

2023 World Conference of A&H Bombs
International Meeting – Session 1

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It is with great honor to be here with you to commemorate the 78 yrs anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Spreading the voices of the Hibakusha is what this session is about in which I find fitting. It's very important, why? Because we care about our planet and human lives. Our future generations should enjoy to the fullest and to thrive, to live without fear for nuclear threats. World leaders should learn from the Hibakusha's experience. No human being should ever go through the pain and sufferings they went through.

I speak on behalf of the people of Rongelap and especially the women. On March 1st 1954 the strongest hydrogen bomb was detonated by US and destroyed the lives of the community. Every children, pregnant women, elderly, men and especially women were severely affected by the nuclear fallout. At the time there were 87 people on the island and had they not evacuated from Rongelap after 4 days of the bomb explosion, no one would have survived.

Today, the people of Rongelap remain to be nuclear refugees. They're living on a very small islet at Kwajalein Atoll called Mejatto. The living conditions on the island is very challenging. There are no jobs available especially for the young people, the sea surrounding the island is limited with seafood, there's lack of transportation between Mejatto and the urban city called Ebeye in case there's health emergency. Women struggles the most because they have to take of the family night and day. The Resettlement fund and compensation monies are

depleting, the value is almost nothing due to increasing high cost of living. The last time there were remediation activity or cleaning up of the contaminated soil on Rongelap atoll was around year 2008 or so. Whether the population will be returning home and how soon is unknown. Similar situation is happening to the people of Bikini and Enewetak Atoll who are also displaced. Even if there were some parts of the islands that was cleaned up but 'trust' is always an issue. The people of these affected atolls do not trust the US Government (DOE) Scientists.

Late last year, the UN Human Rights Council adopted Resolution L.24/Rev.1 on RMI's nuclear legacy. This is a big step going forward to bring in technical team to assist the Government of the Marshall Islands. Hence, it's an act of recognizing the fact that the people of the Marshall Islands 64 years after, they're still struggling with radiation effects.

To help us better understand the cancer problems in the RMI and how to prevent, a two-day cancer summit was held this week in Majuro. Many people from all aspects of the community including students especially women participated. It was reported that most of the patients and deceased are women and every year the cancer rate is increasing. Some of the expertise were representative from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO) and expertise on cancer in Micronesia.

The 3rd Compact of Free Association negotiations between the United States Government is ongoing. However, to ensure funding is secured for FY24, last week, the RMI Government approved an MOU which include compensations not only for the 4 nuclear affect atolls but new additional atolls that US admitted in recent years to be affected from the 67 nuclear bomb tests in the 50s. They are: Likiep atoll, Wotje Atoll, Ailuk Atoll, Mejit Island and Wotho Atoll and fund a new hospital that will be well equipped with specialized doctors to treat cancer patients in country rather than overseas referral which is more costly.

The Chairman of the RMI National Nuclear Commission (NNC) was happy to hear about the Gensuikyo's interest to join and be part of the Nuclear Victims

and Remembrance Day (NVRD) in Majuro next year. This is a time to showcase the solidarity between the Japanese Hibakushas and Marshallese people. The team is most welcomed he said.

Mr. Alson Kelen further supported the idea of holding a conference or sort where we could together lead the discussions on the Treaty of the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and bring in members of parliament and government officials, NGOs, Religious groups, 4 atolls and other relevant members of the community. The former Minister of Foreign Affairs and other key members of the parliament supports this proposed initiative as well.

The last point I'd like to mention is regarding the visit to Wotje Atoll. Minister Ota Kisno this week reminded me of the request he made to Gensuikyo. He's is very concerned about his people's health and very keen to know if the environment they're living in is safe. He also asked me to convey his greetings and that he's looking forward to seeing you in the Marshall Islands.

To conclude my speech, I wish to express our sincere appreciation to Gensuikyo for your continued support extended over the years to the people of the Marshall Islands especially the people of Rongelap. And thank you for the invitation for me to be part of this very important event. We shall overcome someday!