

International Meeting: Plenary Session III

Making Known A-Bombing and Other Nuclear Sufferings Beyond Generations; Solidarity with Victims (August 4)

Panel Presentation:

Tamamoto Haruhide Plaintiff, Hiroshima A-Bomb Collective Lawsuit

Sixty-two years have passed since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Survivors, or Hibakusha, are getting old, and I am especially concerned that our tragic experiences might fade into just one more thing of the past. Many Hibakusha, however, can never forget the devastation the bombings brought. We, survivors, have lived for sixty-two years, suffering from diseases and fearing death.

When I was fifteen years old, I was exposed to the bomb while in a factory that manufactured aircraft components in Yoshijima-cho about two kilometers away from the center of the explosion. Because I went to work earlier than usual that day and was under the roof of the factory, I barely escaped direct exposure to the heat rays of the bomb. It was soon after I went into the factory building that everything flashed white, and the building collapsed with the sound of a blasting explosion.

I did not die because I was between two workbenches, which gave me cover against the collapsing building. I somehow wiggled myself out of the rubble and looked around. All the buildings, which had been there until a moment ago, were leveled to the ground. I looked up to the sky without much thought and saw a pink mushroom cloud spreading out as if it was going to cover the sky.

I headed for the city center in order to return home to Kinya-cho. There, I was stunned by the grotesque figures of many people fleeing from the center. They were severely burnt to the degree one could not tell women from men. There were school girls who were almost naked. There were lines of people fleeing for their lives. I then knew something out of the ordinary had happened.

From the near distance, the city center was a sea of flame. It was impossible to go through it. I struggled through the rubble to make my way to a wide street. I soon found myself in front of the

head office of the Hiroshima Dentetsu Railroad Company in Senda-cho, where electric cables were hanging loose, buildings were burning everywhere, and burned people were lying in the streets, desperately crying out for help. Horses were lying dead, too.

When I crossed the Miyuki-bashi Bridge, which is frequently seen in photographs of the Hiroshima destruction, I was in complete shock at the sight of burnt victims being laid side by side along the river as if they were lifeless timbers. Then some soldiers with a military truck stopped me and ordered me to load the truck with these remains, so I did and saw them up close: some were dead, some were still alive, and some were severely burnt with their skin peeling off their bodies. At the age of fifteen, I felt I understood what life and death meant. I later heard that those people were carried from Ujina to Ninoshima Island by boat.

After that, I struggled back home only to find our house turned into a heap of burnt rubble still smoking, so I headed for Fudojin Temple in Ushita, a designated evacuation place. I can vividly recall the sight of a number of victims I saw on the way.

It was very heart-wrenching to see a young mother carrying her already dead baby on her back as she fled. There were four or five teenagers, who had probably been mobilized for clearing building for fire prevention. They lay on the ground, their bodies burnt, looking at me with empty eyes. One of them gazed at me as if he wanted to tell me something, but I walked away because I couldn't do anything to help him. The look of his eyes is strongly imprinted on my mind. What did he want of me? Was he dead or alive?

Since no one was at the temple, I went to a makeshift first-aid center in Kuchita-cho along the Ota River, but again no one was there. I was able to spend the night at a kind farmer's house in a large room with many other victims. A person beside me, who seemed to be talking, suddenly became quiet. I turned to him, and he was lying dead with his eyes open. Similar things happened to other people all through the night.

The next day on 7 August, I returned once again to where our house once stood and was finally reunited with my family. My mother, elder sister, and two younger brothers had taken refuge

in the Aki-Ota district. My father, elder brother, and I cleared the rubble and made a small make-shift shack out of corrugated tin plates, only strong enough to weather the rain and wind, and started our new life there.

On 8 August, we vainly looked for our cousin, who had been mobilized for building demolition, all over the city from the Hiratsuka to the Honkawa districts. We bid farewell to his spirit on Aioi-bashi Bridge. Though I will not touch on the devastation of the city at that time, I was horrified at myself for seeing the dead people around me not as human beings but as objects. It was very painful.

About ten days after the bombing, I started to develop black spots all over my body, and I suffered from fevers for a long time. Bloody diarrhea continued for one month. We never knew all of these symptoms were being caused by radiation. The fever made me feel chilled despite the hot weather. Without medicine or treatment, all I could do was to wait for a natural recovery in our small shack not big enough even for sleeping.

I heard rumors of many people dying with similar symptoms. I lived on a shoestring with the constant fear of death.

Even today, I still feel dizzy, vomit, and perspire a few times a year. I go to see a doctor every time these attacks happen only to be told the cause could not be identified. There are a number of other Hibakusha who have suffered the same.

I want you to remember those people who were burnt alive, who died in agony from radiation diseases, and who survived living in physical and mental agony day in and day out. I want you to try to understand the Hibakusha's experiences.

I am happy to report that late last month the Kumamoto District Court issued a ruling fully in favor of a group of Hibakusha plaintiffs, who had asked for legal remedies to the government's rejection of recognition of their A-bomb-induced illnesses. This victorious ruling was the sixth of its kind. It has greatly encouraged those Hibakusha whose similar cases are waiting for court rulings.

Now, the court rulings establish the just cause of the Hibakusha. The government should correct its improper examination process without delay. When the government appeals these cases to higher courts, the lawsuits are prolonged. The government should not wait until the entire Hibakusha population dies out. It must take a critical look at the war it waged, drawing lessons from it and sincerely work for the relief of Hibakusha.

I am seventy-seven years old now. Four years ago I faced the fear of death when I was diagnosed as having colon cancer and underwent two operations. I still go to a hospital to receive

medical care and to receive thorough medical check-ups a few times a year.

I am enraged at remarks that rationalize the bombings even after all these sixty-two years, as represented by the recent comment by a minister who said the atomic bombings were inevitable. My individual voice is small but if converged together with the voices of others, it will create a strong force of opposition.

My children are second generation Hibakusha, and we worry for the possible effects of radiation on them. We must not leave behind the legacy of the war to future generations. The abolition of nuclear weapons is an absolute necessity for the abolition of war from the face of the earth. I have high expectations of the work you will be doing to achieve that goal.

Finally, human beings made these horrible bombs. Human beings pushed the release buttons. These simple acts killed 200,000 people.

Dr. Jin Keizo

A-Bomb Victims Association in North America

Let me begin by saying that those of us who are atomic bomb survivors living overseas deeply appreciate all the hard work that you and your organization have done over the years on our behalf. We admire and also appreciate your efforts on behalf of establishing world peace. In addition, we are deeply grateful for the encouraging and morale-lifting efforts on finding attorneys willing to work *pro bono* to bring suit against the Japanese government. With their considerable help, we were able to go all the way up to the Supreme Court and secure very important victories, leading to improvements in our living standards. We owe it to your initiative and good work.

There remains, however, a troubling side in our cause. At our annual meeting here in Los Angeles that took place on June 10, our chairman Mr. Mukai informed us that atomic bomb survivors are dying at a rate of 200 a year. This means that those of us who have died will not be able to benefit from any current or future improvements in our situation. It reminds us that as a group we are slowly but surely dying out. In twenty or thirty years we might all be gone. We are saddened not only by the ongoing loss of fellow survivors, but also by the thought of our own mortality. We see in the obituary columns news of the death of more survivors, like those of the chairman of the Brazilian survivors association, and the head of the Korean survivors association.

We realize that we are all living on borrowed time, which is why we feel a greater urgency to gain additional improvements for ourselves from the Japanese government, before time runs out.

In this spirit, we have drawn up a list of steps that we strongly urge the government to take.

1. Honestly acknowledge and apologize for the lack of action undertaken by the government on behalf of survivors for over sixty years.
2. In consideration of the disparities in medical costs between countries, abolish the upper limit of 130,000 yen monthly, which is often grossly inadequate in the United States.
3. For those survivors in the final stages of life, provide financial assistance that will enable them to receive bedside care that Japanese survivors in similar dire circumstances often receive by courtesy of the government and/or private insurance but that American survivors must pay for themselves.
4. Establish a simpler procedure whereby overseas survivors who have difficulty traveling to Japan due to illness or lack of funds can obtain their certificates more easily, perhaps by filing all relevant documents in their home countries.
5. Since the Supreme Court ruled on 2/6/07 in the Brazilian survivors case that there is no statute of limitations on payments to a survivor who goes to Japan to receive treatment along with his monthly stipend and then leaves to go back to his own country, pay the same stipend as soon as possible to all other survivors who went to Japan for treatment and then returned home.
6. Extend from one month to three months the amount of time allowed to submit documents to the government.
7. Regarding the team of Japanese doctors dispatched every two years to perform physical exams and collect blood and urine samples for lab analysis (CBC, lipid panel, urinalysis, enzymes, etc.), find a way to allow these physicals to provide more concrete medicals.
8. Print all documents to be filled in three different formats (all Japanese, all English and both Japanese and English)
9. Find a way to re-organize the program (the one in which Japanese-American doctors are brought to Japan to undergo training in atomic medicine and then sent back to the U.S.) so that these physicians actually take advantage of these training by treating atomic bomb survivors here in the U.S.
10. Upgrade to higher-payment categories those patients who are severely or gravely ill.

We hope that we have laid out clearly what we would like to see the Japanese government do in order to improve our situation. In so doing, we realize that we are imposing additional burdens on you and your staff. We cannot thank you enough for your dedication to this cause. We remain eternally grateful.

Cho Chang Kun
Korean Atomic Bomb Casualty Association
Republic of Korea

When I was five years old, I was exposed to the atomic bombing together with all of my family members in the Fukushima district of Hiroshima City. Soon after the bombing, we went back to South Korea. Then, my younger brother and grandmother, despite their previous good health, suddenly fell ill and died from unknown cause. To make sure I would not suffer prejudice and could marry, my father chose not to register himself as an A-bomb victim, and he died of angina pectoris at the age of fifty-seven.

My retirement at the mandatory retirement age finally allowed me to do things other than work, and in the summer of 2002, after successfully applying for a Hibakusha certificate, I was officially registered as a Hibakusha. In 2005, I was chosen President of the Seoul Chapter of the Korean Atomic Bomb Casualty Association. Since then, I have worked for the cause of Korean Hibakusha.

It has been sixty-two years since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In 2002, a senior colleague of ours, Kwak Kwi Hoon, won a lawsuit in the Osaka High Court, Japan that he had filed against the Japanese government for its denial of his Hibakusha health allowance, generally provided to Hibakusha who live in Japan. It has been five years since Korean Hibakusha started to receive their health allowances since the legal affirmation of Kwak's argument that Hibakusha are Hibakusha no matter where they live.

The needs of Korean Hibakusha, which have been repeatedly expressed in past years, have not been met. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate them since they are very urgent issues. I would also like to point out the existing discrimination against those Hibakusha who reside abroad in terms of the official recognition of having A-bomb-related diseases by sharing my own experience.

First is the issue of the Hibakusha certificate. Today, 2,650 South Koreans are registered as Hibakusha, but 232 of them are not officially certified as Hibakusha. In order for them to be certified, they have to have witnesses prove their presence in Hiroshima or Nagasaki at the time of the bombing and to physically go to Japan for application. Most of the 232 people are unable to find witness and to travel to Japan due to their health problems. Also, there are seventeen Hibakusha who do have witness but cannot go to Japan because of their poor health. We are calling on the Japanese government to dispatch officials to South Korea for face-to-face meetings

and examinations for certificate issuance. I ask for your support in realizing this.

The second issue is the need for removing the limit on the medical allowance for Korean Hibakusha, which is currently 130,000 yen. Compared to Japanese Hibakusha certificate holders whose medical expenses are fully covered, about 23 percent of South Korean Hibakusha must foot part of their medical bills because their allowances are not enough. It is a very significant disparity in support measures vis-à-vis Japanese Hibakusha.

The third issue is the need for also providing nursing care allowances to Hibakusha living abroad.

Now, I would like to share with you my history as a Hibakusha with the hope that such things would never happen again.

In April 2006, I had surgery for rectal cancer at the Red Cross Hospital in Seoul. After that, I came to learn of the existence of official recognition for A-bomb-related diseases, which helps a recognized Hibakusha with additional medical support. I soon learned, however, there were some obstacles for Hibakusha in South Korea in having our diseases successfully recognized as A-bomb-induced.

This is how the process works. In applying, Hibakusha must have medical certificates for their illness issued by specified hospitals and must submit the application forms to a Japanese municipal office in person. I later learned that the medical certificate could be issued by a hospital in South Korea, but I was told that the application must be submitted in Japan, not to the Japanese embassy in my country as I had requested.

It might be easier for Hibakusha who live in Japan to submit application forms to their local government, but this is not the case for us. I had no other choice but to go to Japan in November last year. Local governments, however, are tasked only to check if all the necessary documents are completed; only the Health Ministry has the power to issue recognition. Only five minutes was required to submit the completed forms. For those five minutes, we spend two nights and three days and about 100,000 yen.

This is obviously discriminatory against us. There must be some other difficulties overseas Hibakusha are facing. Such unreasonable approaches must be corrected. I have to wonder why we have to file lawsuits for fair and equitable assistance.

It may not be easy to immediately change laws and rules, yet a certain degree of revision should be possible if only the Japanese government would respect the principle that Hibakusha are Hibakusha no matter where they live. A good example is in the application process for the health certificate,

which can now be applied for at Japanese embassies abroad as a result of the ruling in 2005.

I would like to discuss with you ways and means to overcome the general atmosphere that is making us believe the impossibility of changing the present regulations without resorting to legal remedies. The reality is that aged Korean Hibakusha cannot afford the time and money to go through all the legal processes.

Let me now touch on the issue of North Korea's nuclear program. North Korea's nuclear testing could provide its neighboring countries with a rationale for nuclear armament for defense. Many people are concerned about the possibility that Japan, an A-bombed country, will openly become a nuclear-weapons state, given the large amount of plutonium it possesses and its processing ability. I hear that some Japanese politicians argue for the country's need for open nuclear armament.

Fortunately, the Korean nuclear issue is more likely to be solved with the recent progress made in the Six-Party Talks, in which North Korea agreed to halt the operation of its nuclear plants with the expected elimination of nuclear weapons and disabling of its nuclear capability. It is my earnest hope that Japan plays a leading role in achieving a nuclear weapons-free world because of its tragic experience of suffering from actual nuclear attacks, instead of changing its Constitution, degrading itself into an openly war-fighting nation.

I would like to conclude my remarks by wishing good health and every happiness to all Hibakusha, to those of you working against war and for peace, and to your family members.

Paul Ahpoy
Vice President, Fiji Nuclear Test Veterans Association (FNTVA)
Fiji

Mr. Chairman, the Organizing Committee, honored guests, ladies & gentlemen:

I bring you warm greetings from the Fiji Nuclear Test Veterans Association and the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, the secretariat for the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) Movement.

Between 1957 and 1958 about 285 Fijian soldiers and sailors took part in the British Nuclear arms testing program on Malden and Christmas Islands, Central Pacific. I am a survivor of those explosions, where Fiji veterans were used as human "guinea pigs" to test the weapons of war of the United Kingdom.

We were not given any radiation monitoring devices or protective clothing, while only a few wore anti-flash clothing. I wore my ordinary work day uniform. There was never any medical

tests before or after the nuclear tests. We were told that everything would be fine.

It is now fifty years since the British nuclear tests ended (and ten years for the French in French Polynesia). We have retired home to a legacy that will remain with us until the end of our time. We suffered from skin rashes, bleeding gums, hair loss, finger nails falling off, wives suffering miscarriages and children suffering birth defects. Some veterans became sterile, others died of leukemia or blood poisoning and other strange diseases. My own child died at the age of four after being diagnosed of heart failure. We do not even have a Fijian word for radiation and for other Pacific islands, for that matter. The diseases that we have suffered can only be caused by our exposure to radiation at these tests.

The Fiji government has, for the past four years been giving our Association a grant of about FDS\$10,000 a year.

We are also being paid a small monthly allowance called the After Care Fund, but we are still waiting for our war pensions which was passed in our Parliament in 1999.

Currently we are all waiting for the outcome of our class action in the British courts next year. Time may not be on our side, but whatever time is left I am prepared to spend it all in telling the world of the consequences of the "might" of nuclear powers like the UK on small vulnerable islands and indigenous peoples like us.

In May 2003 our organization received the good fortune of a visit by Gensuikyo to Fiji. Many veterans who met with our Japanese friends have passed on and a few of us remain to continue with our struggle for justice and compensation. There are about 160 surviving members with the oldest survivor being about 85 years old and youngest, 70 years.

In January 21, 2002, I was invited as guest speaker to Lyons and Paris, to join representatives from French Polynesia, the U.S.A., New Zealand and France, under the chair of Senator Lyn Allison of Australia.

The Paris International Network on Nuclear Tests was formed and administered by the observatory of the French nuclear arms based in Lyon, France. Linking all such organizations together with the world's largest body here in Japan would benefit us all.

I thank you for the opportunity to be able to join you in this Conference today and I wish you all the best.

Milya Kabirova
Chairperson, Chelyabinsk Nuclear Victims
Organization "AIGUL"
Russia

Victims of the Nuclear Industry, Tests, and Bombs

I would like to greet all the participants of the World Conference against A&H Bombs and to thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity to take part in this forum.

These days, people from different countries are coming to Hiroshima to express their solidarity with the people of Japan who have lived through a horrible tragedy. Many years have passed, but the pain is still in the hearts of people. Here in the hall there are people who are not indifferent to other people's suffering and who are eager to preserve this beautiful world.

We all differ, but disaster has united us. In Japan, people suffered from nuclear bombs; in Kazakhstan, in Nevada, and on the Pacific Ocean islands people suffered from nuclear tests; and we, in Russia, in the far away city of Chelyabinsk, became victims of nuclear industry.

In 1948, the activity of the Mayak facility began, becoming the first industrial facility in the country to produce plutonium, the main component of nuclear weapons. The time was very hard: after the war, everything was to be done in the shortest time, and the technology was not perfect. Everything was done by way of trial and error.

This facility brought about a lot of suffering for the population living in the vicinity. Three very serious radiation catastrophes happened at the Mayak facility.

The first catastrophe was the discharge of liquid radioactive wastes without purification into the Techa River. More than three million curies of radioactivity were discharged into the river system, and 124,000 residents from forty-one settlements were exposed to radiation.

The second radiation catastrophe was the explosion of a tank storing liquid radioactive wastes. More than twenty million curies of radioactivity were discharged into the atmosphere, and 335,000 residents in 391 settlements were exposed to radiation.

The third catastrophe was caused by wind fallout of radioactive dust from the shores of Lake Karachai that served as a storage facility of liquid high-level radioactive wastes. More than one million curies were spread, and 24,000 people in sixty-eight settlements became victims of radiation exposure.

When many residents were diagnosed with leukemia (cancer of the blood system), the decision to evacuate people from the villages was

made. All in all, six villages populated by 18,000 people, without being consulted, were put into trucks and resettled. Their houses were destroyed. Their cattle were slaughtered. Everything was buried in trenches.

But inexplicably, four villages were left at a distance of thirty to forty kilometers from the contamination site. On this border of the exclusion zone, the first village on the Techa River was Muslumovo. This village is situated in fact on a nuclear waste dump. I was born in this village. Its residents, including my family, paid dearly for all the mistakes of nuclear officials. But they were not mistakes at all. Those who made the decision to produce nuclear weapons just did not take into account the health, the lives, and the fate of the people.

The population of the polluted territories has had to live in a high-risk zone. The number of disabled people has been increasing as well as the number of those who die early. Medical research has revealed high rates of chronic pathology, both among adults and children. The number of radiation-related diseases has grown. There have been very high rates of cancer, of sterility, and of birth defects.

There is only one conclusion: the radiation exposure of the population is still ongoing, and the problem needs an immediate solution.

Our government understands this, and only this year, the fiftieth year after the accident, the decision was made to resettle the unfortunate village of Muslumovo. Paradoxically, the new village will be built on the same territory only two kilometers away from the old village. So one can conclude that medical experimentation on the people is continuing and the authorities want to keep the research project ongoing by all means.

Today, as never before, the problem of radiation, of nuclear safety, is acute. By now, so many radioactive materials have been accumulated that this is not only the problem of my region but of Russia as a whole. This problem must worry all of us as radiation does not know any borders.

I feel the pain that the people of Japan suffered, but we all must understand that the way chosen by the leaders of many countries has led the world to nuclear madness. In their race for profit, they are ready to keep the nuclear race going, so our main tasks are always to remember those who are not with us today and always to stand against the repetition of the mistakes of the past.

Gediminas Rimdeika
Director, Sapiega Hospital
Chernobyl Medical Center
Lithuania

The following year is momentous for Sapiega Hospital. It has been fifteen years since Sapiega Hospital staff members are actively taking part in the World Conference against A & H Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These fifteen years has given us knowledge about Hibakusha treatment and their social problems. We use this experience in Lithuania. For having an opportunity to use this experience cumulated by experts from Japan we are very thankful to Hiroshi Taka san – Secretary General of Japan Council against A & H Bombs, Hida Shuntaro san – Director of Hidankyo's Hibakusha Counseling Center, Isamu Kimura san (Fukuoka Prefecture Council against A & H Bombs - Fukuoka Gensuikyo) and for all the pleasant colleagues from Japan. Regarding these and other friends, Japanese medics-specialists have visited us and consulted Chernobyl nuclear power plant clean-up workers treated at Sapiega Hospital, and a delegation also helped us showing how to give proper treatment and supervision of these patients.

Close connection is also maintained with the New Japan Women's Association, Fukuoka Nishi-Branch. They have given donations to our Hospital and presents for our patients. I want to thank them for all this.

Commemorating the hurtful 20-year anniversary of the Chernobyl accident anniversary in 2006, Isamu Kimura san, Fukuoka Council against A & H Bombs, gave a speech in the conference during his stay in Lithuania. The parliament of the republic of Lithuania showed a big interest in his speech. Due to this he was invited to the Lithuanian parliament in which Kimura san reviewed the movement against A & H bombs since the first explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki until the present days. This was the first notification made by Japanese representatives in the parliament of Lithuania, which had raised a big interest.

Heeding advice given by Japanese specialists we are watching Chernobyl clean-up workers health. If it is necessary we give them treatment at Sapiega Hospital or we send them to other hospitals in Lithuania.

At the present day there are 5985 Chernobyl nuclear power plant clean-up workers registered at Sapiega Hospital Chernobyl medical center. The age of the average clean-up worker in 1986 (during the Chernobyl accident) was 35.5 years.

After analyzing morbidity related to the Chernobyl nuclear power plant clean-up works from 1996 until the first half of 2007 we noticed that most diseases related to clean-up work are

bloodstream (25.4%), therein high blood pressure diseases (72.6%).

Second place is mind and behavior disorders (19%). Third – endocrine system diseases (14%), most of them consist of thyroid nodes (87.2%). Fourth place is gastro-intestinal diseases (10.3%) of which 79.1% are stomach ulcers.

Apart from this we have noticed Chernobyl clean-up workers cancer morbidity, which takes fifth place (9.9%). Since 1986 until 2004 there were identified 214 cancer cases. The growth of morbidity was from 1986 until 1988 (3.1 cancer cases per year). The number stabilized from 1989 until 2000 (11.2 cancer cases per year). Repeated growth started from 2000 until 2004 (16.2 cancer cases per year).

We have to state that since 1986 until 2007 May according to our data, 550 patients (9.2%) among the Chernobyl nuclear power plant clean-up workers have died.

It is a big loss which cannot only be attributed to morbidity and treatment problems. Comparing the period 1986-1997 during which clean-up workers mostly died due to external factors (such as car accidents, fatal accidents, suicides) in 1998 deaths from cancer and bloodstream diseases took the lead.

Problems concerning Chernobyl clean-up workers' treatment should not only be solved by institutions controlled by the health-care ministry but also by the ministry of social security and labor and the government of Lithuania.

The essential factor is Lithuanian's government viewpoint toward social support. Most of Chernobyl clean-up workers find it hard to get a job so they should not only be provided with state guaranteed treatment but also with domestic privileges and pensions.

Most of these problems, especially those related to a healthy lifestyle, and the social and legal problems of Chernobyl clean-up workers could be solved by public Chernobyl organizations.

Concluding my report I would like to give regards to all participants of the World Conference from Vilnius county governor Alfonsas Macatis. He also wants to thank you for continual assistance and support to Sapiega Hospital Chernobyl Medical Center solving Chernobyl clean-up workers' treatment problems.

I wish tremendous success to your Conference - the Conference of great humanity and success for your humane goal for the welfare of the people.

Statements:

Roza Fardieva Chelyabinsk Nuclear Victims Organization "AIGUL" Russia

Dear Friends!

I bring you warm regards from the fraternal Tatar people whose historic motherland spreads from the Volga riversides to the Ural Mountains.

The destiny of my people has not been simple. Our history is famous for the glorious traditions of great states that have made important contributions to civilization. Tatar and Japanese cultures have much in common; as a matter of fact we both belong to the Altai family of peoples. It is possible to find features in common in our music, speech structure, and lifestyles. It is no coincidence that it was the Tatars who established the first Islamic Communities in Japan; the first Mosques in Japan were constructed by Tatars. When Bolshevism came into power and a totalitarian regime was set up in Russia, many Tatar freedom fighters took refuge in Japan and the Far East. Today the Tatars admire the successes of Japanese people, and take pride in their achievements and want to emulate it. The successes of the fraternal Japanese people give us a considerable sense of mission.

At this time I should speak about the tragedy which the destinies of our people have in common. Both the Japanese and the Tatars were victimized by the ruthless war machinery of imperialistic states, and those states embarked on a nuclear arms race. You were exposed to the fallout of nuclear bombs, and my compatriots – the Tatars – fell victim to many accidents at the Mayak Nuclear Industrial Plant. In spite of these tragic circumstances, both our people long for life, and seek for happiness and creative work. Our peoples are still making their contributions to the creation of a multi-cultural world.

The famous Japanese scientist Hiroshi Noma said, "if somebody wants to destroy a nation, it is enough to construct an atomic station in its territory".

After the Second World War, the Mayak Nuclear Industrial Plant was constructed in the Urals for the production of weapon-grade plutonium. Accidents began during its first working day. But in spite of many tragic accidents, the plant continued to function. 33 major accidents have happened at the plant, that have been reported to the public.

On the 29th of September 1957, a radioactive waste storage site exploded. The danger zone from this accident has a radius of 1,000 km which is called the Vostochnyi-Ural Radioactive Trail

(VURT). Many Tatar settlements are within this region, and Kazakhstan, Kurgan and Sverdlovsk regions, and more than half of Chelyabinsk came into the danger zone. Within three months Russian people were resettled into territories free from radiation, but Tatar settlements were left as they were even up to the present time. 50 years have passed, but Tatar villages are still standing on land where the radiation rate is 200 times higher than in the Chernobyl region. It seems that the authorities are waiting for all Tatars to die out.

On the 23rd of May 1993, a Federal Law was passed, titled "On social security for citizens who suffered from radiation effects from the accident in 1957". But judicial authorities and social security authorities obstruct certifying citizens as "a person who has suffered as the result of the accident in 1957" every method that they could, legal and illegal. At last, in the summer of 2003, people who suffered from the effects of the accident in 1957 at Mayak Nuclear Industrial Plant received the status of "Chernobyl cleanup veteran". This is because the May 23, 1993 law is set equal to the Law on Chernobyl cleanup veterans.

I am a lawyer of my people, and I managed to defend these people in the court. But I met with opposition from the strong nuclear lobby including judicial and administrative authorities which together with social security departments were ready to infringe on the rights of aggrieved persons by any means they could. All the clients who I defended were female oncology patients. What kind of morality does the government show, in the actions of its health and social security authorities, seeing with indifference the old, women and children dying from radiation for a half of century, and now taking the position of prosecution?

Among those who received recognition as 'Chernobyl cleanup veterans' were children who took part in emergency clean up work. They call themselves "little cleanup veterans". After the accident at Mayak Nuclear Industrial Plant in 1957, school-aged children, first-grade pupils and school leavers, were bound to labor in the fields under the

orders of the authorities. The children worked from morning till night, taking crops. People in Tatar villages had no idea of what had happened. The truth was kept back from all of them. In addition children from the resettled Russian villages from these regions were told to work in pig farms, and they cleaned bricks recycled from dismantled churches. The bricks were then used to make pig farms in Tatar villages. But the pigs in these enterprises died of radiation. At the beginning of 1957 there were 800 pupils in the country school of the village Tatarskaya Karabolka. Today only 30 people are still alive. The rest died of oncologic diseases, waiting for help from the Government, which never came. Should these government actions and inactions be considered as genocide against the Tatars who have been living here more than 1,000 years, keeping the Moslem faith?

After the "little cleanup veterans" received the status of "aggrieved persons and participants in emergency cleanup", a new precedent was established. As a result similar judicial proceedings were decided in victims' favor in Chelyabinsk, Kurgan, and Sverdlovsk regions.

In spite of everything, the Tatars, atom-labeled, continue to survive and wait...

At the end of my speech I would like to express heartfelt thanks to the Steering Committee of the Conference on behalf of my people and myself. It is a great privilege for me to take part in this conference, and this event is of great importance not only for Japan, but for all people in the World. We always feel pain with you. From my childhood I remember, we drew cranes, and sang Japanese songs. Now I am lucky enough to be here, in your company and I have the chance to tell you about our struggles, as a law ecologist and jurist of my people.

I wish success in all spheres and prosperity to all conference participants. I wish the best to the people of the wonderful country of Japan, and the peaceful sky to all of us and to our children.