
First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

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Now is the Time to Act, From Prohibition to Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Working paper submitted by the New Japan Women's Association

1. Founded in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association is a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Its members are working all over the country to promote peace and the elimination of nuclear weapons, as well as women's rights and gender equality. The Association upholds the prevention of nuclear war as the top priority of its objectives, and has worked, together with the Hibakusha, to accomplish this goal. The New Japan Women's Association welcomes the holding of the first Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

I. The Use of Nuclear Weapons Is Unacceptable

2. The first Meeting of the State Parties to the TPNW is taking place at a time when Russia's invasion of Ukraine rages on, and the danger of nuclear use is becoming a reality. While citizens across the globe are taking actions, and even in Russia people are voicing "No War," "Russian Troops Withdraw," and "No Nuclear Use," we see rise in military spending and tendency towards arms buildup. All the effort the international community has made to defend peace and human rights, and to achieve a sustainable world are in jeopardy. This first Meeting of State Parties has a crucial role to play in declaring that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is absolutely unacceptable, as well as in urging the world to rule out military option and commit itself to resolving the crisis in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

3. The government of Japan, the only country to have suffered the wartime use of nuclear weapons, did not even attend the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination in 2017, on the ground that nuclear deterrence is necessary. Since the adoption of the TPNW, we have called on the government to join the Treaty, but it still refuses to do so. Despite many requests made by the Hibakusha and citizens to attend this important first Meeting of State Parties at least as an observer, the Japanese government is not present here. It instead has announced that it would consider acquiring strike capability that could be used for pre-emptive attacks in violation of the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution, and doubling the country's military

spending. Some even argue for “nuclear sharing,” which is impermissible in the country that has the first-hand experience of the atomic bombing.

4. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, states in its Preamble: “Deeply concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons, and recognizing the consequent need to completely eliminate such weapons, which remains the only way to guarantee that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances.” The Treaty thus made nuclear weapons illegal. With Russia’s threat of nuclear elevating the risk of a nuclear war, it is time for all countries to move towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

II. Appeal from Women of the Atomic-Bombed Country

5. For these sixty years since its foundation, the New Japan Women’s Association has been working on the grassroots level to strengthen public opinion, by collecting signatures in support of the petition calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons, while making the realities of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki known to the public. The Association brought the signatures advocating the conclusion of a treaty banning nuclear weapons to the First Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament in 1978, and the number of the signatures it submitted to the United Nations since then on various occasions has totaled more than 16, 570,000. At the United Nations Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons in June 2017, the Association’s president delivered a speech representing civil society and said, “The Government of Japan is not present here but an overwhelming majority of Japanese women and people stand with you hoping to see this Conference take a historic step forward by adopting the convention to prohibit nuclear weapons.” Currently we are promoting a signature campaign to urge the Japanese government to join the TPNW, and everywhere many people sign the petition, saying that they do not see any reason why Japan is not a party to the Treaty. We are confident that the citizens’ will expressed by the signatures, that is, the power of public opinion, has prevented nuclear weapons from being used to this day.

6. The New Japan Women’s Association has consistently been advocating to cut military spending and redirect the money to improve people’s livelihood, welfare and education. Now that the climate crisis poses an existential threat to the planet itself, while people face skyrocketing prices as they still struggle to deal with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, we are strengthening our actions saying, “Save Lives, Defend Livelihoods!” When the international community need to unite to address the crisis for the sake of the future of humankind and the planet, there is no money and time to waste on war, arms buildup, or nuclear development and manufacturing.

7. The New Japan Women’s Association hopes that this first Meeting of State Parties will send out a powerful message, categorically opposing the use of nuclear weapons by Russia, and calling on all countries to break away from the illusion of “nuclear deterrence” and join the TPNW, thus taking a big step forward towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. In solidarity with citizens of the nuclear-armed states, their allies and nuclear dependent states; the countries still refusing to join the TPNW, we will continue our effort to have more and more countries to come on board. Above all, we are resolved to urge the Government of Japan to become party to the TPNW and take leadership in achieving a “world without nuclear weapons” as the only country to have suffered the nuclear use in wartime.

8. To this first Meeting of State Parties of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, the New Japan Women's Association presents the messages from its chapters in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two atomic bombed cities.

III. Message from Hiroshima

9. Rejoiced over the foundation of the New Japan Women's Association in 1962, women of Hiroshima who have the first-hand experience of the atomic bombing said, "Women throughout Japan can now be connected to carry forward the movement together to eliminate nuclear weapons." With a determination that there should never be another Hibakusha, they started to publish the collection of Hibakusha's stories titled, "Burnt like Fallen Leaves." At that time, it took courage for survivors to speak about the atomic bomb, because of the discrimination remaining in society against the Hibakusha. Women spoke in tears about what they had come through and wrote down their stories. The Hiroshima Chapter has published the collection every year, and this year we will release the 56th edition. With these series of collections, we have conveyed Hibakusha's stories to children, and the English translations have helped us to tell the world of the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons. Those who were moved by the Hibakusha's experiences and aspirations, have joined the actions for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We do believe that our steady effort has borne fruit, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

10. Japan's Prime Minister Kishida hails himself as a native of Hiroshima. Then the Government of Japan should immediately sign and ratify the TPNW. We have requested Prime Minister Kishida to attend the first Meeting of State Parties to the TPNW. The aging Hibakusha do not have much time left, but we will, side by side with the Hibakusha, continue to act, saying, "No More Hiroshima, No More Nagasaki!"

IV. Message from Nagasaki

11. On the occasion of the holding of the first Meeting of State Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, Ms. YOKOYAMA Teruko, Hibakusha of Nagasaki, says: "With joy, gratitude and expectation, I keep my eyes on the first Meeting of State Parties. I earnestly hope to see the Government of Japan sitting at the meeting table. By doing so, I believe, Japan can show their decisiveness to confront the nuclear threat by Russia. Russia's attempts at nuclear intimidation bring back the memories of the atomic bombing seventy-seven years ago, and my heart aches. I feel urged to do whatever I can to eliminate nuclear weapons right now. Nuclear weapons can destroy the earth, and put humanity at risk. This is why there is no option but to eliminate nuclear weapons. To me, the TPNW looks shining brightly towards the future."

12. The New Japan Women's Association Nagasaki Chapter carries out signature drive on 9th of every month, and our local members also collect signatures on different occasions when many people gather, such as cherry blossom viewing and new tea leaves festival. To give young generations opportunities to learn the realities of war, we displayed the atomic bombs photos and paintings drawn by the high school students in Hiroshima in the commercial area. We put tables where people can sit to make paper cranes and write down their messages for peace. Many young parents with small children, and junior and senior high school students came and signed the petition calling on the Japanese government to join the TPNW. We will redouble our effort until the day that the government sign and ratify the TPNW.