

2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs  
International Meeting -- Opening Session

Greetings on behalf of the Organizing Committee

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Welcome to friends participating in the 2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs, either in person or online. I bring you warm greetings of solidarity on behalf of the organizers.

This World Conference is taking place from August 4 through 9 under the main theme: "With the Hibakusha, Let Us Achieve a Nuclear Weapon-free, Peaceful and Just World – for the Future of the Humankind and Our Planet". This year's World Conference involves a mixture of in-person and online attendees. I want to share the pleasure of having a larger number of delegates than last year in the A-bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

We have a representative from the United Nations, who is striving at the forefront of the effort to promote the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, along with government representatives from Austria, Mexico, and Malaysia. Hibakusha from the Republic of Korea are with us here. Also present are activists from the ROK, who are endeavoring to make the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free and build a peace regime there, and from the Asia-Pacific peace movement. From Europe and North America, representatives of the peace movement and dedicated grassroots people are here. They are activists who are playing significant roles in the frontline of the effort in the campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons. We have a representative of the Ukrainian peace movement, which is fighting in extremely difficult conditions against the aggressors. Japanese delegates include Hibakusha, municipality heads from Hiroshima and Nagasaki; people who are devoting themselves to collecting signatures to urge the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW; people who are opposing the Kishida government's arms buildup policy and the adverse revision of the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution; people who are leading the movements to get the US military bases out, to end nuclear power, to resolve the climate crisis, to overcome economic inequality and poverty and to achieve gender equality. People who have been affected by the 2011 great earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan and by the nuclear disaster at Fukushima Daiichi plant are also joining us.

The average age of the Hibakusha, who hold the hibakusha certificate, is now 85.01 as of the end of March 2023, exceeding age 85 for the first time. Last year, the number of surviving Hibakusha dropped to below 120,000 for the first time, to 118,935. Today, the number has fallen by 5,300 to 113,649. As Hibakusha are further ageing, the number is projected to be below 110,000 a year later. We pay our sincere respect to the Hibakusha for carrying on the effort to make the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons known to people. I hope they will take good care of themselves.

In May, the World Health Organization (WHO) lifted the Public Health Emergency of International Concern for COVID-19. During the 39 months of global emergency declaration, the COVID-19 pandemic swept the world, hitting particularly the poor population, migrants, refugees, and indigenous people hardest.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates the amount of global military expenditure in 2022 at a record 2 trillion 239.8 billion dollars. What we have learned from the pandemic is that arms buildup is helpless in preventing COVID-19 infections. Globally, 768 million people got infected with the coronavirus and 6.95 million people died. At a time when the COVID-19 deals a heavy blow to the world, it's surprising that the nuclear weapon states led by the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France are continuing to reinforce their arsenal just as they did during the Cold War era. The nuclear weapon states should realize that measures to improve people's livelihoods, employment, healthcare and welfare services and education are hampered by the growing military expenditure, including money for the modernization of nuclear weapons. If the money and human resources used for research and development for military purposes is redirected to non-military spending, our livelihoods would be improved drastically.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine is a crime in violation of the United Nations Charter and international humanitarian law. On February 23 this year, the United Nations General Assembly held a special emergency session and adopted a resolution titled "Principles of the Charter of the United Nations underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine" with 141 countries voting in favor. It demanded Russia's immediate withdrawal from Ukraine and called for ending the war and making diplomatic efforts to achieve comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine in line with the UN Charter. Following Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement of a plan to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, the UN Security Council met for an emergency session on March 31. Many Security Council members denounced the Russian announcement as an act of increasing the risk of nuclear war in violation of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). We strongly demand that (1) Russia and the other nuclear weapon countries refrain from

deploying nuclear weapons outside their countries and that (2) they remove nuclear weapons they have deployed outside of their countries as soon as possible.

It is a matter of grave concern that the Putin government is repeatedly threatening to use nuclear weapons against governments and people that are throwing their support behind Ukraine. The TPNW bans the use or threat to use nuclear weapons. The Putin government's threat to use nuclear weapons reaffirms the danger of the nuclear deterrence doctrine and tells us that the only guarantee for humankind to evade the calamity caused by the use of nuclear weapons is the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.

As of June 2023, there are 12,520 nuclear warheads in the world, including 3,800 deployed in operational status and half of them are ready to be launched within minutes. Over the last 78 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no nuclear weapons have been used. It is said that's not because nuclear deterrence has worked but just because luck has been on the side of our movement calling for a ban on nuclear weapons. At the NPT Review Conference in August last year, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "... **luck is not a strategy. Nor is it a shield from geopolitical tensions boiling over into nuclear conflict.**" In the highly computerized nuclear weapons systems today, even in the absence of willingness to fight, unintended nuclear explosion or nuclear war could occur due to computer malfunction or breakdown. The risk of cyberattacks is growing. Even the limited use of small nuclear weapons could cause climate change or trigger global hunger, which threatens the survival of humankind. This is what scientists have warned over the last 40 years. We no longer can leave the security of the humanity to luck.

Faced with the gravest risk of nuclear weapons being used since the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, many countries are seriously seeking for actions to abolish nuclear weapons. But the Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio's government is pushing ahead with major arms buildup policy by taking advantage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the crisis in Northeast Asia. Last December, his Cabinet adopted three national security-related policy documents, including the "National Security Strategy." The "National Security Strategy" calls for Japan's possession of the ability to attack enemy bases, which means acquiring the capability to attack enemy territories. It also states that Japan should increase its military expenditure to 43 trillion yen over the next five years, from 2023 through 2027. That's up 50 percent from the current five-year plan. This Cabinet decision will pave the way for reversing Japan's defense policy established after World War II based on Article 9 of the Constitution pledging an exclusively defensive stance that the country will not become a military power. How outrageous it is for the government to decide such major defense policy change

at the Cabinet level, without asking for electoral judgment or without explaining it to the people!

Leaders of the Group of Seven met in May in Hiroshima. They adopted “G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communique” and “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament” to reaffirm that achieving a world without nuclear weapons is the “ultimate goal,” postponing the task to an indefinite future. While calling on Russia and China to implement their obligations of Article VI of the NPT, the G7 leaders are justifying their own nuclear weapons, saying that they should “serve defensive purposes” and that they “deter aggression” and “prevent war and coercion”. The TPNW has already been signed by 92 countries and ratified by 68 countries, adding to its normative force as an international treaty. It is appalling that the G7 Summit documents failed to refer to the TPNW at all, even though 70 percent of the people of Japan are calling on the government to sign and ratify the treaty. The limitations of the G7 summit, which consists of the United States, its allies and NATO members, are so clear.

The first session of the preparatory committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference is underway from July 31 through August 11 in Vienna. Representatives from the Japan Council against A and H Bombs (Gensuikyo) and the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Hidankyo) are participating in this preparatory committee session. They are working to build international opinion pressing the nuclear weapon states and nuclear-dependent countries to implement the agreements made so far, including the NPT’s Article VI obligation to eliminate nuclear weapons and the “unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament.”

The 78th Session of the UN General Assembly will be held in September. The second meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW is scheduled in November in New York. The United Nations, governments around the world, and grassroots civil society are called upon to energetically promote their joint actions.

The real driving force of international politics does not come from a few great powers but from governments and grassroots civil society of the majority countries. Raising public awareness and people’s movement in each country is important. Let us stop the Russian aggression against Ukraine and restore the peace order based on the UN Charter. To redirect military budgets to the efforts to make people happy and achieve a peaceful, just and sustainable world, let us drastically increase global solidarity and joint activities.

Finally, I hereby declare the start of the “Peace Wave” actions, which the Organizing Committee of the World Conference has called on the world to carry out. The Peace Wave actions are launched today from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as the world-wide grass-roots joint actions with the common aim of achieving the elimination of nuclear weapons, circling around the globe from August 4 to August 9. These actions will convey the voices of the grass-roots people, saying, “Don’t use nuclear weapons”, and “Keep the promise to achieve a ‘world without nuclear weapons’”, focusing on the 1<sup>st</sup> Preparatory Committee of the next NPT Review Conference now meeting in Vienna. Here in Japan, a variety of actions will take place across the country, including the exhibitions of A-bomb photos and paintings by high school students of Hiroshima, signature collections and street actions, meetings to hear the testimonies of Hibakusha. Dear friends across the country and from around the world, let us develop the Peace Wave actions for the prevention of the use and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

I conclude my speech on behalf of the organizers by expressing hope that we will make this World Conference a milestone in our effort to build great common action and launch concrete plans to further accelerate the trend toward banning and eliminating nuclear weapons, making the Korean Peninsula nuclear-free and building a peace regime, and to urge the Japanese government to join the TPNW and let the Constitution guide diplomacy for peace.