Youth Speech at the 2013 NPT PrepCom

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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

We thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the youth. Young people from Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Middle East have contributed with comments to this speech in order to claim their voice.

Nuclear weapons have catastrophic effects that are not controllable in time or space.

In the preamble of the NPT, the parties declared their intention to work together to eliminate nuclear weapons. As contained in the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, “the legal import of that obligation goes beyond that of a mere obligation of conduct; the obligation involved here is an obligation to achieve a precise result – nuclear disarmament in all aspects.”

Moving beyond the abstract legal debates, those catastrophic and inhumane devices are a concrete threat to humanity. We share the views of the 1984 Human Rights Committee, which clearly stated that the production, testing, possession and use of nuclear weapons should be prohibited and recognised as crimes against humanity.

Distinguished Delegates,

We have been waiting for you to act “in good faith” since 1970 to achieve general and complete disarmament. However, very little has been achieved in multilateral negotiations. The youth of the world demands all of the states to take concrete and sustainable steps to accomplish this goal. In our view, nuclear disarmament is as urgent as non-proliferation.

If states really want to protect their citizens, they must re-evaluate their priorities by divesting military to social expenditures in order to improve the health, education and welfare of their respective citizens. We do not believe deterrence protects us.

Nuclear deterrence is based on rational behaviour and perfect information. However, we live in an imperfect world with incomplete and asymmetrical information. Therefore, nuclear deterrence is inherently flawed and is not effective.

Additionally, the international landscape has changed. The Cold War is over. In today’s multipolar and increasingly globalized world, the logic of deterrence is even more unreliable. Ultimately, in the post-cold war context, we do not believe that the deterrence rhetoric is still valid and we find the current status quo does not protect us from the threats posed by nuclear weapons.
Our generation is the first one after the Cold War. In this context, we do not divide the world between West and East: them and us. We are global citizens.

Nuclear deterrence does not make sense to us because it is based on the construction of states as enemies. We refuse to be enemies.

Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,

We would like to thank H.E. Ambassador Laajava of Finland and regional states for trying to establish a Middle East WMD Conference in 2012. Nevertheless, we are very concerned that the current situation could lead to a paradigm shift in the regional security of the Middle East. We strongly believe that there is a high risk that states may question the legitimacy of the NPT and attempt to acquire nuclear weapons to deter one another.

Disarmament education in the region is crucial to bring this issue into the limelight. It is the linchpin of civil society engagement and the key for a prosperous and peaceful Middle East.

Honourable Delegates,

We welcome the initiative of Norway for hosting the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo. We urge all states to join this important discussion at the follow-up conference in Mexico.

We have not experienced the same suffering as the Hibakusha, but we can imagine the inhumanity of these nuclear weapons by listening to their testimonies.

No nation is capable to react to this humanitarian catastrophe. We believe that negotiations for a global ban on nuclear weapons are achievable. Recently, the UN General Assembly adopted the Arms Trade Treaty, a fundamental step in disarmament. The decision to adopt such a treaty demonstrates the feasibility to make a concrete step towards disarming the world. Consequently, we believe that a ban on nuclear weapons is also possible.

Again, we emphasise that disarmament education is the most valuable tool towards this goal. Educated minds transcend borders to bring people together and change the status quo. We further request states to fulfil their commitments to the 2010 Action Plan with regard to disarmament education.

Distinguished Delegates,

We are the youth of the world.

Our freedom, our security, and our fate lie in your hands.
Our future could become hell on earth, if you do not succeed in banning these dreadful weapons.
Our lives and the lives of our children depend on your actions.
We want you to favour cooperation and compromise over confrontation and conflict.
We want you to achieve concrete results that improve the world that we live in.
As youth of the world, we want you to take action – and we want it – now.

Thank you very much.