

Appeal of the Hibakusha

TANAKA Terumi, Secretary General Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Hidankyo) NGO Session, First Preparatory Committee for the 2010 NPT Review Conference Vienna, May 2, 2007

Mr. President, distinguished delegates and friends,

I am very honored to be given this opportunity to speak before you. I am TANAKA Terumi, secretary general of HIDANKYO, the Japan Confederation of A-and H-Bomb Sufferers' Organizations.

Before I start, with deep sorrow and anger, I must inform you of the death of Nagasaki Mayor Iccho Itoh, who was gunned down on April 17. On behalf of the citizens of the A-Bombed city Nagasaki, and also as the vice president of the Mayors for Peace, he has fought in the forefront of the struggle for the abolition of nuclear weapons, encouraging the Hibakusha and the people all over the world. I want to express my sincere condolences to his bereaved family and citizens of Nagasaki.

On behalf of the Hibakusha, the A-bomb victims who have survived the first nuclear attack, and over great difficulties have struggled for the restoration of human rights and for the abolition of nuclear weapons, I would like to make this appeal to you, the leaders of governments and civil society movements in the world.

The two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on August 6 and 9, 1945, instantly destroyed the cities completely by intense heat, blast and radiation, and by the end of 1945, more than 210,000 people, 140,000 in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki, had perished. I am a survivor of Nagasaki. I was 13 years old and was inside my house located at 3.2 kilometers from the blast center. A multitude of good luck saved me from instant death, but I lost five members of my family all at once. They were burned, charred or agonized in high fever before they died. Their miserable deaths cannot be called human deaths. But I want you to know that each of the deaths caused by the A-bombs brought enormous and irreplaceable loss and sorrow to their loved ones, as they were parents, brothers & sisters and children or grandchildren.

The radiation released by the bombs and the residual radiation have caused cancers and various other health problems in the bodies of the Hibakusha. Their suffering continues even after 62 years. According to the report of the Ministry of Health, 7,000 to 8,000 Hibakusha die every year. The atomic bombs continue to torment the Hibakusha until the last day of their lives. Nuclear weapons are the cruelest and devilish weapons. They cannot coexist with humans, and their existence itself amounts to the outrage against humanity.

Our most earnest desire is to make sure that no one else should experience the same suffering as ours. That's why we say, "No More Hibakusha. Abolish nuclear weapons now!" Despite our poor

health and nightmares of hellish experiences, we have told the truth of, and described in pictures, the damage caused by nuclear weapons through whatever means available. However, our cries and desires have not been met with reality. Still today we see many wars in the world, and we are raising our fears over the possibility of nuclear weapons being used again.

Why do we still face the increasing danger of nuclear weapons despite our wish? It is partly because the leaders, people and citizens of the world have not had sufficient opportunities to know what happened to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and how the A-bomb damage has continued for the last 62 years. The governments of the United States and Japan are largely responsible for this, as they have consistently covered up and underestimated the real damage of the A-bombings.

Further, the nuclear weapon states continue to neglect their promise to implement Article VI of the NPT and the 13 steps agreed upon at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Especially, the U.S. Bush Administration, far from fulfilling their obligations, plans to develop "usable" mini-nukes, and does not exclude the possibility of preemptive use of nuclear arms. Such a stance of the U.S. is one of the reasons for more countries possessing nuclear weapons to emerge, and deepens the crisis of the world.

The Hibakusha cannot tolerate such a situation any longer. We have already known too well what we should do to create a world without nuclear weapons. We must have a strong moral and political will to abolish nuclear weapons. We must not stop our efforts and have courage to exert all our energies to achieve this goal. Our hope, truth, imagination and firm commitment must prevail.

In the closing, we earnestly propose the following three points to be promoted for the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference:

1. For the sake of the survival of the entire human race, we urge the nuclear weapons states to start working to abolish nuclear weapons without any further delay.

2. We urge all the governments of the world to make efforts to conclude an international treaty for a total ban on nuclear weapons, as envisaged in the Vision 2020, proposed by the Mayors for Peace and others, aiming to abolish nuclear weapons by 2020.

3. We urge all states to constantly give opportunities to their people, especially for younger generations who bear our future, to learn the reality of the nuclear weapons damage and to discuss the survival of the whole human race.

No more Hiroshima. No more Nagasaki.
No More Hibakusha. No more war!