

2023 World Conference against A and H Bombs

Virtual remarks by Izumi Nakamitsu, Under Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am, once again, honoured to participate in this important conference, which shines a spotlight on the testimonies of the *hibakusha* – the courageous survivors of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

This conference is an opportunity to collectively reflect upon the unparalleled destructive power of these cataclysmic weapons and reaffirm, once again and with renewed vigor, our commitment to bringing about their total elimination.

It is also an opportune moment to acknowledge the indomitable spirit of the *hibakusha*, the human face of nuclear catastrophe. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the *hibakusha* for transforming their suffering into a force for good and for their decades of service to the cause of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Nearly eight decades have passed since the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Since its inception, the United Nations has made the elimination of nuclear weapons its highest disarmament priority.

Yet, our goal of achieving a world without nuclear weapons remains unfulfilled.

Current events – including the use of nuclear weapons as tools of coercion – have spiked the risk of these heinous weapons being used to levels not seen since the depths of the Cold War.

The increasing prominence of nuclear weapons in national security strategies is accompanied by modernization programmes to make these already calamitous weapons faster, more accurate and stealthier.

Technological developments, competition – economic and military – and evolving strategic conditions warrant a re-examination of our approaches to peace and security.

The world is in transition, and we need new impetus to drive humanity forward in

its quest for peace.

To this end, the Secretary-General has proposed a New Agenda for Peace, to elaborate on how we can manage competition and collectively seek solutions to new and emerging risks. The New Agenda for Peace will reinvigorate efforts to ensure that the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons – the NPT - at its center, remains fit-for-purpose.

Civil society must be a catalyst for turning the tide of nuclear risk. It was civil society, together with the hibakusha, who provided the impetus for the NPT. They helped galvanize the frustration felt by many countries at the slow pace of nuclear disarmament into the negotiation of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – the TPNW. I warmly welcome the successful conclusion of the first Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW and the adoption of a practical action plan for the Treaty's implementation. I trust that the second Meeting of States Parties, to be held later this year, will be equally inclusive, innovative and forward-looking.

With so many leading civil society organizations present at this conference, I take this opportunity to call on all of you to redouble your efforts to reverse the current dangerous trends and to return the world to a common path for the elimination of nuclear weapons. At the United Nations, we will continue to strive to make sure that your voices are amplified, and your actions compounded.

The United Nations is staunchly dedicated to ensuring that the survivors' testimony lives on and is spread to the broadest possible audience, including to younger generations. We must invest in and empower today's young people to be changemakers for a safer and more secure world, including through initiatives such as the newly established Youth Leader Fund for a World Without Nuclear Weapons, generously supported by Japan.

We have lived for too long under the spectre of nuclear catastrophe. For the sake of all of humanity, let us all use this solemn occasion to recommit to the achievement of a safer and more secure world – a world that is finally free of nuclear weapons.

I reiterate, once more: No more Hiroshimas. No more Nagasakis.

Thank you.