Online World Conference 2020 -- Abolish Nuclear Weapons; Resist and Reverse Climate Change; For Social and Economic Justice

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**For the lives of humanity and the globe, let us build up the decisive global pressure for the abolition of nuclear weapons**

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Behind me, you can see a tapestry on which the poem of Toge Sankichi, entitled “Give me back my people” is stitched. A woman activist in Kyoto sent it to me, wanting to show it to you to convey the Japanese grass-root voices through this online World Conference.

Some 75 years ago, the lives of 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki were lost, and many more people were exposed to radiation. The number of the deaths in Hiroshima was as many as the number of the people who have died of COVID-19. His poem represented the desire for “Never again atomic bombings”.

The nuclear powers still possess over 14,000 nuclear warheads. Lying that their arsenals are to “prevent nuclear war” or “the guarantee of security”, they are even developing new nuclear weapons and modernizing their whole arsenals in the midst of human crisis.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres issued an urgent appeal for the immediate halt to armed conflicts and to engage in the struggle against the pandemic that is devastating our world.

We, too, should call on the nuclear powers, particularly the Nuclear Five that hold the permanent seats in the UN Security Council, as well as the nuclear-dependent states, to refrain from the threat or use of force in resolving international conflict, to implement the first resolution of the UN General Assembly which pledged to “eliminate atomic and other weapons of mass destruction”, and to redirect the resources to the protection of the humans and their globe, for peace, to halt to the climate change, filling economic gaps, and for the improvement of social welfare, medical services and education.

On this very day, we of Gensuikyo were supposed to be attending the World Conference in New York with 1,000 delegates, and tomorrow we planned to submit millions of signatures in support of the International Appeal of the Hibakusha for a ban and the elimination of nuclear weapons to the UN and the NPT Review Conference. These actions were necessarily cancelled.

Yet, the efforts we made are not in vain. We formed a broad coalition to collect signatures, and the number of the people who signed the Hibakusha Appeal has surpassed 10 million; the mayors who have appended their signatures now represent 70% of the 1,720 Japanese municipalities; and 448 local assemblies passed resolutions urging the Government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Please look forward to hearing a report from Mr. Tanaka at the end of today’s session.

At present, because of COVID-19, the pace of these efforts is slowing down. Our nationwide peace march, which usually has 100,000 participants, is cancelled in most places, or will be changed to silent symbolic actions. But we want to turn this adversity into opportunities to learn to use new media as well as long-tested traditional media to strengthen our communication with the public.

While superpowers continue their rivalry, failing even to take a common approach to address the current COVID-19 pandemic, people are rapidly learning that the problems facing the human race cannot be resolved by “My country first” or “our national security first” politics, and that cooperation is the only answer. Solidarity between the anti-nuclear peace movement and diverse movements for environment and social and economic justice is developing, as seen in this online conference.

If people cooperate worldwide, COVID-19 will be finally subdued and the next NPT Review Conference will take place in or before next April. So that it will be successful, we must generate changes in our own countries, especially those nations which possess or rely on nuclear weapons, by building majority voices for the implementation of Article 6 of the NPT and related past agreements, including the obligation of the “total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”.

We are determined to make every effort here to change Japan to a country that will stand in the forefront in order to bring the TPNW into force, as the only A-bombed country that makes it the Constitutional principle to renounce war and war potentials as means to resolve international conflicts. It is possible, as seen in the fact that in the survey conducted in December last year when Pope Francisco called for Japan’s entry into the treaty, 65.9% answered, “Yes, it should.”

In August, we will mark the 75th year of the A-bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With the aging of the Hibakusha, the initiative of our movement against A and H bombs is important to continue preventing nuclear war, banning and eliminating nuclear weapons and extending support and solidarity with the nuclear victims. So, we have agreed among us to host the 2020 World Conference against A and H Bombs on August 6th and 9th as an online conference. It will be a conference that will bring together voices and actions of people at grassroots who act for a nuclear weapon-free, peaceful and just world. It will extend solidarity with all who want to save the human race and the planet. And it will invite representatives of both grassroots movements and national and local governments who stand for the same goal as our speakers.

At the same time, we are planning to launch an international joint action “Peace Wave”, which will start in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and circle round the globe at the speed of the earth’s rotatation. It will be a chain linking many creative grassroots actions with one common goal - abolishing nuclear weapons - and one common form of action in support of the Hibakusha Appeal. I hope by then COVID-19 will be subdued but even if it is not, we will find various forms of actions that fitting for our respective conditions.

In April 2015, when we presented millions of our signatures to the UN and the last NPT Review Conference at the Hammarskjöld Plaza, the then chair of the conference Taous Feroukhi emphasized that the effort to globally involve ordinary citizens was essential to reaching our goal. She was right. To achieve success in abolishing nuclear weapons, saving our earth, overcoming the pandemic, or winning in any other important cause, decisions and acions taken by the people are decisive. Let us continue our action for it, creatively and undauntedly.