

2021 WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST ATOMIC AND HYDROGEN BOMBS

Speech by Dong Huy Cuong

Secretary General

Vietnam Peace Committee

Distinguished guests,

Dear friends,

I am very happy and honoured to participate in the 2021 World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. First of all, I would like to thank the Organizing Committee to kindly invite me to address this session. May I convey to all distinguished guests, esteemed activists and friends the warmest greetings and sincere sentiments from the Vietnam Peace Committee and Vietnamese people.

Seventy-six years ago, the nuclear disasters in Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused enormous, devastating and lingering consequences to human and the environment. Since then, peace-lovers in Japan and the world over have spared no effort in the struggle for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, leading to the approval of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 and Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2017. In Southeast Asia, the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ) was signed in 1995 and became effective in 1997, expressing the desire of Southeast Asian States to maintain peace and stability in the region and determination to take concrete action to contribute to the progress towards general and complete disarmament of nuclear weapons. SEANWFZ, together with other nuclear-weapon-free zones are beneficial to the regional dialogues on how to address issues of security concerns.

The Vietnam Peace Committee echoes Vietnam's Government early ratification of the TPNW, as it has done with other similar treaties. It not only demonstrates the country's responsible participation and contribution to the work of the international community to totally abolish nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, but also expresses Vietnamese people's aspiration for a peaceful world.

As you know, the TPNW came into force in January this year. So far, 55 countries have ratified it. It ushers in a major step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons and becomes an important part of the international disarmament and nonproliferation architecture. This multilateral treaty prohibits the development, testing, production, stockpiling, stationing, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as assistance and encouragement for any the prohibited activities for State Parties. The

TPNW also demands victim assistance, environmental remediation, international cooperation and assistance and national implementation.

However, we are all aware that it is far from the total abolition of nuclear weapons as nuclear-weapon states still say “NO” to the treaty. Many countries are still researching, developing, manufacturing, trading in, and threatening to use nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In addition, growing political confrontation among major powers has paved the way for militarism and arms race, leading to the nuclear-weapon states’ refusal to join the TPNW and seeing nuclear deterrence as a “pillar” of their security policy. In Asia-Pacific region, conflicts and disputes in ‘hot spots’ including the East China Sea and South China Sea (Vietnam’s East Sea) with China’s excessive maritime claims, continued unilateral military build-up are placing people’s lives and livelihood at risks.

Friends,

In an effort to struggle for a world of peace without nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, I would like to make the following proposals:

- All peace movements, people’s organisations and peace-lovers worldwide work together to place pressure on all governments, especially nuclear powers to join, sign, ratify, respect and implement the TPNW;

- Promote international and regional treaties, including TPNW and SEANWF in order to the expand nuclear weapons-free zones;

- Strengthen cooperation among such international and regional bodies as ASEAN and IAEA for peace, stability and prosperity;

- Call for peaceful settlement of all disputes in the region and the world, stop the use or threat to use force and fully respect the international laws, including UNCLOS 1982;

- Continue to support the hibakushas and victims of Agent Orange in their life and their struggle for justice. Stories and experience of Hibakusha and Agent Orange victims should be disseminated worldwide in order to raise awareness of the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons and create inspirations for the struggle and effort to achieve a treaty-based prohibition on such weapons of mass destruction.

Friends,

As we see today, after 76 years, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have revived strongly, becoming a symbol of resilience and vitality of the people and the Land of the

Rising Sun. I do hope that this spirit of the Japanese people will be a strong inspiration for us to strive for a world free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It may take years, even generations, to achieve this ultimate goal. The Vietnam Peace Committee and Vietnamese people will join hands with Hibakushas and Agent Orange victims and all peace movements and progressive forces in the great struggle, especially in such context of COVID-19.

On this occasion, on behalf of the Vietnam Peace Committee, I would like to express our sincere and profound gratitude to Japanese people and peace movements and all international friends for your heartfelt sympathy and valuable support for Vietnam during our struggles for national independence and reunification as well as our national construction and development.

I wish all participants in this meeting and the 2021 World Conference good health, security and happiness. I do hope that the Covid-19 pandemic will end soon and we will meet each other in person in the next World Conference.

Thank you very much.