



Remarks By Sergio Duarte
SGI Hibakusha Event

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I very much welcome this opportunity to speak with you this evening.

We are all humbled to be in the presence of *hibakusha*, who have traveled so far to share their tragic stories in the hope that others will learn the true human consequences from the use of nuclear weapons. I fully share their belief that these stories will help enormously not only in preventing another use of such weapons, but in promoting greater efforts worldwide to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

It is especially important for a new generation to hear their messages and to assume a personal commitment to work on behalf of global nuclear disarmament. In this respect, I would like to express my appreciation to all of the many youth members of Soka Gakkai International for their recent survey of attitudes of young people in six countries on nuclear weapons issues.

Conducting well over 4,000 interviews is a very difficult task indeed—and undertaking such a project in six countries makes this an even greater challenge. They have succeeded in underscoring that young people in these countries share a deeply held belief that the world would be far better off without nuclear weapons. Yet they have also shown that additional efforts are needed to educate the public, young people in particular, about some of the basic facts about nuclear weapons and their horrific effects.

I am also enormously impressed that these Japanese youth have succeeded in gathering over two million signatures on a petition to support the first of the Secretary-General's 5-point proposal—early negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention. I would like to add that the United Nations has recently received other petitions with several million signatures, all calling for new progress in nuclear disarmament. Widespread support from civil society is the strongest possible foundation for future disarmament initiatives and SGI's demonstration of support for the Secretary-General's initiative is very welcome indeed in strengthening that foundation.

Together this is a great achievement for Soka Gakkai International—and I mean this both in terms of advancing the goal of nuclear disarmament, as well as advancing the closely related cause of disarmament education. SGI has found some useful and highly effective ways to give young people a voice and a sense of participation in the wider effort to eliminate nuclear weapons worldwide.

I therefore wish to commend Mr. Daisaku Ikeda, the President of Soka Gakkai International, for his many efforts on behalf of a peaceful world without nuclear weapons. This is a great cause not just of all *hibakusha*, but of people everywhere and I thank you all for your many efforts to make such a world not just an inspired dream of today, but one of the greatest human accomplishments of tomorrow.