

Message to Conference to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons

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Thank you for giving me this opportunity. Congratulations for your important efforts to organize the Conference to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons at this very historic juncture. I am very pleased to send a message from Japan.

Last year, the governments of Australia and Japan established the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The Commission is chaired by Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, former Foreign Ministers of the two countries. In Japan, civil society groups are trying to take this opportunity to encourage the Japanese government and push the nuclear disarmament agenda forward. Earlier this year, a Japanese NGO Network was formed in order to influence the Commission with dozens of civil society groups involved. We are having a regular roundtable with the Co-chair Kawaguchi. We will have the second roundtable tomorrow on Monday. Also, Co-chair Evans is coming to Tokyo next Wednesday on the invitation of Japanese NGOs, after the Commission's regional meeting in Beijing which is dealing with the issues of Northeast Asia.

The International Commission has made clear that its final report, to be issued at the end of this year or early next year, will include a disarmament plan featuring three stages for a nuclear weapon free world. According to their explanations so far, the initial stage will be until 2012, and is to be led by the US, Russia and other nuclear weapon states, engaging such steps as the entry-into-force of the CTBT and further reduction of nuclear arsenals. The middle stage will come up to a “vantage point,” some time around 2025, where the reduction has come down to a level of low hundreds and a nuclear weapon free world will be in sight. The final stage after 2025 will entail working to get down to zero from this vantage point. The Commission is investigating such steps as verification and management of nuclear technologies, but there is no time frame suggested to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons in this final stage.

While we generally welcome the Commission's discussion for nuclear disarmament, I have to say that the suggested three stage plan is too cautious. We Japanese NGOs are trying to convince the Commission that it should articulate a clear road map towards abolition. It should not end with a reduction plan toward so-called a vantage point with hundreds of nuclear weapons in 2025. That is why the Japanese NGOs, including Hibakusha—atomic bomb survivors, are calling on the Commission to articulate a plan to achieve a Nuclear Weapons Convention, an international treaty to categorically outlaw nuclear weapons. Dr. Hans Blix's Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission has already called on the international community to start to work to outlaw nuclear weapons. Now the Australian-Japanese Commission should follow this call and present a clear road map for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

As many of you know, the “Mayors for Peace” initiative promoted by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is leading a campaign for “Nuclear weapons abolition by 2020”, attracting broad support from both domestic Japanese and international civil society. From this perspective, the Commission's present stance of setting a vantage point in 2025 is too slow. Hibakusha have been struggling for nuclear weapons' abolition with a call to achieve abolition while they are alive. Today the average age of Hibakusha exceeds 75. The sense of urgency must be shared among all the parties who work on nuclear disarmament, including governments officials, policy makers and experts.

Now let me point out that Australia and Japan have two significant commonalities, in terms of

nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. One is that they are important allies for the United States within the Asia Pacific region, and that their security is based upon the so-called “nuclear umbrella,” dependent upon the US nuclear weapons. The other is that Australia exports uranium to the world, while Japan has accumulated huge stocks of plutonium and will shortly commence its commercial production. In this sense, these two countries together form the front and back ends of the nuclear fuel cycle – making both of these non-nuclear weapon states the bearers of grave responsibility for the world's nuclear fuel cycle.

In regards to the “nuclear umbrella” issue, the Commission has already recommended to the United States that the role of nuclear weapons should be limited, and a declaration that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter the nuclear weapons of others should be made. Even in relation to these cautious steps, within Japan the emerging response is that for the sake of Japan's security, the US nuclear deterrent must not be reduced. This shows how deeply the the security policy of Japan is still affected by the Cold-War legacy.

Civil society in Japan is advocating that the country should overcome the Cold-War thinking in security policies, and aim at a “non-nuclear dependent security.” The concept of “non-nuclear dependent security” is important not only in US-Japan relations, but also in persuading North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons, and in getting China onboard the nuclear disarmament process. We are calling for the creation of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Northeast Asia. The Six-Party Talks process on the North Korean issue should be resumed and strengthened to achieve such a nuclear-weapon-free peace mechanism in the region. The United States should review its nuclear posture and significantly reduce the role of nuclear weapons, including declaring no-first use of such weapons, and should cooperate in international negotiations to make nuclear weapons unusable.

As to the civilian use of nuclear power, Australia and Japan have the responsibility to prevent any arbitrary spread of nuclear energy and technology, which link to risks of nuclear proliferation. We do not want to see the Commission just give passes to Japanese production of plutonium or Australian exports of uranium, just to indulge commercial interests of the nuclear industries in both countries. Rather, cautious examination is needed of fissile materials, at the time that international negotiations for a Fissile Material Treaty is going to start next year.

The Commission will have its third meeting next month in Moscow. Then it will meet in Hiroshima in late October, when they will compile major parts of its report. In both meetings, a certain degree of civil society engagement will be secured. Japanese groups are planning to have an international civil society forum on the occasion of the Hiroshima meeting in October. We are trying to utilize the opportunity as a lead up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Also, let me remind you that the general election for the Lower House of Japan will be held sometime before September this year, and a change of government is predicted. This could provide a shift in Japan's nuclear policy. The lessons learnt in New Zealand and other countries in the Pacific will have great value in any policy transformation of Japan. I hope that we can keep cooperating among the countries in the Asia-Pacific to push nuclear disarmament policy forward.

Thank you very much.