

Nagasaki Day Rally

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In our prefecture, on July 18 we initiated a new alliance of citizen groups named the “Nagano Network for Expanding the TPNW --Carrying Forward Hibaksha’s Wish”. This alliance aims at working together to spread prefecture-wide popular opinion and the movement calling on the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW. It is steered by a panel of nine people from various fields, including 3 women, as well as distinguished personalities such as FUJIMORI Toshiki, President of Nagano Federation of Hibakusha Associations, KUBOSHIMA Seiichiro, Director of MUGONKAN (Art Museum in Ueda City showing the paintings of art students who died in WWII), and SUGAYA Akira, former mayor of Matsumoto City. The name of the alliance was decided after an extensive discussion and with valuable inputs from young people: “The Hibakusha’s desire should be our starting point and, as they get old, the challenge now is to ensure the transmission of their will across generations”; “the activities of the alliance should not be limited to signature collection drives but should also include other type of initiatives to enlist support for the TPNW”.

The Nagano Network is the heir of the Nagano Prefecture Forum for the Promotion of Hibakusha International Signature Campaign that was active for 4 years from March 2017. The five local groups, namely Hibakusha Association, Coop, Teachers’ Union, Nagano Gensuikyo and Nagano Gensuikin, that shared the secretarial work for the forum will continue to do so for the new network.

We took full advantage of our experience as citizens groups working jointly to make the Peace March more visible and attractive. In 2018, Gensuikin and Gensuikyo peace marchers of Nagano converged at Zenkoji Temple to form a single procession carrying side by side Gensuikin and Gensuikyo banners, a moving scene highlighting the cooperation of these two long standing rivals. The joint peace march in Nagano is now held every year. It culminated in the exchange of messages between the two groups at the 2020 World Conference.

These joint initiatives of citizens groups were made possible mainly through their cooperation in the campaign to oppose security legislation and to preserve the Constitution. The cooperation developed in scope and power through election campaigns that were run to eventually establish a coalition of opposition parties forming government with the support of citizen groups.

For instance, in the by-election campaign for the Senate fought last April in Nagano prefecture, opposition parties and citizens groups concluded a policy agreement that included the ratification of the TPNW. Our joint candidate won an overwhelming victory. We are now calling for the adoption of this “Nagano-model election campaign” in other prefectures.

In view of the general election in the coming fall, we citizens and opposition parties need to develop a common roadmap so that we can work together to put in place a national government that will ratify the TPNW. However, even if we succeed in establishing a coalition government through citizen-opposition party cooperation and the way is opened for Japan to join the treaty, there still will be persistent resistance and obstruction from opposing forces, the US in particular, before getting to the stage of signing and ratifying the TPNW.

We therefore have to create a groundswell of public opinion to support and encourage the coalition government that will promote the joining of the TPNW. A benchmark for our strength and ability to match this task is the number of signatures we can collect on the “petition to call on the government to sign and ratify the TPNW” currently underway.

According to an opinion poll, 71% of the respondents think “Japan should join the TPNW”, and 85% believe “Japan should participate in the first Meeting of the States Parties to the TPNW”. We must bring together and make visible the opinions of Japanese people in general that widely “reject nuclear weapons for any reason whatsoever”. We are called to take a bold step to build nationwide cooperation across differences in political stance and ideological thought through the petition campaign we are working on.

To bring together an unwavering opinion against nuclear weapons, we must expose the true nature and deception of “nuclear deterrence logic”, which is based on the use of these weapons, and work to overcome such logic.

“Nagano Network” is committed to actions intended to expand the support to a broad range of personalities and people of culture living in Nagano, including mayors, members of local assemblies, on to all groups and all elements of society, so that each city and each village in the prefecture is actively engaged in the signature campaign.