



**World Conf. against A & H Bombs
August 2023**

**Daniel Högsta, Interim Executive Director, ICAN – Recorded Video
remarks**

Thank you for the warm invitation and the honor of appearing before you today. I am deeply humbled to address the 2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs..

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Organizing Committee for their tireless efforts in convening this crucial conference on achieving a nuclear weapon-free, peaceful, and just world for the future of humankind and our planet.

Today it is imperative to acknowledge that we stand at a critical juncture. The events of the past months have highlighted the ever-pressing and urgent nature of the global nuclear problem. The world has witnessed acts of aggression and nuclear coercion, reminding us of the catastrophic risks nuclear weapons pose to international peace and stability. The devastating consequences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remain ingrained in our collective memory, serving as constant reminders of the sheer horror that nuclear weapons can inflict upon innocent lives.

Earlier this year in May, the G7 met in Hiroshima and released its “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament”, a joint statement which falls far short of providing any meaningful outcomes for nuclear disarmament.

The statement recalls the unprecedented devastation and extreme and inhumane suffering experienced by the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the atomic bombs were dropped and reconfirms the G7 leaders’ determination to realise a "world without nuclear weapons."

Yet it fails to commit to concrete measures towards that goal and even emphasises the importance of reserving the right to use nuclear weapons. The G7 are trying to sell decades-old and insufficient initiatives as a new “vision”, when at the same time they themselves are complicit in the rising nuclear risks

and promoting mass murder of civilians as a legitimate form of national security policy.

This is more than a missed opportunity. With the world facing the acute risk that nuclear weapons could be used for the first time since Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed, this is a gross failure of global leadership. Simply pointing fingers at Russia and China is insufficient. We need the G7 countries, which all either possess, host or endorse the use of nuclear weapons, to step up and engage the other nuclear powers in disarmament talks if we are to reach their professed goal of a world without nuclear weapons”

In light of Russia’s unacceptable threats nuclear threats, the G7 leaders failed to offer a progressive and credible response, effectively walking back earlier language by the G20 that clearly condemned all nuclear threats, with equivocations meant to give the nuclear armed states in the group some cover:

Despite the disheartening reality of nuclear-armed states failing to fulfill their disarmament obligations, there is hope on the horizon. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) stands as an extraordinary achievement, declaring nuclear weapons illegal under international law. It offers a concrete framework for practical action and progress towards a world free from the threat of nuclear annihilation.

We must celebrate the dedication and relentless efforts of the Hibakusha and the Japanese people in advocating for nuclear disarmament. Your voices have been the driving force behind the TPNW's realization. The energy and passion you bring to this cause inspire the global movement for peace, and your resilience serves as a guiding light on the path ahead.

It is clear that the message from Hiroshima and Nagasaki must echo loudly across the world: nuclear weapons can never be acceptable, not for any nation, under any circumstances, ever. The Japanese government, given its unique history and experience, should seize the opportunity to lead the way in the global movement for nuclear disarmament. Joining the TPNW would be a powerful statement, signaling Japan's unwavering commitment to a safer and more secure world.

ICAN often talks about how “stigmatising” nuclear weapons is so important and how the TPNW is a gamechanger in making it clear that they are abhorrent, illegitimate and unacceptable weapons. This year we saw how much that



message is resonating – and the real-life impact it is having in preventing nuclear war.

It's easy to feel like international law and forums like the United Nations are unable to have an impact at times like this. But that is far from the truth.

In 2022, the treaty helped stop Russia from using nuclear weapons. The strong global condemnation of nuclear threats and use of nuclear weapons we saw this year is based on the new law we achieved through the TPNW, and ICAN's tireless work to advocate, promote, and mobilize our network to enable this progress.

When the 65 member states of the TPNW met in Vienna in June, they issued the strongest condemnation of threats to use nuclear weapons that a UN body has ever made, declaring that any use of nuclear weapons would be unacceptable, and setting the bar high for how governments must respond to Russia's threats. That unequivocal language came up again in August, when 147 states declared at the United Nations that the use of nuclear weapons is unacceptable "under any circumstances."

The strength and universality of this response took Russian leadership aback, and in late October, we saw Putin walk back his threats. Both the US State Department and German Chancellor Scholtz concluded that the strong international condemnations shifted Russia's behaviour.

We are by no means clear of the danger -- the risk continues to be very high and as we have experienced this year, the situation can change very quickly in any of the nuclear armed states based on the whim of one of their leaders.

Together, we must push forward to expand the membership of the TPNW, to implement its provisions, and to intensify our efforts in eliminating nuclear weapons entirely. The vision of a world without nuclear threats is not a distant dream; it is an achievable reality that we can work tirelessly to accomplish.

Let us never lose sight of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. As we engage in this fight for peace and justice, we must remind ourselves and others of the true cost that nuclear weapons pose to humanity and our planet. By doing so, we strengthen our resolve to prevent such horrors from ever happening again.



ICAN is with you today in solidarity and optimism, knowing that the path to a nuclear weapon-free world is not without challenges. But with unwavering determination and a united global effort, we can surmount any obstacle in our way.

In closing, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Hibakusha for their unyielding commitment to protect others from experiencing the same suffering they endured. Let their courage and perseverance continue to inspire us in our pursuit of a safer and more peaceful world.

Thank you for your attention and for allowing me to be a part of this momentous occasion. Together, let us work relentlessly until the last state has joined the Treaty, the last warhead has been dismantled and destroyed, and nuclear weapons are eradicated from our shared Earth.