

2019 World Conference against A & H Bombs-Hiroshima

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My name is Mimaki Tomoyuki. I am speaking on behalf of the Hiroshima Hidankyo. I am also the representative director of Nihon Hidankyo.

I was born in 1942 in the Shimura district of Tokyo's Itabashi Ward. I left the capital for my father's hometown in Hiroshima following the Great Tokyo Air Raid on March 10, 1945 and was exposed to the atomic bomb attack.

In 2017, I joined a Gensuikyo delegation to visit the UN Headquarters in New York to attend the UN Conference to negotiate a treaty banning nuclear weapons. We presented an international petition bearing 2.96 million signatures calling for a ban on nuclear weapons to the conference chairperson, Elayne **Whyte**, and UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Nakamitsu Izumi. In December that year, I had the privilege to visit Oslo when ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Since the NPT Review Conference four years ago failed to reach an agreement, Hibakusha had almost lost hope for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Then Hidankyo launched an international signature campaign two years ago for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and Hibakusha, despite their old age, plucked up their courage to pursue their last ditch hope.

In Hiroshima Prefecture, we are doing our best to achieve a set goal of 1.4 million signatures, or half the prefecture's population.

As the average age of Hibakusha now exceeds 82, we feel that our faculties are declining. There are about 140,000 Hibakusha around the country today, but the number will be well below 50,000 within 10 years or so. We do not wish to end our lives without seeing nuclear weapons eliminated. About 210,000 people died in Hiroshima following the atomic bombing. The lists of the names of over 310,000 A-bomb victims are kept in store under the A-bomb cenotaph in Hiroshima.

We want young people to know how horrible nuclear weapons are and to take active part in the effort toward a world without nuclear weapons. High school student peace ambassadors, filled with youthful energy, are working to develop the signature drive and to reach out to people abroad. The task now for Hibakusha is to find ways to hand down their work to their successors.

In prewar Japan, education was aimed at driving young people into war. In the 21st century, we must promote education devoted to building a peaceful country without nuclear weapons.

You have come here to attend this rally from around the country. I want you to visit the A-bomb Museum, which was recently opened after renewal. Photos and other items left by A-bomb victims will help you understand the truth of what happened 74 years ago in Hiroshima. I hope that when you go home, you will tell your friends and co-workers about what you have learned and invite them to think and discuss what would happen if nuclear weapons were used.

Imagine what would have happened to you if you had been in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Just look up at the sky over Hiroshima and try to imagine the scene of the B29 bomber Enola Gay dropping an atomic bomb nicknamed Little Boy on Hiroshima. What do you think is the probability of nuclear weapons being used somewhere in the world? I bet you think that it varies depending on changes in the international situation.

My deepest regret is that the Japanese government cannot be relied on for achieving the elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is impossible for the human race to survive unless we get rid of nuclear weapons, the most dangerous weapons, from our planet. The treaty banning nuclear weapons has been adopted in the United Nations. We will see what the nuclear weapon countries as well as Japan and those relying on the nuclear umbrella, including Japan, will do to move politics forward.

Pope Francis will begin his tour in Japan on November 24. He is to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Let us pay attention to the message he will send from the atomic bombed cities to the world.

I hope his visit will offer an opportunity to disseminate to the world the belief that nuclear weapons are an absolute evil.

Hibakusha are aging rapidly, but we will never give up appealing to the world on the urgency of eliminating nuclear weapons. Let us do our utmost, believing that the day will come when our movement bears fruit.