

2020 World Conference against A & H Bombs (online)
International Meeting

Report from the Organizer

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Welcome to the 2020 World Conference against A and H Bombs marking the 75th year since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On behalf of the Organizing Committee, I extend my warm solidarity to all participants in this gathering and to all our friends who are watching this event on YouTube.

We are meeting at this World Conference under the theme “With the Hibakusha, Let Us Achieve a Nuclear Weapon-free, Peaceful and Just World – for the Future of Humankind and Our Planet”. Participants include officials from the United Nations and the governments of Austria, Mexico and Malaysia, which are in the forefront of the effort to promote the ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). We are joined by activists from the peace movements in the Asia Pacific region, including South Korean friends who are doing their utmost to achieve denuclearization and a peace system on the Korean Peninsula; representatives of the peace movements playing a great role in Europe and North and South America, and dedicated grassroots activists. Setsuko Thurlow, an A-bomb survivor of Hiroshima, is also participating from Canada.

Participants from Japan include Hibakusha, heads of local governments in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and leaders of the international signature campaign in support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We also have representatives of a wide-range of movements on issues such as the revision of the Constitution, zero nuclear power generation, opposition to US military presence in Japan and the removal of US military bases. People who are affected by the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant disaster caused by a major earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan are also with us in the Conference.

The Hibakusha’s experiences testify to the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons. Their average age has reached 83. I express my deep respect for their activities and ask them to take good care of themselves.

We have decided to hold this year’s World Conference online for the first time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is really sad that we are unable to meet in Hiroshima and Nagasaki or to meet in person with representatives of the United Nations, national governments and civil society. Many countries are restricting immigration in order to prevent the spread of the infection. In Japan, there is basically no end in sight to the

coronavirus pandemic, and the likelihood is that restraint on outings and travel and on holding large-scale events will be prolonged as anti-infection measures. Considering all this, we believe that holding an online World Conference is the right decision. I think we can take advantage of an online gathering to encourage as many people as possible around the world to join us or watch it on YouTube amid the pandemic.

As we observe 75 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, our task is to accept in earnest the Hibakusha's call for nuclear weapons to be eliminated in their lifetime and let people in and outside of the country know the damage and aftereffects of the atomic bombings. We are called upon to do more to further develop public opinion and the movement to make the Japanese government support, sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in order to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken the lives of 700,000 people throughout the world. The spread of infection is particularly serious among the poor and the socially vulnerable, including migrants, refugees and indigenous people. The pandemic has revealed the consequences of environmental destruction, poverty, disparities, and cutbacks in healthcare and welfare services and education. The failure of neoliberal policies is clear to everyone. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, known as SIPRI, estimates the world's military expenditure at 1,907.2 billion dollars, or about 200 trillion yen. The present coronavirus crisis has proved that military buildup is useless for infection prevention. The fact is that military expenditure, including money for developing new nuclear weapons, has hampered the effort to improve people's livelihoods and employment as well as healthcare, welfare, education, and other public services. The problem persists beyond the issue of cost. If human resources used for military research and development was diverted to non-military projects, we would be much better off. We must shift the current military-oriented national security policy to "human security", which puts each citizen's life, safety and dignity first.

There are about 14,000 nuclear warheads on earth. Two thousand of them are on high alert and capable of reaching their targets within a few minutes. Nuclear weapons have not been used for 75 years since the atomic bombings. It is said that we have had good fortune and the movement against A and H-bombs has helped to prevent it. In a highly computerized command and control system involving nuclear weapons, a nuclear explosion or conflict could occur due to an error or accident, even in the absence of intention to engage in war. The threat of cyberterrorism is also growing.

The United States, Russia, and other nuclear weapon states continue to maintain security policies that rely on nuclear deterrence. These countries put themselves first and are carrying out the modernization and deployment of nuclear weapons even in the midst of

the coronavirus crisis. Their clinging to nuclear weapons is a major cause of nuclear proliferation and confrontation.

Scientists have long warned that even the limited use of nuclear weapons can annihilate humankind, bringing about climate catastrophe and global famine. We can no longer leave the security of humanity to chance.

The tide for achieving a peaceful nuclear weapon-free and just world is steadily advancing. In July 2017, the TPNW was adopted at a UN conference by a two-thirds majority of its member states. The treaty totally prohibits nuclear weapons, including threat to use them. It established the international norm that nuclear weapons must be banned as the most atrocious weapons in human history. Over the last three years the treaty has been signed by 82 countries and ratified by 40 countries. Its entry into force is a matter of time.

I hope that this year's World Conference will be an opportunity for the UN, governments and grassroots civil society to together develop cooperation to achieve the treaty's entry into force and build up international opinion urging the nuclear weapon states and those relying on nuclear weapons to implement their obligation of nuclear disarmament and the agreements that have been made so far in the NPT, including their commitment to the "unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament."

The true driving force in international politics is not a handful world powers but governments and civil society of the majority of the world. The further growth of public opinion and movements in each country is more important than anything else. Let us bring the COVID-19 pandemic to an end as soon as possible and continue to work together to develop global solidarity and cooperation to achieve a peaceful, nuclear weapon-free, just, and sustainable world. This year, 75 years since the atomic bombings, let us take strides toward entry into force of the TPNW, in cooperation with the UN, national governments and civil society. For this purpose, let us push ahead with raising people's awareness about the damage of the A-bombings and the signature campaign in support of the Appeal of the Hibakusha for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The World Conference is now starting. I would like to conclude the organizer's report by expressing hope that it will be a milestone in bringing together the Japanese and overseas forces for peace and against nuclear weapons, and coming up with concrete action plans to advance the abolition of nuclear weapons and achieve a nuclear weapon-free peaceful Korean Peninsula.