

Progressive Initiatives:

Role of Parliamentarians for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons

by Hideo HIRAOKA

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My name is Hideo HIRAOKA, and I am a member of PNND Japan, and the Executive Director of the Democratic Party of Japan Nuclear Disarmament Group. Today I am very much honored to be given an opportunity to speak to this Austria and MPI panel. Before getting into the main issues, I would like to briefly introduce myself, particularly my first encounter with the atomic bomb.

I was born in 1954 and raised until the age of eighteen in a city called Iwakuni, which is approximately 40 km from Hiroshima. The first time I realized the horror of atomic warfare was when I visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park on a school excursion at the age of twelve. What I saw in pictures and exhibits was hell itself; I still clearly remember being so horrified that I could not sleep that night.

After I grew up, I learned that my father, then a non-commissioned officer, had entered Hiroshima soon after the bombing as part of a relief operation for the victims. After the war, he received an atomic bomb survivor's certificate, yet he declined to talk about his secondary radiation exposure, partly because of prejudice and discrimination against A-bomb survivors. Now he is eighty-five years old and suffers from cataracts and glaucoma like many other bombing victims.

Nuclear weapons ravage the innocent not only upon impact, but also for many years after. We, as human beings, whose civilizations have overcome countless crises, now have a responsibility to abolish this hell of our own invention. As a Japanese

parliamentarian and a second-generation A-bomb survivor, I deeply feel a special responsibility to work hard for this cause.

The nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki sent a shock wave around the world leading the United Nations in its first General Assembly resolution to call for the control and abolition of these weapons of mass destruction.

Unfortunately the aspiration for a nuclear weapons free world could not withstand the powerful political forces which divided the world into military blocs, and the world has continued to live under an unacceptable risk of annihilation.

The opportunity to abolish nuclear weapons and further our cooperative security is now with us. The five-point plan released on UN Day last year by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon outlines concrete steps, a comprehensive framework and the political arenas in which action should be taken to achieve nuclear disarmament.

The flurry of statements on nuclear disarmament from leaders and high-level officials of key countries – including the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, France and Australia – indicate that there is now political momentum.

Parliamentarians have key roles to ensure such progress is made.

Parliamentarians have the opportunity and the responsibility to:

- represent the public's views to government,
- publicise key initiatives,
- ensure that their governments are actively involved in disarmament,
- ensure that adequate national resources are devoted to disarmament,
- adopt national implementation measures, and
- work with their parliamentary colleagues in other countries to promote disarmament initiatives.

Parliamentary organisations such as Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union assist parliamentarians to fulfil these roles.

In Japan PNND members have been active in a number of initiatives, including actions against North Korea nuclear test in 2006 and US-India nuclear cooperation deal last year. In addition, last year PNND member and Speaker of the House of Representatives Yohei KONO invited G8 Speakers to Japan for a Summit on Peace and Disarmament and to visit the nuclear bombing memorial and peace park in Hiroshima. This was a ground-breaking event, not least for the fact that it was the first time a high-level US official had visited Hiroshima. We were thus very pleased to hear US President Obama in his Prague speech, acknowledge the US nuclear bombing of Japan and indicate therefore that the United States has a moral responsibility to take a lead in the achievement of a nuclear weapons free world. Parliamentarians in Japan and around the world are ready to work with President Obama and other leaders to realise this goal.

In April this year the Inter-Parliamentary Union – which represents virtually all the democratic parliaments in the world – adopted by consensus a resolution on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament which calls for the ratification and entry-into-force of CTBT, further reductions in nuclear stockpiles, negotiations for a treaty to control fissile materials, the establishment of additional Nuclear Weapon Free Zones and support for the UN Secretary-Generals five-point plan for nuclear disarmament.

This resolution will serve as a very important cross-party basis for action by parliaments around the world on these issues and initiatives.

On nuclear testing, parliamentarians will remain central to the ratification process.

Regarding the IPU recommendation on Nuclear Weapon Free Zones, parliamentarians have played a vital role in the establishment of the existing zones

which cover Antarctica, the Sea Bed, Outer Space, Latin America & the Caribbean, the South Pacific, South East Asia, Africa, Central Asia and Mongolia.

These zones prevent proliferation in the regions; provide security guarantees that nuclear weapons will not be used against the countries in the zones; establish regional mechanisms for confidence building, conflict resolution and security; and help pave the way for a nuclear weapons free world.

Now parliamentarians are actively promoting NWFZs in North East Asia, the Middle East, Central Europe and the Arctic. In the Middle East, PNND members - including some from Israel - have been supporting the proposal of a moratorium on nuclear fuel cycle activities as a first step towards a NWFZ.

PNND members in European countries including Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland have put forward a plan for a NWFZ which could include European States that don't have nuclear weapons on their territory, with the invitation to other NATO states to join when the nuclear weapons on their territories are retired.

A proposal for an Arctic NWFZ is being advanced by parliamentarians from Canada and Denmark in conjunction with Pugwash Conferences. The successful example of the Antarctic NWFZ gives cause for optimism that an Arctic NWFZ could be negotiated.

Now looking at the Northeast Asia region, I would like to speak on our efforts to establish such a zone. We have developed a draft treaty based on the pioneering works by NGOs, especially those by Peace Depot, and with kind assistance from Dr. Hiromichi UMEBAYASHI, among others. It was released to the public in Nagasaki last August on the eve of Nagasaki Day by Katsuya OKADA, Chair of our group and former Chair of the DPJ.

In the draft treaty, we have adopted a scheme called the ‘three plus three nations arrangement.’ The first three are non-nuclear states of the region, namely South Korea, North Korea, and Japan, while the latter three are supportive states, namely the United States, China, and Russia.

A fuller discussion of the treaty will be presented at the workshop to be held at Conference Room E at 3 pm on Friday.

Regarding the IPU call for parliamentarians to support the UN Secretary-General’s five-point plan, parliamentarians are already active on some of the key components of the plan – most notably the call for implementation of the disarmament obligation through negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements.

In July last year, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the NPT, a cross-party group of Members of the European Parliament, including former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard and former Belgian Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, released a Parliamentary Declaration Supporting a Nuclear Weapons Convention. This statement has also been endorsed by parliamentarians from across the political spectrum from around the world including from Japan, Russia, France, the UK and the United States.

Parliamentarians understand that nuclear disarmament is a complex process and that a nuclear weapons convention might not be achieved in one step. As such, initial deliberative work on a nuclear weapons convention, using the Model NWC as a guide as suggested by the UN Secretary-General, has widespread support. Parliamentarians are doing their part by submitting the Model NWC to their parliaments and holding hearings on it. This work should be stepped up.

Parliamentarians are also actively supporting the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament which is co-chaired by Minister Gareth Evans and Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi. The International Commission can throw a

spotlight on the current resistance and barriers to nuclear disarmament and how these can be overcome.

Of course, parliamentarians cannot operate in a vacuum. We need the advice, information, support and lobbying from NGOs. We need to understand the international forums for disarmament – like the NPT and UN General Assembly - in order to ascertain how best we can be engaged. We need to be able to work with governments when appropriate – such as on government delegations to the disarmament bodies – and also to have some freedom from governments when required to be able to ensure accountability. And we need to work with celebrities and the media to ensure that we can reach the public and that they know we are willing to serve them on this issue.

Thus we reach out to all of you here in a spirit of collaboration – in the understanding that urgent action is required to ensure a secure world free from the threat of nuclear weapons – and in the belief that the time for such action is now.

I thank you.