Distinguished Delegates,

I am honored to be given this opportunity, as a survivor from Hiroshima, to speak at this historic occasion. Already 72 years have passed since my beloved hometown was utterly destroyed by one atomic bomb.

Those of us who survived became convinced that no human being should ever have to experience the inhumanity and unspeakable suffering of nuclear weapons. And we hibakusha have worked tirelessly for decades for the total elimination of these devices of mass murder and cross-generational radioactive violence.

We made a vow to our loved ones that their death will not be in vain. By now about 250,000 people have perished in Hiroshima alone – many people whose dream was nuclear abolition in their lifetime. Whenever I remember Hiroshima, the first image that comes to my mind is my four-year-old nephew who was transformed in an unrecognizable, blackened, swollen, melted chunk of flesh, who kept begging for water in a faint voice until his death released him from agony. This little boy’s image has come to represent in my mind all the innocent children in the world, threatened as they are at this very moment by nuclear weapons.

Your task this week, and again over three weeks in June and July, is to establish a clear, new, international standard … to declare, in no uncertain terms, that nuclear weapons are illegitimate, immoral and illegal.

I am not naive … I know that some nations will dismiss this instrument. They will cling to their misguided belief that they are somehow entitled to possess these life-destroying weapons, which threaten us all.

I especially condemn the Japanese government’s inability to fully commit to these negotiations. They claim to be playing a vital role in nuclear disarmament by bringing foreign dignitaries to Hiroshima with the hope that they will learn the reality of the nuclear catastrophe. But these are empty, evasive actions as they continue to take shelter under the United States’ nuclear umbrella. Instead
they should take an independent position which responds to the will of the Japanese people.

For those of you delegates, who are genuinely serious about disarmament, I want you to feel the presence of not only the future generations who will benefit from your negotiations to ban nuclear weapons, but to feel a cloud of witnesses from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The memories and images of those who perished have always supported and guided me. I think this is how many survivors have kept on living — to make sure that the deaths of their loved ones were not in vain.

As you proceed through this week, I want you to also feel their support and presence. And do your job well! And know that we hibakusha have no doubt that this treaty can — and will — change the world.

Thank you.