

Statement of the New Japan Women's Association to the Second Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Agenda item 11(f)(iv) Consideration of the status and operation of the Treaty and other matters important for achieving the objectives and purpose of the Treaty: other matters important for achieving the objectives and purpose of the Treaty: implementing the gender provisions of the Treaty

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Mr. President,

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of the New Japan Women's Association at the Second Meeting of the State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

After World War II, based on the remorse over the war of aggression it waged against other nations, Japan adopted the Constitution with Article 9 stipulating to renounce war. Japan also suffered the physical and human damage caused by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Women in Japan have therefore been upholding the adherence to Article 9 and the elimination of nuclear weapons as common causes. Since its founding 61 years ago, the New Japan Women's Association has been working in communities nationwide for nuclear abolition, opposition to war, and advancement of gender equality. The association has submitted to the United Nations a total of 16,720,000 signatures in support of the petitions, including the one initiated by the Hibakusha, calling for banning and eliminating nuclear weapons. We are confident that along with the Hibakusha and the citizens around the world, we contributed to the adoption and entry into force of TPNW.

The TPNW acknowledges the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and girls. Female Hibakusha endured unspeakable sufferings from discrimination and stigma, with their marriage and job opportunities denied. Many of them experienced repeated miscarriages and stillbirth, and even those who gave birth without any complications have lived with anxieties about the health of their own, and of their children and grandchildren for the rest of their lives. One of our members, a Hiroshima survivor, says that the Hibakusha cannot escape the atomic bombing until they die. Another member, also a Hiroshima survivor, told us that she was so excited to join the association because now she could campaign for nuclear abolition together with women all over Japan. She also said that after she and her colleagues started to compile a collection of Hibakusha testimonies titled "Burnt Like Fallen Leaves" every year, her hatred towards the United States changed into hatred of war, and she became a committed nuclear abolition activist. These female Hibakushas' courage has inspired the rest of us, and working together, we have empowered each other.

Amid the aging of Hibakusha, the New Japan Women's Association attaches importance to passing the atomic bomb experiences on to next generations. We organize sessions to listen to the stories of Hibakusha, and hold atomic bomb photo exhibitions to raise awareness of the facts about atomic bombing among the public. Recently we focus our effort on exhibiting pieces that local high school students painted listening to the Hibakusha victimized in Hiroshima. Our members in different chapters hold exhibitions of these paintings in public spaces including schools and libraries. Some school authorities appreciate our offer as an opportunity for their students to receive peace education, and teachers and students help the preparations. The paintings are so powerful that the audience of all ages learn horrible damage of nuclear weapons and they begin to wish to abolish these weapons of mass destruction. Inspired by those peace activities, young women become members of our organization.

We regret that the government of Japan, the only country that suffered the wartime use of nuclear weapons, is yet to sign or ratify the TPNW, and is absent from this meeting even as an observer. On the other hand, so far almost one and a half million people have signed the petition calling on the Japanese government to join the treaty. Of these signatures, 445,000 were collected by our members. Facing the heightened risk of nuclear weapons use, the Group of 7 nations summit under Japan's presidency announced that nuclear weapons were necessary. Ignited their anger by the statement, women are raising their voices, "We never allow nuclear weapons to be used." We believe that women's grassroots activism is the power to defeat the myth of nuclear deterrence.

The existence of nuclear weapons itself is a threat to humanity and the planet. The only way to eliminate nuclear risk is to eliminate nuclear weapons. While we gather at this meeting, our members are out on the streets in Japan, collecting signatures urging Japan to become a party to the TPNW. They are voicing against nuclear weapons and against war. We look forward to working with you all, so that we can achieve a world without nuclear weapons as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention.