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2022 World Conference against A and H Bombs

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It is a pleasure to send greetings to the participants of the 2022 World Conference against A and H Bombs and would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to speak to you. It is a great honour for me.

I came to Hiroshima in person in 2014 and addressed this conference. Being in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and speaking to many Hibakusha left a profound impression on me. Back then, I was preparing the 2014 Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. At this conference in December 2014, as you may know, the Austrian Foreign Minister presented the Austrian – later the Humanitarian – Pledge. It was subsequently supported by more than 130 states and paved the way for the negotiations of the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Today, 8 years later, I have the pleasure of speaking to you again at this conference. The TPNW is now a treaty in force and its States Parties have just last month had their first Meeting of states parties. I had the great honour of presiding over this historic conference and facilitating its preparations.

The very first time that states Parties come together is a very important moment for any a new treaty. It is the moment where the new norm must be established and consolidated and the implementation of the treaty put on the right path.

If States Parties get things wrong at the 1st MSP it is much harder to correct it later.

For the TPNW, this 1st Conference was even more important. Firstly, because Nuclear weapons and the TPNW are very contested issues. Secondly, and more importantly, because virtually every aspect regarding nuclear weapons is pointing in the wrong direction and the overall trends are very disconcerting:

- **We have seen explicit threats of using NWs by Russia, a depository state of the NPT, in the context of an invasion against a NNWS**
- **Partly as a result of this, We see a worrying re-focus in some states on the belief in nuclear deterrence theory;**
- **We have seen nuclear threats being made also in other contexts**
- **We have seen already for several years – massive nuclear modernisation programs and also the developments of new nuclear weapons and delivery systems**
- **There is increasingly dangerous and strident nuclear rhetoric, including about the “usability” of tactical nuclear weapons. Such irresponsible talk undermines the taboo against the use of NWs**
- **Nuclear Proliferation drivers are getting stronger and more dangerous**
- **We have seen legal instruments and arms control agreements not implemented and some of them terminated**
- **The nuclear disarmament process in the NPT and so-called step-by-step approach has lost much of its credibility**
- **And geopolitical tensions are on the rise**

All this results in and fuels highly disconcerting arms race dynamics and – as far as nuclear weapons are concerned – we are unfortunately already in such an arms race.

So, we are confronted with these trends that all point in a very dangerous direction – except for the TPNW.

It is the one development in the nuclear weapons field that gives rise to hope.

In this treaty – where States Parties and civil society are working together – with a great sense of responsibility - to establish an alternative way forward on nuclear weapons. This is what makes the TPNW so precious and so important. It points the way out of the precarious trap of nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence and tries to build global support for the urgency of nuclear disarmament and for a security approach that is not based on the threat of mass destruction.

The 1MSP was a very successful, substantive and important conference.

Firstly, the conference demonstrated the seriousness of the TPNW and its arguments. We prepared all our decisions diligently and cooperatively.

We took important decisions to put the implementation of the treaty on a very good track. We adopted, for example, an action plan with concrete steps to work on victim assistance and environmental remediation. These are ground-breaking steps that were never before included into a nuclear weapons related treaty.

We also took decisions of how to promote the universalisation of the treaty. One aspect is how to get more states to join this treaty. The second aspect is how to promote the cogent arguments on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons which underpin the TPNW and how to engage with those states that so far do not support this treaty.

We took decisions on how to further develop verification provisions.

We took decisions on harnessing scientific advice for the TPNW and its implementation.

And we established innovative and flexible formats of cooperation on how states parties will work on the implementation of the treaty.

Very importantly, TPNW agreed on a strong political declaration. I believe it is the strongest multilateral document on nuclear disarmament ever. It clearly sets out the arguments in favour of the TPNW, the urgency for progress on nuclear disarmament and it is the most unequivocal repudiation of nuclear threats and of the precarious theory of nuclear deterrence.

I am convinced that the Vienna declaration – represents the position on nuclear weapons that is shared by the 150 States that reject nuclear weapons and an approach to international security that is based on the permanent threat of mass destruction.

With the TPNW we now have a legal framework that allows the majority of non-nuclear states to express their positions and reject the legitimacy of the nuclear status quo. This is more important today than probably ever before.

Due to the negative developments that outlined before, I believe that we are at a threshold moment when it comes to nuclear weapons.

We will either see a slide into a nuclear arms race dynamic. This would be very dangerous and to the detriment of our common security and would potentially put our very existence at stake.

If we do not take urgent action and change course, this is where we are heading right now.

Or, we use this dangerous moment as a collective wakeup call to take credible and directional steps away from the nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence and mass destruction paradigm.

We will never achieve real progress on nuclear disarmament as long as some actors believe that these weapons are indispensable, that they provide security and status.

Nuclear disarmament will be possible once all stakeholders understand that the

permanent threat of mass destruction cannot be a sustainable basis for an international security system; that these weapons pose unacceptable risks to all humanity and the entire planet and that nuclear deterrence is thus not a responsible policy and needs to be overcome.

It is simply naïve to believe that the permanent threat with nuclear weapons will always remain a threat only and that these weapons will not be used.

We see the precariousness of this approach right in front of our eyes and it is getting more dangerous the longer this situation persists.

It is no doubt difficult to extract oneself from the seemingly convincing logic of nuclear deterrence but it is an existential necessity.

The TPNW and the scientific and empirically demonstrable conclusions on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons provide the arguments that can help the international community to take the necessary steps away from nuclear weapons.

This is the rationale of the TPNW and, at the same time, its strength and transformational potential.

These arguments need to be made more forcefully and by more and more stakeholders and whenever and wherever possible.

The NPT Review Conference that is taking place right now is one important moment to do this, even though or maybe especially because the global security context is so difficult.

But of course, the commemoration of the atomic bomb explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is the most pertinent place to highlight the need for a profound change on the nuclear weapons issue.

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In the past 77 years – we have failed to remove the existential threat of nuclear weapons

**We have not sufficiently listened to the warnings and experiences of
Huibakusha and victims of nuclear weapons testing**

**We have failed to heed the declared wish of the UN General Assembly as
expressed already in its very 1st resolution in early 1946.**

**How different would the situation be today if at this moment after WWII,
different decisions would have been taken.**

**Instead almost 80 years later the existential danger of nuclear weapons is still
there and it is getting more precarious every day.**

**The risks of nuclear conflict – or of accidents and miscalculation – is higher
today than it has been in decades.**

**Since 1945, 3 generations have tried but failed to solve this issue and we now
know how often we were saved essentially by luck in these past decades.**

- **We cannot continue to postpone the solution to this issue to an
undefined future and burden generation after generation to living with
this existential threat.**

**But let me end on a more optimistic note. We have the solution to this issue in
front of us.**

**With the TPNW, we have the legal and argumentative basis to move away from
nuclear weapons.**

**I am optimistic - because I believe in the power of arguments and the possibility
of change.**

**I am optimistic because of the strength of the Treaty's arguments and the
evidence on the humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons – and
– franky – because we do not really have a choice if we do not want to continue
to live in permanence with the threat of nuclear war – and potential global
destruction looming over our heads.**

What we do not yet have, is the political will in those states that still think they must rely on these weapons

It will be up to civil society and through a much broader societal engagement on this existential issue to make sure that this changes.

It will require people who look at the world from a global – from a common security – perspective, who understand how interconnected we are and who do not accept the “threat of global annihilation” logic as a foundation of security.

Let me quote Albert Einstein from a letter to the EMERGENCY COMMITTEE *of* ATOMIC SCIENTISTS on January 1947

I quote: “Through the release of atomic energy, our generation has brought into the world the most revolutionary force since prehistoric man's discovery of fire. This basic power of the universe cannot be fitted into the outmoded concept of narrow nationalisms. For there is no secret and there is no defense; there is no possibility of control except through the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world.” (end of quote)

The “insistence of the peoples of the World” is what forms the basis of the TPNW and what I hope civil society and the next generation will accomplish.

Let me salute civil society in Japan for your engagement and your commitment

And for your support for the TPNW

Thank you