

**2021 World Conference against A and H Bombs
International Meeting: Session I**

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I warmly welcome you to the online International Meeting of the 2021 World Conference against A and H Bombs.

It is 76 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki were devastated by atomic bombings. This is a memorable World Conference as it is the first one to be held since the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

The common theme of this World Conference is: “With the Hibakusha, let us achieve a nuclear weapon-free, peaceful and just world – for the future of humankind and our planet.” It expresses our determination to realize a hopeful post-pandemic world. From today, let us work together to bring success to the World Conference as a conference to renew solidarity and cooperation.

Historic significance of the TPNW

On January 22, the TPNW entered into force, making nuclear weapons illegal and banning all nuclear weapon-related activities, including their use, as an international norm. This marks a great step forward toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The treaty’s entry into force is an epoch-making success. It was made possible by joint efforts of the World Conference, which has for more than 60 years called for a total ban and elimination of nuclear weapons, and of the Hibakusha from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as an overwhelming majority of the world’s governments and civil society.

The adoption and entry into force of the TPNW is a testimony to the fact that the key players of international politics are the majority of the world’s governments and grassroots civil society, not a handful of great powers. At last year’s UN General Assembly, 130 countries voted in favor of a resolution calling for countries to join the TPNW. They represent two-thirds of the UN membership.

Each increase in the number of states ratifying the treaty heightens its authority and puts pressure to bear on the nuclear weapons possessing countries. If more than half of the UN membership (97 countries) ratify the treaty, nuclear-weapon states will be further isolated.

The United States, Russia, China, and other nuclear powers are hostile to the TPNW and have refused to join it. They are increasingly clinging to nuclear weapons and strengthening nuclear deterrence.

The nuclear-weapon states are brandishing nuclear weapons, giving priority to defending “their own security” instead of ensuring the survival of humankind. This is unacceptable to the international community. The preamble to the TPNW points out “the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons” and states that “the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons cannot be adequately addressed.” It is clear that clinging to nuclear weapons goes against reason.

The TPNW has the power to defeat nuclear deterrence theory.

As we work to achieve a world without nuclear weapons, we must stop any attempt to use nuclear weapons. Let us build up overwhelming public support for the TPNW and isolate the nuclear-weapon states.

People’s power to end pro-nuclear politics

Opposition to the nuclear-weapon states and the states relying on nuclear weapons is the key to preventing nuclear weapons from being used and advancing toward the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Since the TPNW was adopted in 2017 at the UN conference, public opinion urging the government to join the treaty has been growing in the United States, NATO allies, as well as in Japan. Everywhere, seventy to eighty percent of the people are in favor of their governments’ accession to the TPNW.

Next year, the first meeting of state parties to the TPNW will be held in Vienna. It will provide an important launching pad for the further development of the global movement toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. Its success or failure depends on the effort of civil society to develop the movement and public opinion in each country. Civil society will also be invited as observers to attend the Vienna meeting.

I call on you to take actions around the world and rally around the meeting of state parties in order to make it a turning point toward a total ban and the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The movement in Japan, the only atomic-bombed country, should take a lead

In Japan, the House of Representatives election is held in fall.

In this general election we will fight to make Japan, the only country to have suffered nuclear attack, join the TPNW and stand at the forefront of the movement to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The Japanese government has persistently opposed the TPNW, turning its back on the international community's expectations of the only atomic-bombed country and also on the desires of the Hibakusha and the people. At a Japan-US summit in April, Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide promised US President Joe Biden that Japan will bolster its own national defense capabilities in exchange for the strengthening of extended deterrence, commonly referred to as the US "nuclear umbrella."

The Suga government's dependence on "nuclear deterrents" only helps to increase the danger of nuclear weapons being used in Asia and puts the Japanese people's lives at risk.

If Japan is to defend the peace and security of the country and the people, it is imperative that it end its dependence on the "nuclear umbrella." If we establish a government that joins the TPNW, it will end Japan's security policy of depending on the "nuclear umbrella" and contribute to the abolition of nuclear weapons and to the peace and security of Japan and the rest of Asia.

An opinion survey shows that 70 percent of the Japanese people support the TPNW and call on Japan to join the treaty. The number of local legislatures that have adopted resolutions urging the central government to join the treaty has reached 593, or 33 percent of all local assemblies.

Last fall, we started a nationwide signature drive, which was launched by prominent Japanese figures from various areas to urge the government of Japan, the only atomic bombed country, to sign and ratify the TPNW. The signature drive was initiated by Hibakusha from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, former Foreign Ministry and

Defense Ministry officials, and many prominent figures from a wide range of fields—political, economic, social, cultural, religious, scientific, entertainment, and sports. Even under the constraints of the coronavirus pandemic, 640,000 signatures have been collected.

On July 7, marking the fourth anniversary of the adoption of the TPNW, we ran an opinion advertisement in The Asahi Shimbun, a major Japanese national paper, calling for signatures to urge the Japanese government to join the Treaty. A survey of the newspaper found that 4.5 million people, or 80 percent of the total readers, read the ad, and more than three million people, or 60 percent of the readers, said they gained an awareness of the TPNW. More than 4,500 readers gave their online signatures. Joint action in the signature drive is increasing at the prefectural level.

Convinced of the growing public awareness and broadening movement, we are determined to further expand joint actions regardless of differences of thought, creed, or political orientation, to develop cooperation from the grass-roots in making Japan join the TPNW, and to mobilize overwhelming public opinion to create major changes to Japan's politics. Thank you for your attention.