

Session 1, August 4

**Message to the Participants in the World Conference against
A and H Bombs**

Lee Gyu-yeol
President, Korean Atomic Bomb Casualty Association
ROK

Do you know that there were more than 100,000 Koreans among the victims of the atomic bombings?

We Hibakusha do not fail to commemorate August 6 and 9, 1945 and humbly pray for the souls of those who died on those days so that they rest in peace.

Dear peace-loving citizens of the international community who are taking part in the World Conference against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs for peace and a nuclear weapon-free world, I am very happy to see you. I extend my greetings of appreciation and encouragement to the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, Mr. Tanaka Terumi and other fellow Hibakusha of Nihon Hidankyo as well as those involved in the organization of this World Conference for their hard work to make it possible.

As we look back, we see that 77 years have already passed since that day in 1945 where more than 100,000 Koreans were exposed to the atomic explosion. Some 50,000 of them were killed on the spot while 50,000 others survived. The survivors, however, were all wounded by the tremendous force of the bomb. Korean survivors in particular, even heavily hurt, were sometimes denied admission to hospitals only because they were Koreans. Those who returned to Korea with the joy of liberation, suffered from lingering wounds and aftereffects of the exposure to the bomb. Some of them, with nobody to turn to, sunk into despair while others died in terrible agony because of lack of food.

Our organization, the Korean Atomic Bomb Casualty Association, was formed by the Korean Hibakusha who suffered rather minor injuries and were able to go back home. We wanted to create our own organization and took contact with each other first on an individual basis and progressively established a nationwide network in South Korea. Through its fifty-five years of existence, the association has grown to have 2,000 members, and their descendants' association has about 3,000 members. Even now, many of our members are struggling with various illnesses whose causes are unknown.

Despite such circumstances, the Korean Atomic Bomb Casualty

Association, thanks to the support and solidarity of many civil society organizations in Korea and Japan, has been constantly campaigning to promote the human rights and well-being of the Hibakusha and to realize a world free of nuclear weapons and peace.

In March of this year, as Russia began to invade Ukraine, Korean and Japanese Hibakusha joined with a diverse group of global nuclear victims' organizations, and sent a strong message of warning to Russia to criticize its threat of nuclear attack. We urge the governments of South Korea and Japan to immediately join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Hibakusha organizations in Korea and Japan are also sharing information necessary for the peace movement to abolish nuclear weapons.

Together with the Solidarity for Peace and Reunification of Korea (SPARK) and other Korean civic groups, our Association is working to organize a citizens' tribunal on the U.S. atomic bombings on the occasion of the 2025 NPT Review Conference. This project aims to hold the U.S. government and others accountable for criminal as well as civil cases, and to demand an apology and compensation. In this context, we are deeply moved to see law professors, lawyers, and other legal experts, researchers, and civil society activists getting together to jointly work on that project.

Finally, I would like to once again express my gratitude and encouragement to you for your brave endeavor against all odds to abolish nuclear weapons on this earth and establish the universal values of humankind. I wish you all the best.