

Special Forum 1: Supporting the Hibakusha, inheriting and disseminating their stories

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The 2020 World Conference against A & H Bombs' "Special Forum 1: Supporting the Hibakusha, inheriting and disseminating their stories" was held online from 10:00 to 12:00 on August 5. It was a space for discussion and exchange of views on the task of succeeding the experiences and struggles of the Hibakusha, especially in this landmark 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing. 80 people joined the discussion through "Zoom" and 40 people joined on the YouTube livestreaming.

To begin with, I made introductory remarks on some key discussion points on behalf of the Steering Committee. Then we listened to speeches by the Hibakusha representatives. The first speaker was Mr. Kido Sueichi, Hibakusha of Nagasaki and Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo, who spoke on the "Aspirations and movement of the Hibakusha". Ms. Kakita Fumie, 2nd generation Hibakusha of Nagasaki and General Secretary of Nagasaki A-Bomb Survivors Council, spoke on the life of her mother, who, at age 21, lost her loved ones by a twist of fate. With mixed feelings, she used to describe herself as a "happy Hibakusha" who had survived, despite witnessing with her own eyes the cruel deaths of her family members.

Then, Mr. Takato Seiji, leader of the plaintiffs in the "Black Rain" lawsuit (in which those who were exposed to the Black Rain in places outside the designated area demanded official recognition as Hibakusha) reported on the victory of all 84 plaintiffs in the ruling handed down by the Hiroshima District Court on July 29, just before the World Conference. From Kochi Prefecture, Ms. Masumoto Miho spoke about the chagrin of her fisherman husband, who suffered the fallout of the Bikini hydrogen bomb test of 1954 in his first voyage at the age of 17. He died recently just before the first hearing of the trial in which he and others claimed compensation from the government. Mr. Okamura Keisuke of the Pacific Nuclear Damage Support Center said, "The total victory in the Black Rain lawsuit is a great encouragement for the fishermen and the bereaved families of the Bikini test." The last speaker was Ms. Hara Reiko, lead counselor of Nihon Hidankyo's Hibakusha Counseling Center, who shared the thoughts and feelings of the Hibakusha.

This Special Forum was prepared as an online version of the workshop on inheriting and spreading Hibakusha's experiences, which had been held as part of the World Conference. This year, we were able to share the forum with a larger number of

people participating in the online platforms. But unfortunately, active exchange of opinions and comments from the floor was not made sufficiently possible, perhaps because of the different atmosphere from past years, when the audience was able to sense the breath of the speakers as they listened to them. We used to be able to count and confirm the attendance of the Hibakusha, as well as the 2nd and 3rd generations, and received more comments from younger and first-time attendees over the entirety of the World Conference. In this online format, however, such impromptu responses seem to have been difficult.

On the other hand, in the middle of the forum, we had a pleasant surprise with a performance by the Aichi Singing Voice choir, who sang 4 songs through the Internet Singing Voice Project. This was made possible thanks to the online format, without the difficulty of stage setting or preparation. It brought a special sense of sharing and connectedness, especially to those people who were joining alone from their home PC.

In the closing, the participants agreed to redouble their activities in this 75th anniversary to achieve the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and to encourage the dissemination and inheritance of Hibakusha testimonies and stories through joint undertakings of the U.N., national governments and grass-root civil society members. And they pledged to make greater efforts to promote the International Hibakusha Appeal signature campaign.