

Opening Plenary, August 7

2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs - Nagasaki

Joseph Gerson

Campaign for Peace, Disarmament and Common Security

U.S.A.

Friends,

It is a privilege to rejoin the World Conference after the pandemic years. Given the increasingly dangerous great power confrontations, accelerating nuclear arms races, and assaults on the U.N. Charter our collaborations are more important than ever.

I have just come from Korea, where like Taiwan, an accident or miscalculation could trigger escalation to nuclear war. Across Northeast Asia all parties to the region's tensions have first strike doctrines, including Japan's conventional preemptive strike capacity with U.S. cruise missiles. Indian-Pakistani tensions continue apace, and there's France, Britain, and Iran's nuclear program.

Following in the U.S. tradition of preparing and threatening to initiate nuclear war, Putin and Medvedev are rattling their nuclear sabers. And, with its conventional military inferiorities, Russian will increasingly rely on its nuclear arsenal for years to come.

Elsewhere, the U.S., Japan, and their allies are massively increasing their military spending, increasing the danger of war and sacrificing spending for human needs. The U.S. is upgrading and replacing its nuclear arsenal and its first strike delivery systems. A U.S. nuclear armed submarine just returned to South Korea after 40 years, and new U.S. nuclear weapons are being deployed in Europe. After Bush II

and Trump assaulted the world's arms control architecture by withdrawing from the ABM and INF treaties, Moscow put the last nails in the arms control coffin by suspending New START. And refusing to be intimidated by the U.S., China is increasing its nuclear arsenal, dangerously preparing to achieve parity with the U.S and Russia.

This takes place in the context of Biden's *National Security Strategy* which states that: "the post-Cold War era is definitely over, and competition is underway between the major powers to shape what comes next." The continuing belief that "America is the indispensable nation" fuels self-defeating policies and dangerous actions including seeking Russia's strategic defeat in Ukraine and sending warships through the Taiwan Strait.

Biden's *Security Strategy* names the "China threat" as "the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and increasingly the economic, diplomatic, military and technological power to do it." It names China as the "pacing threat" driving U.S. military planning. Biden's cohort understand that they can no longer enforce U.S. hegemony without integrating their allies' military, economic and technological resources. They encouraged Japan to double its military spending, consolidated the QUAD and AUKUS alliances, and are pressing Tokyo and Seoul to build a tripartite alliance. And NATO names containing China as an Alliance priority.

China hasn't stood still, doubling its nuclear arsenal and has a navy larger than the 7<sup>th</sup> fleet. There are the warplanes sent across the Taiwan Strait's median line and the warships and planes active in the East China Sea.

I have thought about how my grandson would hear my references to the existential dangers of war, nuclear war, and the climate emergency. Let me close with hope. “There are cracks in everything/that’s how the light gets in.”

Our movements to create a nuclear weapons-free world, to defend democracy, create a sustainable environment, to stop the killing in Ukraine, and pressing for essential Common Security diplomacy are all cracks in the systems that threaten us. To expand the cracks, and defend civilization and people’s lives we need to continue teaching the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and celebrate the extraordinary courage of Hibakusha who have provided humanity the gift of their searing testimonies that eviscerate the illogic of nuclear deterrence. And we need to support and expand the influence of the TPNW. With our combined efforts we can expect more governments to ratify the Treaty and bring some umbrella states to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of States Parties.

People debate if there is sound when a tree falls in a forest and no one hears it. Our responsibility is to ensure that there will be sound and powerful reverberations to end and prevent wars and to prepare the way for a nuclear weapons-free world. Preparing for the TPNW’s 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in November, representatives of more than 20 organizations have been meeting to coordinate activities there. We look forward to hosting our Japanese and other partners there as we demand creation of the nuclear weapons-free world we need and deserve. I hope to see many of you there as we let the light in by broadening the cracks in the nuclear annihilation system.