

**2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs
International Meeting – Session III**

A nuclear weapon-free, peaceful and just world – Solidarity and actions of civil society

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Dear colleagues and friends,

It is an honor to be with you all today, to see and hear the strong voices for a peaceful and nuclear weapon-free world from Japan and from across the globe. As a young activist, I feel deeply privileged and humbled to learn from and discuss with you all.

It is fundamentally impossible to have a peaceful and just world without the elimination of all nuclear weapons. The use or threat of use of nuclear arms is a crime against humanity and contrary to international law – the victims of nuclear weapons and testing are the strongest testimony to this fact. We must listen to them and spread their messages the world over – despite their tireless efforts, there are still far too many people who have not heard their firsthand accounts of the horror and destruction of these weapons. Moreover, the mere existence of nuclear weapons hinders efforts to build trust and accountability between nations and prevents true equality on the international stage. Nuclear armed states today can act with impunity and threaten the destruction of our planet to meet their interests at a cost to the rest of the world. Plain and simple, this is terrorism. All while risking war between nuclear-armed states – we know that nuclear deterrence is nothing but a myth - the most dangerous myth.

Firmly understanding the role these weapons play in preventing a just peace and deeply concerned with the existential risk that they pose – higher than any point in recent decades – the International Peace Bureau and our international network of peace organizations has made this a top priority of our work.

Of utmost importance is the empowerment and support of anti-nuclear organizations and movements and to raise up the voices of the Hibakusha. We are committed to disseminating the messages and participating in the events, activities, and campaigns of our partners for the complete abolition of nuclear weapons and all steps leading to it, including pressure for Japan and other nations to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Likewise we are

working to spread the ICAN cities appeal for more local leaders to play a role in the elimination of nuclear weapons. And perhaps most importantly, we will continue to spread the powerful and moving testimonies of the brave Hibakusha, which should be heard by all.

The IPB also continues to develop our own activities and work around nuclear weapons to complement that being done by our partners and colleagues – with a focus on this past week we had held three side events at the NPT PrepCom, underlining some main themes we are working on:

1. The first event drew attention to nuclear sharing policies – an irresponsible practice that increases the fear and risk around the use of weapons by spreading their presence to supposedly non-nuclear armed countries to serve political goals of nuclear-armed states. Such policies are equivalent to playing with fire and are illegal and immoral. Ending nuclear sharing opens up new channels for nuclear disarmament by enforcing existing international law and providing space for civil society in these countries, who strongly support nuclear disarmament, to enact greater changes and pressure at the national and international levels.
2. The second event contemplated the role of nuclear weapons in a world undergoing stark geopolitical changes. The tensions we are seeing since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in which one nuclear power is directly involved and where several others are engaged indirectly is on one hand a symptom of a changing world order; on the other, it reveals that competition and war between great powers has returned and brought with it new nuclear risks and escalation. As we enter what in many ways is a new Cold War, the nuclear risks that many believed to be a relic of the past also return, but with stronger “modernized” weapons and less nuclear arms control than we have had in decades. Nations are again talking about increasing stockpiles and non-nuclear nations want to have warheads of their own or an expansion of nuclear sharing policies. The proliferation of these weapons is once again spoken about openly by politicians and with less resistance from nuclear-armed states.

It is essential that civil society activate to prevent the nuclear hubris. The P5 has already asserted that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought – we must hold them accountable, and increase pressure to return to negotiate on the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. We need to educate and counteract those pushing militarist policies who know full well that nuclear deterrence is a myth and that more nuclear weapons will not make us any safer. This is complementary to our work in promoting the concept of Common Security – which argues that we cannot

achieve security at the expense of our adversaries, but instead must create security with each other. This can only be done through the elimination of nuclear weapons and the rebuilding of trust between nations.

Similarly, in our geopolitically changing world the role of countries of the Global South and the East will have new roles to play. Nuclear Weapons Free Zones which have been established in many parts of the world could play a strong role in the push for the elimination of the weapons – the power in such blocks could assist the push of the TPNW. The Tlatelolco Treaty is the golden example of nuclear weapons free zones and such a model should be expanded upon to include nuclear free zones in other parts of the world – that indeed cover over half of the nations on earth. This includes a role for single-state nuclear free zones and the expansion of nuclear weapon free zones to new areas such as West Asia and Europe.

3. The third event we hosted in Vienna argued for the need to regulate new technologies – from artificial intelligence to cyber weapons, hypersonic missiles, unmanned vehicles, and space weapons. These technologies are developing quickly and create a whole range of new risks for the purposeful or accidental use of nuclear weapons, yet by and large remain unregulated by international or national laws. Many such weapons could target nuclear command and control systems or increase the speed of warfare, leading to confusion or uncertainty of an attacker’s intentions and complicating response – further risking the use of a nuclear escalation. It is essential that we as civil society immediately push for international treaties that limit the use of such technologies before it is too late.

These three events together covered a wide range of issues around nuclear weapons in the modern era and all in the end argue for the same fundamental goal – the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. They are not the only approaches we are taking; indeed, we must identify and pursue all channels, from the effects of nuclear weapons on the environment to the unthinkable sum of money wasted on these destructive weapons – in total almost 83 billion US dollars in 2022 alone – and of course the humanitarian costs if the weapons were to ever be used again. We must build and expand our coalition to create a wider base and strengthen our actions to pressure global leaders to eliminate these weapons. This is not an issue just for peace activists, but for all activists concerned with the future of our planet and humankind. Furthermore, non-nuclear armed states have a vital role to play in exerting pressure on nuclear-armed states. Activists across the entire world can increase this pressure and encourage our leaders to move away from nuclear destruction and toward a nuclear-free future.

We aim to approach this common objective in collaboration with all activists. We understand that together our voices continue to grow louder and stronger to speak truth to those in power, those who benefit from the production and threat of nuclear weapons.

By taking a comprehensive approach to the elimination of nuclear weapons, by bringing together a global movement in which every individual and organization working for peace understand the stakes of nuclear abolition and see their role within our work, we are confident that we can take the necessary steps together to once and all abolish these weapons of mass destruction – for the Hibakusha and for the world. Thank you.