal Democratic Party, the largest party in the ruling coalition, lost 9 seats and failed to preserve the two-thirds majority, necessary for proposing any constitutional revision, falling short of 4 seats. What prevented the revisionists from obtaining the two-thirds majority was the victories won by unified candidates of the opposition parties in 10 out of 32 single-seat constituencies.

Through talks on political demands among the opposition parties to choose joint candidates for single-seat constituencies, the demands for the cancellation of construction of a new base at Henoko, an immediate stop to Futenma Base operations and the closure and reversion of the base were agreed upon in Okinawa. In Akita, the joint demands agreed on were no deployment of Aegis Ashore, the land-based missile defense system. Joint candidates won in both Okinawa and Akita constituencies. In Gunma, Kumamoto and Nagasaki, the joint demands included the ratification of the TPNW.

Representatives of opposition parties supporting the TPNW as well as representatives of the citizens' movement for the abrogation of the Security Laws or War Laws and recovery of constitutionalism, and members of the All Okinawa Coalition opposing the construction of a US military base in Henoko will join us in this year's World Conference. Building on the gains we achieved through the recent election campaign, we want to significantly develop the movement to press the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW.

I would like to conclude by reassuring you that we are resolved to give further momentum to the International Hibakusha Appeal Signature campaign towards the U.N. General Assembly this autumn and the 2020 NPT Review Conference, to win a majority of municipal assemblies (now 407 out of a total of 1,741) to adopt a resolution urging the national government to sign and ratify the TPNW, to organize many initiatives in local communities, workplaces and schools in each municipality, with Hibakusha testimonies and A-bomb exhibitions revealing the inhumanity of nuclear weapons and to build a nationwide movement strong enough to make the government change its policy.

Thank you.