Youth Speech

*Convenor: Nina Eisenhardt, Ban All Nukes generation*

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Ambassador Chidyausiku, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you and the NGO community for giving us the chance to raise our voice at this conference, which is dealing with topics that are vital for our future. This speech has been collectively written by young people from many countries and today I am speaking for the well-educated youth who are involved with campaigns for nuclear disarmament but as well for those who are not educated about the nuclear threat.

Is there a necessity and responsibility to educate youth on nuclear weapons?

We believe that it is not that young people do not care but that they do not know about what is happening. It seems impossible to us that anyone, having learned about the pain and suffering of Hibakushas and all victims of nuclear tests, would be able to accept the continued existence of nuclear weapons. These bombings make clear to us that the harm a nuclear weapon creates is dreadful and indescribable. We have to realize that we are the last generation who can learn directly from the victims of the nuclear bombings and for this reason we have to act now so that we do not forget and repeat the horrific history.

We demand that all governments educate children and provide opportunities to learn from the Hibakushas’ experiences and from history, allowing them to make up their own minds on issues of importance to the present and future life.

Don’t you think that nuclear weapons are absurd in a world where countries have made international commitments to peace?

We have to ask ourselves why we are not questioning a system where security is based on military power. The mistrust between countries makes it impossible to forswear military predominance, to leave the spiral of arms race - which is moving to a fight over supremacy in outer space. It is crucial that we abandon this spiral. We have to follow the Charter of the United Nations. We have to create trust, instead of mistrust.

We demand all governments to apply confidence-building measures and international agreements and to hold up the NPT for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Can’t you imagine a better use for the millions governments are spending every year on nuclear weapons?

Already their production is destroying life and our future. People are mining uranium under lethal conditions and are leaving behind radioactive waste that contaminates the environment in which animals are living and children are playing. The use and handling of nuclear materials cause damage to our bodies and also next generations will suffer from the manipulation of our
genes. And for what? Creating a weapon of mass destruction and spending millions of Dollars, Euros, Pounds, Yuan and Ruble for the storage of these weapons. This money could be used much better in fields like unemployment protection, renewable energy projects, poverty reduction, healthcare and education. Spending money for nuclear weapons is destroying our future: it destroys the environment in which we live and it destroys possibilities and it has the power to destroy all our lives. We are arguing for a common future for coming generations as youth from countries all over the world because we have to leave behind the national levels on which states are arguing.

We demand all governments to stop the destruction of our future immediately and work together for a living future.

Do you want nuclear weapons to be your legacy to your children?

The children of the world and all coming generations are innocent. None of us made the decision to have nuclear weapons; we were born into a world where they exist. But why should we accept their existence and the threat this weapons cause through the day by day increasing risk of an accidental, terroristic or intended use? From an objective point of view - especially for those of us who had no experience of the world wars or the cold war - their existence is not justifiable and they are useless and obsolete. We do not want our governments to use “our safety” as an excuse to possess, renew or even use nuclear weapons. We do not feel “safe” in a world with nuclear weapons.

We demand all governments not to leave this negative legacy to us.

Do you think a world without nuclear weapons is possible?

The answer to this question must stem from an innermost wish. This wish should grow to become the political will to bring the change our children need to live a safe and healthy life. It is clear for us, every child and every youth, that nuclear weapons and human beings cannot coexist. This must also become clear for every political leader. A nuclear weapons convention, leading to the decommissioning and banning of all nuclear weapons, would be the result of this insight. It would make a world possible where people don’t have to live in fear of weapons of mass destruction.

We demand all governments to act now and begin negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention. The time is ripe. Nuclear weapons are a hindrance, an obstacle to international cooperation. Let us cast this obstacle aside as a useless and shameful artifact of the past and embark on a new era of global partnership.

We are told that nuclear weapons are here for deterrence.

We are told that we need them and have to accept them.

We are told that this situation cannot be changed even if we dislike it.
Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentleman, we are here to tell you that we have the imagination that it is possible to achieve a nuclear weapons free world. If you listen to what the citizens in your home country are saying, you will hear the same words we are saying today. We don’t have the political power to create a nuclear weapons free world but what we have is the innermost wish, imagination and energy!

Accept it as a gift.

Thank you.