



Bundespräsident
Alexander Van der Bellen

Nuclear weapons are the most indiscriminate weapon ever invented. Their damage cannot be measured only by the immediate destruction they cause but by the unimaginable suffering that continues to last through decades and generations. Yet unlike biological and chemical weapons, these inhumane weapons remain in arsenals of nine states today. The ill-fated belief that the threat of global devastation through nuclear weapons can be the foundation of sustainable security and stability unfortunately persists.

The Hibakusha have been tireless in their advocacy for the past 76 years to warn humanity and make sure that the world knows about those fateful days in 1945 and the consequences ever since. We owe them deep gratitude, but more importantly, we owe them progress: progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

As we commemorate the 76th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, let us move away from the misconception that nuclear weapons are a suitable means of security and instead take heed from the findings of their catastrophic humanitarian consequences and inherent risks. It is urgent to end the resurgent nuclear arms race with arsenals being built-up and modernised for decades to come, as well as a renewed emphasis on nuclear weapons and their use in national security doctrines.

A large majority of countries has already demonstrated that they understand nuclear weapons as a constant threat to the very survival of humanity. They demand that their legitimate security concerns are taken into consideration rather than perpetually put at risk by the policies of nuclear deterrence. With the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, an important step – the setting of a legal norm prohibiting these weapons – was achieved. It is the first concrete step in a long time towards the elimination of nuclear weapons for which the Hibakusha and you here at the conference have been fighting.

I am very pleased that the first meeting of States Parties of the TPNW will be held in my country, Austria, as one of the main initiators of the treaty. I hope that many of you will be able to travel to Vienna to join in marking this milestone with us. I trust that you will continue your tireless advocacy to inspire other countries also to be there; even States that have not yet signed the TPNW. We need to continue to engage all stakeholders in a dialogue on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons and the need for urgent progress towards a world without nuclear weapons.



A. Van der Bellen