

World Conf. against A & H Bombs

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Beatrice Fihn – Speech

Hi everyone, I'm Beatrice Fihn, the Executive Director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN.

First let me say thank you for having me here, and thank you for organizing this important conference on a topic that really is one of the most pressing and urgent global problems.

And this year, unfortunately, we have really seen just how pressing, urgent and dangerous the situation is. In February, a nuclear-armed state - Russia - invaded a country with no nuclear weapons - Ukraine - and threatened to use nuclear weapons against anyone intervening in the conflict.

In doing so, Russia has used its nuclear weapons not for defence or to maintain stability, but to coerce and intimidate - to facilitate its aggression, to constrain the ability of the international community to respond, and to provide a cover for war crimes and violations of human rights. Russia's actions have raised the risks of nuclear weapons being used, and brought the horrifying prospect of nuclear warfare alarmingly closer.

This comes on top of years of nuclear-armed states not only failing to make any progress on their nuclear disarmament obligations, but investing colossal sums to modernize and upgrade their arsenals. As we meet in Hiroshima here today, the review conference of the Nuclear Non-

proliferation Treaty is taking place in New York, looking back at the past seven years of paralysis and failure.

Reductions of nuclear weapon stockpiles have come to a halt. China and Russia are increasing the size of their nuclear arsenals, and the United Kingdom has raised the maximum number of warheads it will retain. Countries that are in alliances with nuclear-armed states, including Japan, have failed to take any steps to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons.

But in the midst of this bleak picture, there are encouraging signs - signs that many countries are not content to continue sleepwalking towards nuclear catastrophe, and are taking action right now to prevent it. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is in force. Like chemical and biological weapons, like antipersonnel landmines and cluster bombs, nuclear weapons are now illegal under international law. This is an extraordinary achievement and a crucial step forward.

And the TPNW is not just a static piece of international law - it is a vehicle for practical action and real progress towards nuclear disarmament. The treaty gives us a framework to eliminate nuclear weapons entirely and it has already started building pressure and normative change.

In Vienna in June, the 65 states parties to the treaty held their first meeting. They adopted a declaration unequivocally condemning any and all threats to use nuclear weapons - the first intergovernmental body to do so. And they adopted a 50-point action plan to put the treaty to work. Also encouraging is the fact that several countries in nuclear alliances - including Germany and Norway - participated in this TPNW meeting.

Some spoke of their support for the aims of the treaty and their interest in collaborating with TPNW states parties. Sadly, Japan did not participate, but I am optimistic that together we can persuade the government of Japan to participate in the next one.

The reason I am optimistic is that it is your energy and commitment that have helped to get us this far. The TPNW could not have been achieved without the tireless advocacy and campaigning by Hibakusha and Japanese people. It is always fantastic to see how committed people in Hiroshima are to abolishing nuclear weapons. The energy and passion that Japanese people bring to this issue, inspires our entire global movement.

It is not surprising — Hiroshima knows better than anyone the consequences of nuclear bombs. But it is not just the Hibakusha who know this, not just the people who lived through the experience and the rebuilding of this city from the ashes that know this — but also regular citizens today, including young people, carry the stories with them, and carry the passion to make sure this is never done to anyone else again. Japanese people know the cost of nuclear weapons, and are dedicated to eliminating them.

So we need your voices, your energy, your persistence as we move forward to expand the membership of the TPNW, to carry out its provisions, and to make progress with eliminating nuclear weapons. When Russia threatens to use nuclear weapons, when other countries threaten to respond with nuclear weapons, when analysts and the media discuss how nuclear weapons might be used in this situation or that, we need your voices to remind the world of the true costs. Of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of *any* use of nuclear weapons.

Of what would really happen if a nuclear weapon were to be used on a city.

We need your voices to remind the world - and the Japanese government - that nuclear weapons can never be acceptable. Not for Russia, not for China, not for North Korea, not for the United States, not for Japan - not for anyone, under any circumstances, ever.

The Japanese Government should know better than any other nation the consequences of nuclear weapons. Japan has joined many other nations in condemning Russia's aggression and nuclear coercion. Yet Tokyo is happy to live under the umbrella of US nuclear protection, and has not joined the TPNW.

Is your government ok with inflicting on other cities the evil that was done to Nagasaki and Hiroshima?

We must harness your voices to show your national government in Tokyo that it is unacceptable to be a willing participant in threatening to use nuclear weapons. That what is wrong for Russia is wrong for Japan too. That Japan must be a leader in the global movement for nuclear disarmament. That Japan must join this treaty.

Encourage your politicians to take up your cause. Grow louder if they do not listen. Know that you have millions of people around the world who share your values and your cause.

Join with them to create an unstoppable force of democratic disarmament.

What happened to Hiroshima must not be forgotten. And that's why Japan has such an important part to play in this story.

So as I have done before, I want to again thank the Hibakusha for their tireless work. For sharing traumatic and painful memories over and over again only to protect others from experiencing the same. And I want to conclude by reading the final paragraph of the Vienna Declaration adopted by the first meeting of states parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which I think perfectly captures the spirit of the Hibakusha and shows us the path ahead:

“We have no illusions about the challenges and obstacles that lie before us in realizing the aims of this Treaty. But we move ahead with optimism and resolve. In the face of the catastrophic risks posed by nuclear weapons and in the interest of the very survival of humanity, we cannot do otherwise. We will take every path that is open to us, and work persistently to open those that are still closed. We will not rest until the last state has joined the Treaty, the last warhead has been dismantled and destroyed and nuclear weapons have been totally eliminated from the Earth.”

Thank you.