

**27th United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues in Hiroshima**

**November 30, 2017**

**Session 3 “The Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: following the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons”**

**Statement**

**Akira KAWASAKI<sup>1</sup>**

Thank you very much, Chairperson. I sincerely thank the organisers for the opportunity to speak.

This year has been a historic year for nuclear weapons abolition. Under the strong leadership of Ambassador Elaine Whyte, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted on July 7 at the United Nations. This treaty for the first time in history comprehensively and unambiguously prohibits nuclear weapons, and also lays out a pathway towards their total elimination. Furthermore, it is a great honour that the Nobel Peace Prize will be awarded to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), in recognition of civil society’s contribution to this process. This prize is indeed to be shared among all those who have made efforts towards the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. In particular, I consider that this prize is for the *hibakusha*, the atomic bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki who have courageously testified of the horror they experienced and pioneered the movement to abolish nuclear weapons. This prize is likewise to be shared with all nuclear test victims around the world, as well as those who have suffered as a result of various activities related to nuclear weapons development.

I hereby also commend the leadership demonstrated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the governments of the core group that led the process to establishing this treaty. Last but not least, I must also thank the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs for the support provided throughout the negotiation process.

Yet, I believe we must not see this as a one-off celebration. The Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony to be held on December 10 must be seen as another starting point. We must take this as a point from which the global civil society and governments committed to this cause accelerate the movement towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In this regards, I would like to call on all in this room, including government representatives, experts, NGO members, and journalists, to make best use of the opportunity of December 10.

The nuclear weapons prohibition treaty, despite its historic and landmark nature, is far from being sufficiently understood and recognized worldwide, or here in Japan. Unfortunately, the negative campaign promoted by many nuclear-armed states and their allied nuclear-dependent states has had greatly influenced this environment.

We often hear the that “the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty has divided the international community.” However, this argument is not at all convincing. The issue does not lie in the treaty. The actual problem is the fact that nuclear-armed states are not making progress in nuclear disarmament. It is the nuclear weapons that are actually creating the divide in the international society.

Here, I would like to consider the major criticisms of the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty

<sup>1</sup> Akira Kawasaki. Executive Committee Member, Peace Boat. International Steering Committee Member of International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Contact: [kawasaki@peaceboat.gr.jp](mailto:kawasaki@peaceboat.gr.jp) and [pbglobal@peaceboat.gr.jp](mailto:pbglobal@peaceboat.gr.jp) This is a script prepared for the speech, and the actual speech may differ in wordings.

frequently encountered, one by one. The first is that the treaty is not effective, since nuclear-armed states are not part of it. The second is that the treaty ignores the reality of security. The third is that the verification and safeguards measures in the treaty are insufficient. These are typical points raised by critics of the treaty.

For the first point about the treaty not being effective due to the lack of participation by nuclear-armed states, this is not actually unusual. The cases of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions easily confirm that it is common for states possessing the weapons in question to resist prohibition. Yet, even if the nuclear-armed states do not participate in the treaty, the adoption of a treaty that makes nuclear weapons totally illegal will significantly strengthen the political, economic, and social pressures surrounding those states.

From now on, the use of nuclear weapons will clearly be considered criminal. This will raise the threshold against the use of nuclear weapons much higher. Any rational leader would question how long her/his country should maintain weapons that can no longer be used. The treaty prohibits assisting the production of nuclear weapons. A bank's investment in corporations producing nuclear weapons will be considered as assistance to the production of nuclear weapons - provided illegal by the treaty. Responsible banks will therefore divest from nuclear weapons industry. Nuclear-armed states will find it increasingly difficult to fund and sustain their nuclear arsenal. At the same time, as this month's conference on nuclear disarmament at the Vatican exemplified, religious leaders are strengthening their appeal that nuclear weapons are evil. Any involvement in nuclear weapons affairs is now considered anti-social.

If a treaty without nuclear-armed states has no significance, why do governments repeatedly emphasise the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)? Looking at the situation in the United States, there is no realistic prospect that the CTBT will come into effect in the foreseeable near future. Yet, even without being legally in effect, the CTBT has its value. The CTBT has not only set the norm that nuclear testing is no longer accepted, but also is operating an international verification system. The international community can strongly condemn North Korea when it conducts nuclear tests, precisely because of the norms set by CTBT, even though North Korea is not legally part of it. Universal and impartial treaties actually constrain even those states not participating in them.

It is senseless for nuclear-armed states to put pressures on other countries to prevent them from signing and ratifying the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty. Such behavior can only serve to decrease credibility regarding their own commitment to nuclear disarmament. Any state in a position to sign and ratify the prohibition treaty is encouraged to do so without delay, so the treaty will come into effect as early as possible. This would strengthen constraints against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

This relates to the second point - the argument that the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty ignores the reality of international security. Enhancing the norm that nuclear weapons are bad weapons in fact benefits international security, through making it more difficult to be involved not only in the use of nuclear weapons, but also in their proliferation.

In fact, the processes that led to the adoption of the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty examined the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons extensively, and such consideration was indeed directly linked to very realistic discussion on how nuclear weapons threaten security. Once used, nuclear weapons would bring about irreversible and unacceptable humanitarian consequences regardless of who they are used by. The use of nuclear weapons would destroy hospitals and

communication networks, and the effects of radiation would make it impossible to provide humanitarian relief. Through the Global Voyage for a Nuclear-Free World - Peace Boat Hibakusha Project, I myself have had numerous opportunities to listen to the testimonies of *hibakusha* who attest to such human miseries. If, you too, take seriously the voices of *hibakusha*, who have tirelessly spoken about their experiences of the atomic bombing of this very site of Hiroshima, and if you have the capacity to imagine, it should not be hard to understand how nuclear weapons are, in a very real manner, threatening our security.

I would like to ask of those who insist that nuclear deterrence leads to strategic stability. What would happen, if deterrence failed and nuclear weapons were actually used? What would be the consequences, what form would the relief system take, and who would bear responsibility? I find it a very unrealistic and irresponsible way of talking about security to simply repeat that deterrence functions, without clearly addressing these concerns.

In Japan, some argue that Japan cannot immediately participate in the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty, as long as there are nuclear threats posed by North Korea. However, if you accept the argument that we need nuclear weapons because they are possessed by North Korea, we will never succeed in stopping nuclear proliferation. In fact, this is a recipe for a world full of nuclear weapons. Who considers such a world to be safe? Moreover, on what basis do we believe that only nuclear weapons can deter North Korea's nuclear weapons, and that conventional weapons do not suffice? Furthermore, I must point out that if this logic of countering nuclear weapons with nuclear weapons is pursued, things will only worsen, and the threat of nuclear war becomes only more real. Looking at both North Korea and the United States, we should be skeptical that decisions made by political leaders are always rational.

In relation to North Korea, I would now like to turn to the third point, which is the claim that the verification and safeguards systems under the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty are insufficient.

What the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty imposes to the states party are the minimum safeguards obligations as defined under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The prohibition treaty establishes that it does not prejudice the strengthening of safeguards in the future. Governments and non-governmental experts should cooperate to pursue ways to put in place stronger safeguards measures.

The challenges in terms of verification and safeguards are multilayered: the first is to safeguard to ensure that nuclear weapons are not being produced; the second is to verify the dismantling process for those countries that have possessed nuclear weapons; and the third is to safeguard to prevent those countries that have once dismantled their nuclear arsenals from rearming with nuclear weapons. Among these three, the NPT deals with the first, namely safeguards to ensure countries' do not make nuclear weapons. However, for the second and third, the NPT does not provide verification or safeguards for those countries that have once armed themselves with and given up nuclear weapons. For these points, measures are newly provided by the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty.

With regards to the situation on North Korea, including the launch of another missile yesterday, the government of Japan so far has only talked about sanctions and pressure. However, what must happen in order to resolve this issue are dialogue, negotiations, and somewhere in this process, an agreement of North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons programme. At that point, we will face the challenge of how to verify the dismantling process of North Korea's nuclear arsenals and programme. It is the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty that outlines such a pathway. It is true that

the verification system laid out in the treaty only provides the basic framework. Concrete and specific measures will be discussed and decided through future meetings of states party. Establishing such a verification system and incorporating North Korea into this system in the future will have security benefits not only for Japan but also for the international community as a whole.

The claim that it is not possible to join the prohibition treaty because of North Korea's nuclear weapons is upside down. Rather, we need to make the best use of the prohibition treaty precisely because of the North Korean nuclear threat. To this end, it is vital that the prohibition treaty enters into force as soon as possible so that states party can begin the process of states party meetings. If the prohibition treaty enters into force within 2018, the first meeting of states party will convene in 2019. In other words, there is ample possibility for the first meeting of states party to the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty to take place before the 2020 NPT Review Conference. This means that in the near future, the NPT and the prohibition treaty could form two parallel processes that shape the international framework for nuclear disarmament. From the perspectives of both disarmament and nonproliferation, it appears wise to utilise these two processes as mutually supplementary.

It is important for Japan to participate in discussions on this verification system that will take place in the states party meetings. This is important for reasons of Japan's security, but it is also a responsibility as the country that experienced the atomic bombings. As a country that has experienced Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima, Japan has unique additional roles to play in the implementation of Article 6 of the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty on victim assistance (both victims of the use and testing of nuclear weapons), and environmental remediation.

Lastly, let me emphasise that as much as the nuclear weapons prohibition treaty is a disarmament treaty, it is also a human rights and humanitarian treaty. This treaty refers to the unacceptable suffering *hibakusha* and nuclear test victims have gone through, and recognises the disproportionate effects imposed upon indigenous peoples and women. Based on these recognitions, the treaty provides that any use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to international humanitarian law.

Abolition of nuclear weapons is often likened to the abolition of slavery. In terms of creating norms and aiming at correcting wrongs based on these norms, I consider that the nuclear prohibition treaty is also similar to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

All social movements that seek justice on the basis on human rights have attended to the issues and contradictions taken for granted in earlier societies. It starts with one individual voicing their opinion, saying that there is something wrong that must not be tolerated. Their words then speak to others, eventually becoming a power to transform society.

We have to look at the reality we are in: one that continues to maintain and reproduce weapons that would clearly destroy humanity. Someone must raise their voice, to say that this is not normal, that it is wrong. The biggest obstacle to nuclear disarmament is people's perception that nuclear weapons are a necessary evil, and that we therefore have no choice but to accept them. The nuclear weapons prohibition treaty resists and rejects this idea in an unprecedented and fundamental manner. What is wrong is wrong; what is unacceptable is unacceptable. We campaigners are committed to maximise this opportunity to move the process of nuclear disarmament forward.

Thank you very much.