Time to Reach the Goal – Voice of the peace movement of A-bombed Japan

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

Responding to the Hibakusha’s initiative for abolition of nuclear weapons, we, the peace movement in Japan, are taking to the streets to increase public support for the Hibakusha Appeal international signature campaign, which calls on international politics to reach a decision to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons. In Japan, this petition is gaining broad support. More and more mayors and even prefectural governors are supporting and joining their hands in these efforts. We want to ask all the states parties to the NPT to listen to and be aware of our voices and actions of civil society.

Now we, the Japanese people, are facing an imminent danger in the middle of intensifying tension between North Korea and the United States. This crisis has been escalated by North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests and the exchange of threats to use force or even to use nuclear weapons in the name of nuclear deterrence. At the end of the dangerous way they are going to head down, there is only catastrophic destruction and damage to humanity. They should act according to reason and proceed to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. It is clear which way will ensure security and safety for humanity.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference pledged to “achieve the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” as objective of the treaty, and agreed on the Final Document, including the renewed commitment of the nuclear weapon states to achieve the “total elimination of their nuclear arsenals” and the need for all states “to make special efforts to establish the framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons”.

We are aware that in order to accomplish these agreements, many governments have made great efforts and have given hope to us all and people wishing for a nuclear weapon-free world. We admire their consistent efforts and a courageous step they took. They culminated in the United Nations Conference to negotiate a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

This also gives a great opportunity to the NPT. While observing Article II of the NPT, a vast majority of non-nuclear weapon states have urged the nuclear weapon states and their allies to fulfill their obligations under Article VI. In order to strengthen the NPT, in particular, the fulfilment of Article VI, the process of negotiating the nuclear prohibition treaty was launched. Unfortunately, they have refused to join it. But the elimination of nuclear
weapons is the objective of the U.N. itself as pledged in its first resolution, and the five “nuclear weapon states” of the NPT, as the permanent members of the Security Council, are in a responsible position to take the lead in achieving it. The task they should achieve in the new review cycle towards 2020 should be to support and join the negotiation process. This PrepCom should confirm it clearly.

We strongly call on both the nuclear weapon states and their followers to join this process, which is the way to ensure the implementation of all the agreements reached in the NPT in 2000 and 2010, including unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

In closing, I have one thing to share with you as the voice of civil society of Japan, the only country to have suffered the atomic bombing. In the First Committee of the UN General Assembly last year, the government of Japan voted against the resolution to convene the U.N. negotiation Conference. But opinion polls showed that over 70% of the Japanese people believed that their government should take part in the conference. This is the same response we have received from people on the street in our activities. We are convinced that this represents public opinion of a vast majority of countries in the world.

Now the Hibakusha are calling for a worldwide support for their petition for the elimination of nuclear weapons. They are going to continue it towards 2020, which is the final year of this review cycle. We sincerely call on all the states parties to the NPT to make constructive efforts, so that in 2020, human society can celebrate the achievement of a nuclear weapon-free world together.