

Democracy, Disarmament, and the Rule of Law

By

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I welcome very much this opportunity to address the 2010 World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. I am especially pleased to do so on the very day that the UN Secretary-General has personally addressed the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony, for the first time in United Nations history.

The visits of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon both to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, of course, are only the most recent examples of something very positive that is happening in this world. Humanity is awakening to the need to confront a very old challenge—the challenge not just of talking about, but of achieving global nuclear disarmament.

I say “old challenge” because efforts have been underway by both governments and civil society alike for sixty-five years to achieve nuclear disarmament. In some ways, it is the oldest goal of the United Nations, given that it was included in the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly in January 1946. Here in Japan, Gensuikyo has been working on this challenge since September 1955, though the goal of nuclear disarmament has had significant support both in Japan and the rest of the world for much longer. The goal of nuclear disarmament is as old as nuclear weapons themselves.

Supporters of this goal have come from literally all parts of social and political life—from individual citizens, diverse public interest groups, professional societies, cities, local governments, civic associations, governors, national governments, to regional and international organizations. Disarmament is a goal that has united East and West, North and South. It is supported by the rich and the poor, and by the world’s splendidly rich variety of cultures, races, and religions. It is an issue that unites men and women, the rich and poor, and the old and young.

Let me be honest—nuclear disarmament is a very complicated subject. There are difficult technical questions to resolve. People fear nuclear weapons, yet many also fear the risks and uncertainties of getting rid of them. What if disarmament commitments are broken? What if cheating occurs? What if disarmament is not implemented universally?

It is easy to pose such questions, though quite unfortunate that other types of questions are seldom posed about the alternatives to disarmament. Too often, we worry about the possible risks of disarmament, yet forget about the risks of failing to disarm—the risks from our current approaches to security. You are all familiar with them: the balance of power; endlessly increasing military expenditures; the threat of military pre-emption; the endless pursuit of a perfect missile defence; the belief that non-proliferation and counter-terrorist efforts alone will suffice to deal with global nuclear threats; and the contagious doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which has now spread to nine countries.

I wish today to thank all of you here today who have quite justifiably drawn attention to these dangers, while emphasizing the genuine security benefits from achieving nuclear disarmament.

Not far from here lies the Aioi Bridge, the intended target of the bombing on 6 August 1945. The citizens of Hiroshima, aided by their supporters in Japan and throughout the world

community, have now constructed a new type of bridge, one leading to a global society of nuclear-weapon-free states. Yet to cross this bridge, there are tolls to pay.

We must recognize that any use of nuclear weapons would violate international humanitarian law. We must admit that if use is illegal, so too must be possession and threat of use. We must reject the contagious doctrine of nuclear deterrence. We must view such weapons as inherently dangerous and useless in meeting today's security challenges. And we must ensure that status and prestige are reserved for those who repudiate such weapons.

This great bridge also connects knowledge with action. We must redouble our efforts to bring the histories of the *hibakusha* into the world's schools—and translating their testimonies into the six UN languages would be a good place to start. Through education, we must show all people how disarmament strengthens security and promotes development.

We also need to engage all organized groups in society—all benefit from disarmament. This is why I welcome the leadership shown by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with their Mayors for Peace campaign. The world's parliaments are also raising their voices, as have local governments. This is an enormously significant development, one to be welcomed by the entire world community.

We must encourage states with nuclear weapons to commence negotiations to eliminate such weapons by law, as the Secretary-General proposed in 2008. I believe that we must also encourage them to declare their intention to achieve this by a given year—2020 is a widely accepted goal. If not then, when? I understand that this issue of “timelines” has proven controversial—it has been a theme voiced in the review conferences of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty for decades.

And I understand why the states with nuclear weapons do not want to enter a binding legal obligation to eliminating their weapons by a specific date, given the uncertainties that may lie ahead. But I do believe that the world expects that these states would at least indicate a willingness to seek to achieve this goal by an agreed year—even if only as a non-binding political declaration. There is no risk or shame in declaring one's commitment to “seek to achieve” nuclear disarmament by a given year, and some significant benefit in signalling to the world that disarmament is finally being taken seriously, both in word and in deed.

I am concerned that the failure to agree on a time-bound commitment to disarmament will lead, predictably, to a parallel reluctance of states to adopt more intrusive commitments to nuclear non-proliferation. If nuclear disarmament is approached simply as an “ultimate goal”, then no one should be surprised if compliance with non-proliferation commitments will also be viewed as only an ultimate goal. To argue this point is to invoke an unsustainable double standard.

So while the eyes of the world are on Hiroshima every sixth of August, the hearts of the world are with you always. I am proud to join you on this journey to a nuclear-weapon-free world. It is a righteous cause and our shared responsibility to past victims and future generations. Come, let us cross this great bridge together.