Dear distinguished chairperson and government representatives,

I express my sincere gratitude to you all for giving me an opportunity to speak on behalf of the A-bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. My name is Mikiso IWASA, I am a survivor of Hiroshima.

As you may know, Japanese people suffered from the damage of A-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki 67 years ago. We also went through the damage of the US Bikini H-bomb test in 1954. And in 2011, the East Japan Great earthquake, tsunami and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant disaster occurred, which gave us a shock as we have appealed for no more radiation victims.

This nuclear disaster reminded us of the unprecedented catastrophe caused by the first use of nuclear weapons in human history in the war of 67 years ago, and reinforced our recognition that we humans are still living under the danger of nuclear weapons. The 2010 NPT Review Conference produced an historic outcome to open up prospects for a nuclear weapon-free world. Being present at the start of a new NPT cycle toward 2015, I sincerely want to urge you to implement the agreements of the 2010 NPT and turn this cycle into a process of abolishing nuclear weapons.

On that day, August 6, 1945, I was 1.2 kilometers from the blast center of the A-bomb and I went through a hell on earth. I was 16 years old. The atomic bomb yielded a tremendous destructive power that defies any human imagination, a combination of blast pressure, heat rays and radiation. I was knocked down on the ground, hit by a strong blast that blew with a speed of more than a hundred meters per second, and in the next moment, the city of Hiroshima literally vanished from my field of view. I had never imagined that such a thing could possibly happen on earth, but it just happened.
I found my mother trapped under the collapsed house and tried to pull her out from there, but it was impossible for the young boy I was. Around me turned into a blazing inferno, which was about to engulf me. At the end, I fled from the fire, turning my back to my mother who was saying prayers sensing that she was going to die. Yes, I let her die. She was burnt alive, caught in the fire.

I desperately managed to reach a swimming pool in the schoolyard of a junior high school located behind our house. I jumped into the water and could escape from the fire. I still remember that a man barely reached the schoolyard a little later, but he got burned to death.

A couple of days later, I dug out what looked like my mother’s body from the ruins of our house. It was an object greasy with fat, like a mannequin painted with tar and burned. I could not believe that it was her body. She was killed mercilessly, like an object, not like a human being. The deaths of A-bomb victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki can hardly be described as “human deaths”.

My younger sister, then a first grader in girls’ middle school, had been mobilized and was working near the blast center when the bomb was dropped. She is still missing. Even today, we do not know where and how she died. Though under extreme wartime conditions, it was a great pity that 12 or 13 year-old children were mobilized to work and were killed so cruelly. I cannot help but feel a strong anger at the war itself and the country that started it as well as at nuclear weapons and the country that used them. Nuclear weapons are inhumane weapons and their use is a violation of international law.

I walked around the city every day looking for my sister. After about a month of this fruitless effort, I fell ill, developing acute radiation symptoms such as reddish purple spots on my limbs and body, bleeding from gums, pain in my throat and fall of hair. Thanks to my aunt’s devoted care, I could get special treatment and recovered miraculously. I was lucky. Because as many as 210,000 people died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the end of that year. In addition, many survivors, including those who entered the city after the bombing in search of their relatives or to rescue victims, fell sick like me with acute symptoms or developed leukemia and they died one after another. When the survivors were in helpless condition and badly in need of urgent help and assistance, the U.S. occupation troops and the Japanese government covered up the realities of the atomic bombing and abandoned the survivors to their fate without providing any help. Such attitude of the governments continued for many years. This is a crime against humanity. It should not be forgotten.

In 1954, the U.S. conducted a hydrogen bomb test at the Bikini Atoll in the Pacific and exposed a Japanese fishing boat the Fifth Lucky Dragon to radiation. This incident triggered the rapid development of the Japanese movement for banning A and H bombs and led to the first World Conference against A and H Bombs in 1955. In 1956, the Hibakusha got together and established a national organization, Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Nihon Hidankyo). For 56 years since its foundation, along with holding the State accountable for waging the war that led to the atomic bombing, we have been campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons for “not creating another Hibakusha again”
as well as for State compensation for the A-bomb damage.

However, more than 20,000 nuclear weapons still exist on the earth, imposing the threat of nuclear war on humankind. If nuclear weapons are used again, it will cause the annihilation of humanity. Even today, the atomic bombing is still tormenting the survivors. Following an increase in incidence and death of leukemia until around 1960, cancer and other radiation-induced disorders and deaths began to increase rapidly since the middle of the 1960s. The A-bomb damage is not limited to immediate effects of the explosion. The Hibakusha are still developing various diseases and agonizing because of effects of internal exposure to radiation caused by eating radiation-contaminated food, inhaling radioactive fallout and being affected by residual radiation. This is a very reason why we extend our solidarity to the victims of Fukushima, and we call for a switch of energy resources to rely on sustainable energy.

I am suffering from cancer now. While fighting against the disease, I am working in the Hibakusha movement and telling the truth about the A-bomb damage so that nuclear weapons can be abolished without delay. The hell the Hibakusha had to go through must never be repeated not only on our children and grandchildren but on anyone in the world.

At the time of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, 41 A-bomb survivors went to New York in spite of their old age and poor health to hold an A-bomb exhibition in the United Nations and tell people of the world about the A-bomb damage. Through these activities, we believe that we could contribute to the success of the Conference. We Hibakusha were greatly encouraged by the call of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made in August 2010 in Hiroshima, saying “…let us pledge to join together on the 75th anniversary of the bombing -with the Hibakusha- to celebrate the end of nuclear weapons.”

As referred to in the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference, we sincerely urge you to commence negotiations for a nuclear abolition convention without delay in order to achieve a world without nuclear weapons in 2020.

Each of you has a responsibility to prevent a nuclear catastrophe and build a peaceful future. I believe that we will succeed as long as humans have reason, love of peace and power to act. Let us work together to open up a door to a world free of nuclear weapons.

No more Hiroshimas. No more Nagasakis. No more Hibakusha. No more war. No more nuclear weapons. Peace forever!

Contact : NIHON HIDANKYO
(Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations)
Address: Gable Bldg. #902, 1-3-5 Shiba-Daimon, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-0012 JAPAN
Phone: +81-3-3438-1897 Fax: +81-3-3431-2113
E-mail: kj3t-tnk@asahi-net.or.jp
Web site: http://www.ne.jp/asahi/hidankyo/nihon/