

International Meeting  
2021 World Conference against A and H Bombs

Yayoi Tsuchida  
Assistant General Secretary  
Japan Council against A and H Bombs

Japan is witnessing before its very eyes the intensification of the US-China military confrontation. Claiming sovereignty over the South China Sea and the East China Sea, China is strengthening its effective control of the region in violation of international law, as seen in the building of military bases. In response to these hegemonic maneuvers, the US has strengthened its global containment against China, mobilizing its allies, Japan, South Korea, Australia and India, as well as NATO member states such as UK and France. As Joseph Gerson says, if a military conflict occurs accidentally, there is a danger of it escalating into a large-scale war between big powers and even the use of nuclear weapons.

While the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) has come into force and the overwhelming majority of countries and people in the world are trying to move to a world free of nuclear weapons, humanity is still under the threat of nuclear extinction. Nuclear armed states are turning their backs on the TPNW, sticking to nuclear deterrence, modernizing nuclear weapons and intensifying the arms race.

**Great powers should fulfill their responsibilities**

In recent years, it is said that nuclear weapons and climate change are global risks threatening the survival of humankind and the earth. Faced with these crises, people all over the world are crying out for measures to resolve them. I feel indignation against nuclear armed states, especially the P5, for prioritizing their own national interest and bringing humanity and the planet to the brink of annihilation. The P5 are permanent members of the UN Security Council. The Security Council's mission is to have primary responsibility for international peace and security under the Charter of the United Nations. We urge these countries to stop hegemonic rivalries and wargames, settle disputes by peaceful means, shift to abolishing nuclear weapons based on the UN Charter, and fulfill their responsibility to protect world peace and security.

## **Japan is dragged into war and nuclear catastrophe**

What is more serious is that the Japan-US summit meeting held on April 16 defined the Japan-US alliance as "the foundation of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and the world as a whole," and the government of Japan, as an equal partner of the US, agreed to promote military integration between the two countries.

In the Japan-US joint statement, the US stated its "unwavering support for Japan's defense under the Japan-US Security Treaty using all kinds of US capabilities, including nuclear"; and, being under the US nuclear umbrella, Japan promised to strengthen its defense capabilities.

"The importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait" was also confirmed. The Japanese government emphasized this in the context of strengthening the military alliance with the US, and it was agreed that the Self-Defense Forces would "commit" to the "Taiwan emergency." It is clear that if the Self-Defense Forces participate in any US military operations in case of the "Taiwan emergency", Okinawa and the Nansei Islands will be involved in war and turned into battlefields. We must not allow such a catastrophic situation to happen.

While saying that it shares the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons as a country which suffered the A-bombing, the Japanese government has opposed the TPNW and committed to maintaining nuclear deterrence, entrusting Japan's security to US nuclear weapons. I cannot suppress my anger at seeing the abnormal subordination of the Japanese government to the US, and seeing it forge ahead down the path of dragging its people into war and nuclear disaster. At the UN General Assembly and the NPT conferences, it has distorted the NPT's agreements in its resolutions and spoken for the nuclear weapon states. Disregarding people's suffering from the coronavirus pandemic, the government has promoted such outrages as a record-high defense budget, bulk-buying of US arms, strengthening of deployment to the U.S. military bases stationed in Japan, participation of the Self-Defense Forces in joint military exercises, and attempts to revise Article 9 of the Constitution. We must even more urge the Japanese government to take the lead in the abolition of nuclear weapons, as the only-A-bombed country, and carry out diplomacy based on the UN Charter and the Constitution. For this purpose, the government should abandon military-first policies and break away from the US nuclear umbrella.

### **TPNW defeats nuclear deterrence theory**

In this regard, the TPNW, which came into effect in January this year, has empowered us. The Treaty calls on the world to shift from "peace and security by nuclear deterrence" to "peace and security of a world free of nuclear weapons." It confronts head-on the nuclear deterrence theory that nuclear-weapon states and Japan have advocated. The current crisis facing us is nothing less than the culmination of competition and arms races based on nuclear deterrence by nuclear-weapon states and "nuclear umbrella" states. If the Japanese government joins the Treaty, this will bring about a major shift in its nuclear umbrella and security policy, and will also make a significant contribution to the peace and security of Japan and Asia.

To this end, we must increase public awareness that peace and security cannot be protected by nuclear weapons, and that the US, China, and Japan should stop military-first policies. The signature campaign to urge the Japanese government to sign and ratify the TPNW, which we have been conducting since October last year, plays that role.

The entry into force of the Treaty has also raised the interest and awareness of a wide range of people in Japan. The signature campaign was launched with 137 prominent people from all walks of life as joint proposers, including world-famous musician Ryuichi Sakamoto and former Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka. On July 7 we posted an opinion advertisement in The Asahi Shimbun, which has 5 million readers. In response, we received a lot of signatures and donations from a wide range of people saying, "I feel the same way!" In opinion polls, 72% of the population said the government should join the TPNW. As of July 20, 593 local governments have adopted resolutions to urge the government to join the treaty.

### **Let's develop the movement with the TPNW as leverage**

It was announced that the 10th NPT Review Conference, which had been postponed due to the Corona virus pandemic, will be held in January next year. We are determined to put pressure on nuclear-weapon states and umbrella states including Japan to not only fulfill their obligations under Article 6 and the agreements to eliminate nuclear weapons, but also to seriously face the international law of the TPNW and achieve the total prohibition of nuclear weapons. Next year, the First Meeting of State Parties to the TPNW is also scheduled. According to a Kyodo News article dated July 6, Austrian Ambassador Alexander Kmentt indicated that there would be discussion about a proposal for a 10-year

deadline for the abolition of nuclear weapons by nuclear powers. This news has raised our expectations greatly.

In Japan, a general election to determine the future of this country will be held in September or October. By generating more public support for the TPNW and encouraging political parties and parliamentarians to strengthen pressure on the government on this issue, we must create changes to Japan's politics leading the government to shift from its stance of subordination to the US and dependence on nuclear deterrence towards joining the TPNW. I am convinced that developing public opinion and the movement, with the TPNW as leverage, is the way to contribute to these decisively important political battles. Let's do our best together.