

2020 World Conference against A and H Bombs (online)
International Meeting Session I

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I am pleased to extend to you a warm welcome to the online International Meeting of the 2020 World Conference against A and H Bombs.

This year's World Conference is taking place 75 years after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and 50 years after the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) entered into force. We are meeting amid a crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we face the coronavirus crisis, we must join forces to build up global solidarity and cooperation to achieve a world without nuclear weapons and protect the future of humankind and the Earth.

Listen to Hibakusha's appeal

The number of coronavirus cases has exceeded 16 million, causing 640,000 deaths (as of July 26). As humankind is under threat of the pandemic, it has become clearer how vulnerable and risky the present-day world is in terms of protecting people's lives, as is clear from the widening economic inequality and the worsening poverty rate under neoliberalism, and the world order led by the great powers.

The coronavirus crisis tells us that it is imperative to change the course of the world to give priority to each individual's safety for the sake of the survival of humankind.

It's been 75 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The call of the Hibakusha, who experienced a human extinction threat and extreme conditions created by the use of nuclear weapons, has special meaning when we are facing crises bearing on the survival of humanity. Their message that humankind cannot coexist with nuclear weapons has power to change the world.

What we should do is listen to testimonies given by the Hibakusha and reaffirm that nuclear weapons must be banned and eliminated in order to save humankind from the threat of nuclear weapons and that what is needed is to make the world free of nuclear weapons and sustainable, with peace, equality, and justice prevailing.

Let us work together to let all citizens know about the damage and aftereffects of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, about the inhuman nature of nuclear weapons, and the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. **Let us work for entry into force of TPNW and call on nuclear weapon states to implement their obligations and agreements under the NPT.**

Amid the coronavirus crisis, the nuclear weapon states, and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P5) - the US, Britain, Russia, France, and China – are not taking the initiative to solve the crises facing humanity. The US and Russia are the two major nuclear powers. It is a serious problem that they are brandishing nuclear weapons, apparently to maintain the posture of putting their own security first.

It is more important than ever to increase public opinion calling for the early entry into force of the TPNW and the implementation of the obligations under Article 6 of the Japanese Constitution and the agreements of the NPT.

Three years have passed since the TPNW was adopted at the UN on July 7. The treaty has been signed by 81 countries and ratified by 40 countries. The treaty will come into force when it is ratified by 50 countries. Ten more countries need to ratify. Its entry into force is a matter of time.

Entry into force of the TPNW will open a new stage toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. As called for in the Declaration of last year's International Meeting, we have to make efforts to form a majority sufficient to encircle all countries, particularly the nuclear weapon states and nuclear-dependent states, with a call on them to sign and ratify the treaty.

For this purpose, marking the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing, the "Peace Wave" international joint action will be carried out, starting at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, the time the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Its success is very important. In Japan, actions are planned to take place at more than 150 locations across the country.

On August 6, Gensuikyo will offer a minute of silence in local communities, at workplaces, and at schools in all 47 prefectures. Participants will hold banners and plaster boards at these actions, urging the Japanese government to join the TPNW.

Let us make a success of the Peace Wave action in Japan and the rest of the world and create a surge sufficient to achieve the early entry into force of the TPNW and the implementation of agreements made at the NPT review conferences.

Let us change Japanese politics leading to Japan's accession to the TPNW

The final point I want to make is that the Japanese movement has a task to make the government of Japan fulfill its international responsibility as the only atom-bombed country with the war-renouncing Article 9 of its Constitution.

Even in times of pandemic, the Abe government has acted at the US Trump administration's beck and call instead of caring for people's lives. This anomaly has led to an eruption of antagonism between the government and the people.

Under the crisis of healthcare and employment caused by the coronavirus pandemic, women, who account for 70 percent of non-regular workers, youth and students are caught in a predicament. The people's anger at Abe's politics is increasing and they are demanding extensive anti-coronavirus measures, gender equality and cuts in military expenditure. The government's plan to spend 600 billion yen to deploy the Aegis Ashore land-based missile defense system, faced with strong opposition from residents in Akita and Yamaguchi prefectures, was driven into withdrawal.

These changes have provided us with a great opportunity to change Japan's politics and make the government play a role befitting the atom-bombed country.

The number of signatures collected for the Hibakusha Appeal International Signature Campaign reached 11,840,000 as of the end of March this year. The number of local assemblies that have adopted resolutions demanding the Japanese government sign and ratify the TPNW has increased to 468, accounting for 26 percent of all local governments. In the recent Tokyo gubernatorial election, the citizens' movement and opposition parties cooperated in all 25 single-seat constituencies. Opposition parties ran united candidates in 4 by-elections for the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly.

The House of Representative general election is to be held within a year, and is likely to be held by the end of the year. In concluding, I would like to express our determination to help achieve political change for Japan to join the TPNW. To this end we will work to promote joint action for the Hibakusha Appeal International Signature Campaign and further develop our cooperation with local governments, a wide range of citizens' movements and opposition parties.