

Concluding Remarks

Special Forum III: Solidarity with the Hibakusha and Agent Orange/Dioxin Victims

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First, on behalf of the Organizer, I express my deep appreciation to Ms. Nishimoto Tamiko, Hiroshima A-bomb survivor, Mr. Nguyen Van Rinh and Mr. Pham Truong, President and Director of International Relations Department of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA), Dr. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong who engaged in the treatment of Nguyen Viet and Nguyen Duc, Mr. Nguyen Hong Loi and Ms. Tran Thi Hoan who spoke on behalf of victims and Ms. Sakata Masako who showed an amazing documentary film. Thank you very much for your great contribution to the success of the session.

In discussion, Dr. Phuong referred to the efforts of the Vietnamese people to hold the US accountable through lawsuits in US courts. The Japanese movement also examined the viability of A-bomb survivors filing a suit in the US. I had discussions with lawyers in the US about this attempt, but found that decisions made by the President and the military during wartime were well protected by a wall of exemption from any responsibility. However, the use of A-bombs and agent orange/dioxin is unlawful even in light of the humanitarian laws of that time. No matter how difficult it is, we, the citizens' movement, have to pursue legal and ethical responsibility for the damage from these weapons of mass destruction. Your speeches/remarks, including those of Dr. Phuong, renewed our determination to do so.

There are clearly common aspects between the damage of the atomic bombing and agent orange/dioxin. These weapons inflict indiscriminate mass killing, make no distinction between combatants and non-combatants, bring inhumane sufferings such as genetic effects and anxiety not only to survivors but to their children and grandchildren, and in spite of the inhumanity and illegality of these weapons, those who used them have made no apology nor compensation to the victims.

At the same time, the victims' experiences of the struggle have given us a very important lesson: that "we must not give up". Five days ago, stunning news made headlines around Japan. Dismissing the arguments made by the State, the Hiroshima District Court handed down a judgement that 84 plaintiffs should be recognized and treated as Hibakusha. They had claimed that their damage and

sufferings were caused by the radioactive Black Rain which fell after the atomic bombing. This shows that with people's support, you can win victories even now, 75 years after the bombing.

What is important is to persistently raise awareness and promote public opinion about the truth of the damage both within the country and internationally. Today we were fortunate to have an opportunity to hear and see valuable reports and stories from our distinguished speakers and a filmmaker as well as those who have long engaged in support activities for the victims. Using the distributed materials today, I would like to ask you all to spread the truth of the damage and the messages of the victims to people around you.

I would like to propose 4 future activities: 1) To make the real damage of these weapons known to people in Japan and throughout the rest of the world; 2) To support efforts to hold those who used these weapons of mass destruction accountable and pursue apologies and compensation from them; 3) To start fund-raising to help and support the victims; and 4) To develop friendship and exchange between Vietnam and Japan, based on the outcome of today's Special Session.

I conclude my remarks by thanking you all again for your participation and contribution to the success of the session, and by expressing my appreciation for the work of the interpreters and technical staff.