

Dear participants in the World Conference, esteemed activists against nuclear weapons, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to speak to you today. How much would I have preferred to be among you on this day when we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima. This day fills us with grief, when we think of the hundreds of thousands whose lives were destroyed and shattered by this bomb. Many still suffer today from the consequences of this act that can never be justified and has gone down in the history books together with Nagasaki as some of the darkest moments in the history of mankind. One bomb, one moment and hundreds of thousands innocent civilians killed.

I want to bow before the survivors, the hibakushas, whose testimony and advocacy is so important. They have a powerful and convincing message – never again. And their testimony and message will live on – in their children, in the audiovisual recordings and in our brains and souls. I will never forget my meetings with hibakushas who so much impressed and motivated me. From the bottom of my heart let me thank the hibakushas.

You have chosen the title of this year's conference very well. It is with the hibakushas, with their leadership and advice, that we will achieve a world without nuclear

weapons. And given the devastating human consequences of nuclear weapons, humankind and our planet run the risk that there will be no future due to a nuclear war.

As a leading system analyst demonstrated at the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, the fact that since 1945 nuclear weapons have not been used should not lull us to feel safe. Statistically the likelihood of a nuclear weapon explosion – be it intentional, by accident or by mistake – is growing every year. When you play roulette, you might get red five times in a row, but for sure black will come sooner or later. As written in the report issued by the former Australian Foreign Minister Garreth Evans together with the former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi: “So long as any such weapons remain, it defies credibility that they will not one day be used, by accident, miscalculation or design. And any such use would be catastrophic. It is sheer luck that the world has escaped such catastrophe until now.”

When we look at the recent political and military developments the feeling that our luck might be running out gets stronger. Never before has the famous doomsday clock been closer to midnight with only 100 seconds still to go.

One element is the destruction of the arms control and disarmament architecture. After the end of the INF Treaty only one major agreement between the US and Russia limiting nuclear weapons is in force, New START. If no extension is agreed, this last legal

framework obliging them to stay within the agreed maximum numbers of strategic nuclear weapons will expire on 5 February 2021. From my point of view we need deeper cuts and a more comprehensive new treaty that brings us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. But this would *become* more difficult to achieve when New START would simply expire. States like Austria or Japan cannot negotiate for the nuclear armed states. But what my country Austria can and does do is to invite the countries possessing most nuclear weapons to Vienna to have their talks there. So I had the honour to welcome the American and Russian delegations to Vienna on 27 July to their working group meetings in my home town, Vienna. And these talks most likely will continue. That offers a glimmer of hope, because without any limitations, no impediments whatsoever, a full scale arms race appears likely.

Unfortunately, all nuclear armed states have embarked on modernisation programmes. This is a euphemistic term for developing new nuclear arms partly to replace the present ones, partly to introduce technically new and more deadly ones. Also small tactical nuclear weapons are being built again. They are called “more usable”, as if nuclear weapons could ever be used without creating havoc and grossly violating international law. Some of these so-called small or low-yield nuclear weapons are actually of a similar size to those dropped in 1945. I wonder whether those politicians responsible for funding such projects have ever visited Hiroshima or Nagasaki or

talked to a hibakusha. When mankind does not learn the lessons from the past, it is doomed to relive the suffering that you had to bear here in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

All those nuclear weapon programmes are costing zillions of dollars which should be used for better purposes in a world where there is so much poverty and health problems abound. The COVID-19 epidemic shows clearly that those countries wasting their taxpayers' money on nuclear weapon programmes have set their priorities wrong. Where else could the huge savings necessary to cope with disease control and funding an economic rebound come from, if not from expenditure for nuclear weapons?

I ask myself often why certain states, not only the nuclear armed ones, cling to the erroneous underlying concept that nuclear weapons are providing security. When you consider what the use of nuclear weapons really means, as you know it here in Japan, the conclusion can only be that nuclear weapons pose a tremendous risk to security, the security of all states and all people. Representatives of nuclear armed states argue sometimes the only reason why they have nuclear weapons is to never use them. President Reagan put this thought into the right context, when he said in his State of the Union Address in 1984: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. The only value in our two nations possessing nuclear

weapons is to make sure they will never be used. But then would it not be better to do away with them entirely?”

Today there are even more compelling reasons to do away with nuclear weapons entirely.

In a thought provoking study by the Nuclear Threat Initiative it has been demonstrated that as a result of possible cyber hacking, nuclear weapons are not reliable any more. That opens up for a discussion why certain states want to build their security on something that can be hacked and might not function as intended in a crisis. Another game changer that we are experiencing as part of the fast technological progress is the impact of hypersonic weapons. They are so fast that whoever pushes the button first might have won the war, since they do not leave enough time for a calculated response and are hard to intercept. Furthermore, it has not been explained how nuclear deterrence could be effective in a multipolar world.

In a discussion at a conference in the Vatican Alexei Arbatov, the Head of the Center for International Security in Moscow, said: “Only God knows whether nuclear deterrence worked during the cold war. But I know for sure that it does not work today.” In my view it is time to say fare-well to the concept of nuclear deterrence. It is high time to face reality: Nuclear weapons bring utter destruction which due to their long term effects like nuclear winter will also fall on the country that has used

them. The issue of nuclear disarmament is a question of life or death in which all states and all of us are affected and have therefore a right to speak up and seek a solution which lies in the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

I concur with UN Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu who recently said: “In the 75 year history of the UN the folly to seek security in vast destructive arsenals has never been clearer. Nor has the need to finally put the brake on this deadly capability.”

On the 75th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki we draw the conclusion that we have by far too long lived in the shadow of nuclear weapons. Therefore a clear majority of states has negotiated the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Taking the humanitarian consequences and inherent risks of nuclear weapons as a starting point, it draws the line that nuclear weapons are simply too dangerous and consequently should be prohibited, just like other weapons of mass destruction. It is, as Hiroshima’s own Setsuko Thurlow put it, “the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons.”

Of course, we are without illusion that the Treaty will immediately reduce risks or nuclear weapon stocks. It is an important and necessary step, and we will need further instruments to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. But the Treaty clearly delegitimizes nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence, and aims to make it

harder for states to rely on nuclear weapons in defence doctrines and strategies.

Since last year's conference another 12 states have signed and 17 additional states have ratified the treaty. This is good and fast progress. Today we stand at 82 signatures and 40 ratifications. Only 10 ratifications are still necessary to reach the number 50 triggering entry into force. I am confident that we will reach this objective before next year's conference in Hiroshima which would be a good reason to celebrate.

Even though we are going through challenging times and the political picture looks rather bleak, there are grounds for being optimistic. We stand up for a good cause and have already the majority convinced. We are active and will not rest, before a world without nuclear weapons is achieved.

We owe this to the hibakushas and to our children.