

JOINT STATEMENT

by

PNND/JAPAN and WCRP/JAPAN

agreed on April 27, 2020

at the Office Building of the House of Councilors, the National Diet of Japan

The Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was scheduled to take place from April 27 to May 22, 2020 at the Headquarters of the United Nations (UN) in New York, has been postponed due to the pandemic of Coronavirus (COVID-19). The UN announced accordingly that it would be rescheduled “no later than April 2021”. Being convinced that *efforts for nuclear disarmament* must not be postponed regardless of the postponement of the NPT Review Conference, *Religions for Peace* Japan (also known as WCRP/Japan) and the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) Japan have issued this JOINT STATEMENT as intended.

The NPT Review Conference is quite an important meeting *not only* to prohibit the proliferation of nuclear weapons *but also* to progress nuclear disarmament. Therefore, PNND/Japan and WCRP/Japan issued the joint statement twice in 2015 and in 2019, recognizing that a political/legislative approach and an ethical/moral approach ought to be integrated for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Believing that this year is critically pivotal in view of the current international environment vis-à-vis nuclear weapons, we have made our third Joint Statement public.

75 years have passed since the droppings of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Being cognizant that hundreds of thousands of citizens were killed by the blasts of the deadly weapons and that even now *hibakusha* are suffering from radioactive aftereffects, the catastrophic inhumane consequences caused by the use of nuclear weapons are *not* a past history *but* a menace at present. However, in spite of *hibakusha's* endeavors both persistent and beyond description, and of their conviction that *no more Hibakusha comes into being*, there still exist around 13,800 nuclear weapons in the world. It is worrisome furthermore that some countries keep developing new types of nuclear weapons.

It was announced by a US scientific bulletin in January 2020 that the minute hand of the *Doomsday Clock* was moved to 100 seconds to midnight (the doomsday of the world). This time setting is the closest to midnight for the first time since 1947 when the Doomsday Clock was inaugurated. It symbolizes a sense of crisis that humanity is near the extinction. The demise of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in August last year, which had been signed through a political decision of the heads of the United States and the Soviet Union, and the ambiguity of the extension of the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), which will lapse in February 2021, might have been affected the aforementioned decision this year. Although a new framework for nuclear disarmament, which urges China to engage, is pursued, the Chinese government shows little interest to the attempt. In the current international relation, the doctrine of *my country first* prevails in a couple of countries, and multilateral fora for nuclear disarmament are at an impasse.

Meanwhile, the visit of the Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church to Nagasaki and Hiroshima in November last year became a light of hope for those, who seek for a world free of nuclear weapons. The Pope stated then that the spending of money for the manufacture, upgrading, maintenance and sale of the destructive weapons was “an affront of crying out to heaven” and: “...just as the possessing of nuclear weapons is immoral...” He further stressed: “...the use of atomic energy for purposes of war is today more than ever a crime...” In addition, the Assembly Declaration adopted at the 10th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*, which was held at Lindau Germany in August 2019, had stated three months prior to the Pope’s visit to Nagasaki and Hiroshima: “...well-being of the others and ours are intrinsically shared.” This philosophical principle likewise the message of the Pope echoed the voice of global citizens, who aim at the elimination of nuclear weapons, and also became an important message to political leaders throughout the world to remind them that the existence of nuclear weapons are the absolute evil.

On the other hand, a noble ideal to make the world free of nuclear weapons is not necessarily confined to an ethical and moral sphere. As the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rendered its Advisory Opinion about 24 years ago: “...the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict...,” the elimination of nuclear weapons must be pursued from a legal perspective as well. Therefore, people in the faith communities and parliamentarians alike are required to play a great role in attaining their shared objective of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Having expressed our resolute as such, we hereby present to the Japanese government the following recommendations for its consideration.

Nuclear deterrence, which requires re-examination of its reliability

We call on the Japanese government again to re-examine nuclear deterrence policy, which presupposes nuclear weapons' *might of deterrence*, as we did in the Joint Statement issued in 2019. In light of such contemporary circumstances as the heightening of mutual distrust among the nuclear weapon states, the the existence of countries, which newly intend to possess nuclear weapons and whose control and accountability of nuclear weaponry seem questionable, the possibility that the threshold of the use of nuclear weapons is lowering due to the development and deployment of low yield nuclear warheads, and imminent risks such as unintentional blast, unexpected theft and accident of nuclear weapons are increasing, nuclear deterrence policy ought to be reviewed to figure out a far better policy to genuinely guarantee life and living of the peoples in the world. We, parliamentarians and religious people, pledge that we spare no efforts in creating a platform for dialogue to review nuclear deterrence policy. In the process of re-examining it, meanwhile, an attention should be paid to a proposition having articulated as a "hard question" by *Group of Eminent Persons for Sustainable Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament*: "Would it be legitimate or appropriate for a state to use nuclear weapons as a last resort...if it is threatened its existence." It ought to be borne in mind as well that nuclear deterrence may result in an inhumane consequence in such a way that the third city devastated by the bombing of a nuclear weapon comes into existence.

Ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons and Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

The numbers of States signed and ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which was adopted at a UN Conference held in 2017, are currently 81 and 36 respectively. The Treaty will therefore come into effect in the near future. According to a nation-wide survey conducted by Japan Broadcasting Corporation (abbreviated as NHK) in December last year, which questioned whether or not Japan should join TPNW, 66 percent of the Japanese population replied affirmatively. The Japanese government needs to take this outcome seriously and to attempt in studying the effectiveness of TPNW with a consideration of whether or not the Treaty is useful for achieving the *ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons*, which the Japanese government has been advocating. Acknowledging the fact that both unacceptable suffering/harm of *hibakusha* and the recognition of *hibakusha's* efforts are explicitly being worded in TPNW, it goes without saying that the international community truly expects that Japan supports TPNW because Japan is the only country, which once experienced the devastation of atomic bombings at a wartime. We, people in the faith communities and parliamentarians, strongly urge the Japanese government to participate in the *first meeting of States Parties of TPNW* as an observer, which will be held within one year of the entry into force of the Treaty. The provisions of this Treaty are not contrary and inconsistent to NPT. TPNW rather strengthens and complements measures to fulfill the obligation to nuclear disarmament articulated in Article 6 of NPT. TPNW is an indispensable legal framework so as to achieve *the ultimate objective of eliminating nuclear weapons*. We urge the Japanese government to take specific measures towards it.

Urgent issues to be undertaken

We fully respect and render our solidarity with *Hibakusha*, who are committedly promoting *Hibakusha International Signature Campaign* as their last appeal. And, we continue to do our best in the early realization of *Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone*, in which PNND/Japan has been engaged for a long time, bearing in mind a lot of uncertain political factors existing in Northeast Asia like military expansion by some countries. Furthermore, we cannot but alarm the present environment where the development of AI robot weapons, militarization of outer space and the development of new typed missiles, etc., are pursued, which regrettably go against a world that we wish to witness. In view of the contemporary situation where scientific technology, which is supposed to be utilized for the well-being of humanity, is instead being taken advantage of the manufacturing of deadly weapons, we become aware of our ethical and moral responsibility and are determined to fulfill our role in reversing the trend.

It is sometimes asserted that human beings have been taken paths of war from the inception of human history. In the meantime, it is also often argued that humanity has reached a thought of *abolition of war* through controlling, regulating and criticizing an act of war, whilst challenging for the *illegitimization of war*. This symbolic process was the accumulation of the long-standing efforts and ceaseless desire of humanity in realizing a peaceful world community. We reaffirm our genuine resolute for realizing *a world free of nuclear weapons* to progress human history further, which has been woven for a long time.