

Appeal of the Hibakusha

Convenor: Yayoi Tsuchida, Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (GENSUIKYO)

Speaker: TANAKA Terumi, Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (HIDANKYO)

Mr. President, distinguished delegates and NGO friends,

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak before you on behalf of HIDANKYO, the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers' Organizations.

My name is TANAKA Terumi and I am Secretary General of HIDANKYO. HIDANKYO is the only national organization of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombing. We denounce the inhumanity and illegality of nuclear weapons and work to achieve the state compensation for the A-bomb damage, and to abolish all nuclear weapons from the world.

I am a survivor of the Nagasaki A-bombing of August 9, 1945. I was 13 years old and was inside my house located at 3.2 kilometers from the blast center. Suddenly I felt a brilliant flash. While feeling that flash changing colors from white to blue, orange and red, I lost consciousness. After a while, I found myself under several panes of glass blown by the blast. Miraculously, I did not suffer heavy injuries. Though I had to go through hardships as the Hibakusha (A-bomb survivor), anyhow I could survive and today speak before you as a living witness of the incident.

However, I lost five of my family members all at once—my grandfather, uncle, two aunts and a cousin, university student who had been back from his school in Tokyo. Hit by intense heat rays, they were burned directly or trapped under the clashed house and burned to death. My uncle, who escaped instant death without any apparent injuries eventually died with high fever, and destruction of his body cells by radiation. With my own hands, I cremated the body of my aunt in the field, who survived only a few days after the bombing with heavy burns. This sad experience at the age of 13 and the scenes of A-bomb hell on the ground keep coming back to me vividly even after about 63 years.

I would like to introduce to you Ms. SASAMORI Shigeko, a survivor of the Hiroshima. She was also a 13 year old student. When she was about to start the building demolition work located at 1.5 kilometers from the ground zero, the heat rays and hot blast suddenly attacked her. Though heavily burned on her face and the upper half of the body, she narrowly escaped death. She now lives in the U.S. and continues to speak out on the atrocity of nuclear weapons and call on the world to abolish all nuclear weapons. It is impossible for her to bear witness on her experience in only a few minutes. So I cordially ask you to make opportunities to listen to her experience, sufferings and life.

The United States dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki in August 1945, in the closing days of the Second World War, when a total surrender by Japan was only a matter of time. The two bombs instantly destroyed the two cities, threw hundreds of thousands of civilians into the furnace, killing more than 200,000 people in the cruelest ways. All of these deaths were parents, children, brothers, sisters or friends for us survivors and irreplaceable loved ones.

The atomic bombs left those who barely survived the hell with radiation-induced aftereffects and wounds in their bodies and mind. They continue to suffer and die even after about 63 years.

The U.S. government still carries on its surveys on several tens of thousands of Hibakusha started during the period of occupation, which reveals the seriousness of the continuing damage from radiation.

Bearing the pains of unhealing scars, the Hibakusha have survived and continued to call, "Such sufferings should never fall on anyone, anywhere in the world" and "Abolish nuclear weapons now!" During these years, the Hibakusha have never claimed for "revenge" or "retaliation". Out of our own experience, we know that if a third nuclear weapon should be used, it would mean the end of humans and all life on this planet.

Nuclear weapons must never be allowed to exist. We must abolish them urgently. They are the weapons of devil, and cannot coexist with humans.

Despite our appeals, there are still more than 20,000 nuclear weapons in the world. We the Hibakusha cannot bear this fact, and we cannot sit still. Those pro-nuclear forces, especially the United States, still try to take every opportunity to use nuclear weapons. The danger of nuclear weapons being used is still with us.

With the possession of nuclear weapons by India, Pakistan and Israel, the NPT regime is at a crisis. We the Hibakusha strongly request all the States of the world to sincerely implement the obligations under the NPT. We urge the Nuclear Weapons States to implement the 13 steps agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, especially, their unequivocal undertaking to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.

To our encouragement, we are witnessing the shift of current and growing international opinion in favor of nuclear disarmament and abolition. In addition to long-term effort and initiatives made by the New Agenda Coalition and Non-Aligned Movement to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons, a call "Toward a Nuclear-Free World" was made twice in 2007 and 2008 by senior leaders on nuclear policy of the U.S., including Mr. Henry Kissinger. This has reverberated in the whole world and inspired anti-nuclear peace forces globally. It was followed by the initiative of the government of Norway that convened the international conference for "Achieving the Vision of a World Free of Nuclear Weapons." All these moves give great inspiration to us Hibakusha.

The Hibakusha welcome and support the conclusion of a treaty totally banning nuclear weapons as proposed in the Vision 2020 of the Mayors for Peace. The Model Nuclear Weapons Convention has already been tabled before the debates at the NPT and the U.N. If the countries of the world abide by and sincerely implement their international commitments, we can open the path to achieve a nuclear weapon-free world.

We request that the 2010 NPT Review Conference will set the path and goal to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons, and start multilateral negotiations to this end. Hand in hand with the anti-nuclear peace movements in Japan and of the world, we pledge to do our utmost for the success of this NPT Conference.

Lastly, nearly 63 years have passed since the nuclear weapons were actually used. Both in Japan and internationally, the knowledge about this fact is fading among people. We ask all the governments of the world to educate their peoples about the inhumanity and devilish nature of nuclear weapons through learning the facts about the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and build up the will to abolish them. Please listen to the witnesses of the Hibakusha, and pass on the Hibakusha's experiences to future generations as the legacy of the human community.

For preventing another Hibakusha, and for the survival of human beings:
No More Hiroshimas! No More Nagasakis!
No More Hibakusha! No More War!