

Statement by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan
at the Opening Session
High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament
26 September 2013, New York

Mr. President,
Distinguished Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to begin by expressing my sincere congratulations to His Excellency Ambassador John William Ashe on his assumption of the Presidency of the Sixty-Eighth Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I also would like to take this opportunity to convey my profound gratitude to His Excellency Ambassador Vuk Jeremić as President of the Sixty-Seventh Session and to those who contributed to the successful convening of this esteemed meeting. Indeed, this is the first High-Level meeting focused on nuclear disarmament within the United Nations General Assembly, and I am highly honored to be given an opportunity to address all of you during this Opening Session.

Mr. President,

Japan is the only country which has ever suffered from the devastation caused by the use of atomic bombs in wartime. We know from experience the aftermath caused by the use of nuclear weapons and their elimination has been Japanese people's unwavering aspiration since the end of World War II. For my part, I participated in the commemorative peace ceremonies held this August in Hiroshima and Nagasaki where I renewed my strong determination to achieve "a world free of nuclear weapons".

Mr. President,

"A world free of nuclear weapons" is a major goal not only of Japan but shared by mankind. At the same time, however, in reality a massive number of nuclear weapons still remain and in some areas nuclear arsenals are supposedly increasing with a lack of transparency. Considering nuclear terrorism by non-state actors and the nuclear development by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), the nuclear risk we face is more diverse and challenging than what we encountered in the Cold War Era.

Under such circumstances, Japan regrets the long-lasting stalemate observed in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. As the current international situation is more and more unpredictable, now is the time for revitalizing our efforts in making progress on key nuclear disarmament issues in parallel with nuclear non-proliferation such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the early commencement of negotiation and conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

Mr. President,

An essential element in the process of nuclear disarmament is for all states possessing nuclear weapons to reduce their nuclear arsenals and to enhance their transparency. In this respect, Japan appreciates the speech President Obama of the United States of America delivered in Berlin in June when he declared to reduce the US deployed strategic nuclear-weapons by up to one-third. It is my hope that the President's speech triggers further reduction between the Russian Federation and the US, and that this bilateral nuclear reduction negotiations quickly develop into negotiations of multilateral character among all states holding nuclear weapons. I also call upon the five nuclear-weapon states to report their concrete measures on nuclear disarmament at the occasion of the 3rd session of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT in 2014.

Mr. President,

I would like to emphasize that the responsibilities that the non-nuclear-weapon states shoulder are equally important as those of the nuclear-weapons states. Building realistic and practical blocks upon mutual trust between those two sides is the most definitive path to achieve "a world free of nuclear weapons".

Based upon the Japanese National Constitution desiring eternal peace the spirit of the United Nations Charter, Japan upholds its firm commitment to the Three Non-Nuclear Principles as a country dedicating itself to world peace and prosperity. We will continue to faithfully devote itself to nuclear disarmament until it is achieved. Every year since 1994, Japan submits to the General Assembly the nuclear disarmament resolution which is adopted by an overwhelming majority. My Foreign Minister, Fumio Kishida, who will be making a speech this afternoon, will host the Foreign Minister's Meeting of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) in Hiroshima, a city that suffered atomic bombing, on April 12th 2014. I am confident

that the NPDI Foreign Ministers will launch a meaningful initiative through their close collaboration.

Mr. President,

The devastation that occurred in Hiroshima and Nagasaki reminds us of the humanitarian consequences resulting from the use of nuclear weapons. Such consequences could go beyond our imagination and such tragedies must never be repeated. In order to share our experience with the international community, for more than three decades, Japan has welcomed the visits by participants of the United Nations Programme of Fellowship on Disarmament. Furthermore, “Special Communicators for a World Without Nuclear Weapons” has been dispatched worldwide to convey the testimonies of their survival from the atomic bombings. Any political leader responsible for their citizen’s safety should recognize the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. I therefore invite all political leaders to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki to witness first-hand the impact that could be inflicted by the use of such weapons.

Mr. President,

Symbolically, Hiroshima and Nagasaki will commemorate the 70th anniversary of those tragic events in 2015 when the next NPT Review Conference will be held. I would like to appeal to all of you present here today that your political leadership is indispensable for pushing forward nuclear disarmament. In addition, the date of the 2020 Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo, which was recently decided, coincides with the annual memorial ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I would like to make the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games a sports festival where we think of peace together with citizens around the world. To conclude my statement, I would like to stress that the time has come for both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states to overcome their differences and unite in their efforts as a whole to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

I thank you, Mr. President.