I Desire to Abolish Nuclear Weapons: Appeal of a Hibakusha

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Chairperson, government representatives, and dear friends, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak before you in this session.

I am KIDO Sueichi, and I now work as the Assistant General Secretary of Nihon Hidankyo. I am 69 years old, making me one of the relatively younger Hibakusha (A-bomb survivors). I was only five years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Soon the generation of Hibakusha who directly experienced the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will die out, but the aftermath and damage of the A-bombs will continue. I am sharing my A-bomb experience with you, wishing that it would be of some help in our common effort to achieve a world without nuclear weapons.

At 11:02 on 9 August 1945, I was with my mother on Asahi-machi Street in Nagasaki about two kilometers from the blast center of the bomb. I heard the roaring sound of a bomber. As I looked up in the direction of the sound of the airplane, I saw a brilliant flash, and I was blown to the ground by a strong blast. I immediately lost consciousness. My mother carried me in her arms, fleeing to an air-raid shelter on the slope of Mt. Inasadake.

My sister Akiyo later found us in the air-raid shelter. It was very dark in the air-raid shelter, so she lit a match. In the light of the match, she found my other sister Yukiko, my Mother, and me lying on the floor together with many other injured people. Mother’s face was severely burned and swollen, and her chest and arms were also burned. Akiyo could not stop her tears from flowing when she saw Mother’s miserable condition that was beyond description. Half of my face and my chest were also heavily burned. At first, my burns did not appear so bad, but on the following day, pus started to ooze out of the infected parts of the burns. I also had a high fever of about 40 degrees Celsius.

On that following day, we took the road along the bank of the Urakami River (about a half kilometer from ground zero) to escape to Michinoō (about 3.5 kilometers from Nagasaki). In the vast area from around the explosion center to 1.5 kilometers away, there was not even a single house standing, not even the remnants of houses. Along the street, numerous dead bodies were scattered around. Corpses were also strewn under Ohashi Bridge. The dead were all left scattered, falling wherever they were at the time of the bombing. It was really a hell on earth. While walking, I was naked and Yukiko was wearing only a slip.

The atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and on Hiroshima three days before killed 70,000 and 140,000 people respectively by the end of 1945. How could such cruel and horrible weapons be used? They are nothing but the weapons of the devil.

In 1952, immediately after the U.S. occupation of Japan ended, the Asahi Graph photo-magazine published a special issue featuring the atomic bomb. I was terribly shocked by the rumor that spread after the magazine was published. The rumor was that all the Hibakusha were doomed to die from leukemia and that the Hibakusha would give birth to deformed babies. That was the first time I clearly realized that I myself was a Hibakusha. The damage done by the A-bombs did not end in 1945, and even now, they continue to torment the physical bodies and spiritual minds of the survivors. Many still die from cancers or leukemia, and the survivors are in constant fear of possible outbreaks of illnesses or
genetic effects as aftereffects of A-bomb radiation.

The entire picture and facts about the damages caused by the A-bombs have not been fully revealed. Fragmentary and incomplete knowledge about their effects on the human body have given rise to misunderstandings and prejudices, which lead to discrimination against the Hibakusha. This discrimination against the Hibakusha still persists sixty-four years later, and not a few of them continue to hide their identity as Hibakusha. Even after I recovered from such acute symptoms as loss of hair, bleeding from the gums, and diarrhea, I was a weak child and could not go to primary school every day. Naturally, in my boyhood, I kept quiet about my experience of the A-bombing. During my high school days, I sometimes thought seriously that I should not have children or that I should not marry anyone.

I got married in 1973. I had long kept my silence about my A-bomb experience, but by then, I was convinced that the Hibakusha must get married and have children, as it would be one way to prove that human beings could overcome the A-bomb. My lover decided to marry me in full knowledge of the health and social problems the Hibakusha had. She read books on the issues Hibakusha faced so she could make her decision knowingly. But her elder brother was firmly against our marriage, and he refused to attend our wedding ceremony. When my wife gave birth to a healthy baby girl, I was so relieved. But when our daughter was young, she often had nose bleeds, sometimes very heavy ones. I was so anxious about her, thinking that it might be related to my exposure to the A-bomb. Now, she is healthy, but my fears about her health still persist.

Though the movement against A-and H-bombs gained momentum nationwide in the late 1950s, only Gifu prefecture, where I had moved, did not have the movement. But in 1990, the first consultation on the problems of the A-bomb survivors was held and more than a hundred survivors gathered, which led to the founding of the Gifu A-Bomb Victims Association in 1991. At that time, I finally thought that the time had come for me to become involved and play my part. I joined the association and have served as General Secretary of the organization ever since.

In Japan there are about 240,000 surviving A-bomb victims. I am one of the younger ones. Every year, about 8,000 Hibakusha pass away. Even out of my limited experience, I can assert this: A-bombs are weapons of the devil, inherently meant for total destruction only. They do not allow humans to die or to live as humans. Humans cannot coexist with them.

We Hibakusha, A-bomb survivors, have talked about the reality of human suffering caused by A-bombs and have called for the swift abolition of nuclear weapons, because we do want such hellish sufferings and agonies to not be experienced by anyone. ‘No more Hibakusha’ is the appeal that we send out from the bottom of our hearts, out of our life-long experience.

Recently, President Obama of the U.S. said, “as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act” for the abolition of nuclear weapons. We feel encouraged by his words. Our strong desire is that his words will be put into action towards the 2010 NPT Review Conference. I conclude my speech by urging all of you to agree on the conclusion of a nuclear weapons convention, and to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons within a set time frame.

No more Hiroshimas! No more Nagasakis! No more Hibakusha! No more war!

Thank you for your kind attention.