

United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination.

Item 8 (a). General exchange of views: high-level segment (27 March 2017)

Statement by H.E. Mr. Nobushige TAKAMIZAWA, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament at the High-level Segment of the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination
(27 March 2017, New York)

Madam President,
[Secretary-General of the United Nations,]
[President of the General Assembly,]
Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Japan has a mission, as the only country which has experienced the devastation of the war-time use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to raise awareness on the reality of atomic bombings and clear recognition of its humanitarian consequences across borders and generations. Through this effort, Japan has devoted itself to uniting the international community towards the advancement of nuclear disarmament, and to working together with other countries towards our common goal: to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

In order to make our steps towards a world free of nuclear weapons, Japan has consistently advocated that it is essential to build up practical and concrete measures on the basis of cooperation between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states, while not losing sight of a clear recognition of the humanitarian aspects of the use of nuclear weapons and an objective assessment of the severe international security environment. Japan believes that this approach is the most effective path in reaching a world free of nuclear weapons. Our confidence in this position remains steadfast.

In order for us to step forward together, and in light of the current severe international security situation, I would like to take this opportunity to articulate the approach we have upheld, the path forward that will lead us to the elimination of nuclear weapons and the concrete measures for nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament and national security are closely linked; it is evident that disarmament will not be feasible without regard for the existing security concerns. We must not turn away our eyes from the current security situations in the international community, which are increasingly worsening. In particular, North Korea, since last year, has conducted two nuclear tests and launched more than 20 ballistic missiles in clear violation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and moreover it is vocal in its intention to become a nuclear power. This poses a real and imminent security issue facing not only the East Asian region but also the international community as a whole. This is also a serious challenge to the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime centered around the NPT. It is therefore crucial to have a realistic perspective as to how nuclear disarmament measures can contribute effectively to addressing actual security concerns that each country and region faces.

Now, let me elaborate on a path forward that we support based on the practical approach towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

As Japan has consistently advocated, the engagement of the nuclear-weapon states is indispensable for the advancement of nuclear disarmament. The most important thing is to build confidence and trust among states, including nuclear-weapon states, and thereby accumulate various realistic and practical measures through bilateral and multilateral efforts, such as agreeing on a concrete measure to reduce nuclear weapons.

It is also necessary to resolve regional issues and thereby to remove the elements that give states the motives to possess nuclear weapons. In this way, we have to accelerate our efforts to create an enabling security environment for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

After accumulating such efforts, through actions by all countries, including nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states, we can then expect to reach what our proposed Progressive Approach calls “a minimisation point,” at which the number of nuclear weapons will be very low. Only when this achievement is within reach, will it be possible to make an effective and meaningful legal instrument as the final building block to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. At that stage, we will be able to give further thought to an appropriate framework for nuclear

disarmament, including a multilateral nuclear weapons convention, which should be nondiscriminatory and internationally verifiable.

We must correctly appreciate the fact that the current international regime under the NPT has contributed to international peace and stability. Therefore, it is crucial that a new legal instrument must strengthen the existing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime supported, inter alia, by the NPT. The delicate balance and groundwork so far created and maintained by the NPT regime towards realistic nuclear elimination must also be preserved. Japan firmly believes that we will be able to achieve our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons through persistent efforts in advancing concrete measures and steady dialogue.

Based on the approach I have just explained, with engagement of nuclear-weapon states, Japan will be dedicatedly carrying forward the following concrete nuclear disarmament efforts in order to implement steadily and effectively nuclear disarmament measures, as agreed by the international community through such fora as the NPT.

Firstly, Japan has been contributing to the NPT Review Process to strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For example, Japan has been playing a leading role in the NPDI, a cross-regional group of non-nuclear weapon states, which has proposed concrete measures, such as increasing transparency. Japan attaches particular importance to improving the transparency of nuclear forces as a concrete and crucial step for a world free of nuclear weapons. In this regard, we are calling upon the nuclear-weapon states to conduct concrete and regular numerical reporting. We will continue to emphasize increased cooperation of the international community as a whole towards the successful 2020 NPT Review Process, which will begin in May this year.

Secondly, Japan is committed to making progress in advancing concrete and practical measures, especially in those fora where decisions on concrete steps are made with the participation of nuclear-weapon states. This effort includes the following:

For 23 years in a row, Japan has submitted resolutions calling for united action towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons to the UN General Assembly, which have gained overwhelming support. We have also made active contributions towards

an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) over the past 20 years by providing technical and financial support, in addition to patient, steady diplomatic efforts. Furthermore, in order to demonstrate the will of the international community not to allow the further production of nuclear weapons, Japan is willing to actively participate in the discussions at the high-level expert preparatory group, established under the United Nations, towards early commencement of negotiation of an FMCT.

Regarding nuclear disarmament verification, which is an essential element for the actual elimination of nuclear weapons, Japan is making active contributions for the establishment of a group of governmental experts on nuclear disarmament verification under the UN, and to the activities of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV).

These are all approaches with the involvement of nuclear-weapon states. Last year, at the G7 Foreign Ministerial Meeting in Hiroshima, G7 Foreign Ministers issued the Hiroshima Declaration on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The Declaration unequivocally confirmed the political commitments of all G7 member states, consisting of nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states, including their persistent and active support for the reduction of nuclear weapons and for individual nuclear disarmament measures. As the next step, now it is time for each state to make sincere efforts to turn these commitments into actions and to deliver results.

Japan will continue making proactive contributions to such nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation fora, and is prepared to offer proper opportunities for dialogue and cooperation.

At the UN General Assembly last year, the resolution to convene this Conference was adopted. As a country having experienced the catastrophe of nuclear weapons, Japan fully understands and shares the frustration among non-nuclear-weapon states due to the present slow pace of nuclear disarmament and the sincere desire to urgently achieve substantive progress in nuclear disarmament.

Japan has called upon nuclear-weapon states to squarely and faithfully examine the backdrop of a ban treaty and to exhaust their efforts towards advancing nuclear disarmament. Japan has also had earnest discussions with many non-nuclear-weapon states on nuclear disarmament, including the idea of a ban treaty, in various

international conferences.

A ban treaty, if it does not lead to an actual reduction of a single nuclear warhead, would be of little significance. In fact, efforts to make such a treaty without the involvement of nuclear-weapon states will only deepen the schism and division not only between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states, but also among non-nuclear-weapon states, which will further divide the international community. Therefore, our common goal will be pushed away, a goal of reaching a world free of nuclear weapons. Even if such a ban treaty is agreed upon, we don't think that it would lead to the solution of real security issues, such as the threat by North Korea. This is why we voted against the UN General Assembly resolution 71/258 last year.

From discussions and considerations so far, it has become clear that the ban treaty concept has been unable to obtain understanding and involvement of nuclear-weapon states. Furthermore, this negotiation has not been formulated to pursue nuclear disarmament measures that will actually lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons, in cooperation with the nuclear weapon states. Regrettably, given the present circumstances, we must say that it would be difficult for Japan to participate in this Conference in a constructive manner and in good faith.

What is essential is to pursue practical and effective measures with the engagement of both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, as Japan has consistently maintained. As we sincerely aspire to see a world free of nuclear weapons, we will continue to pursue realistic and effective disarmament measures, and will work to create a security environment conducive to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In closing, let me be clear and reiterate Japan's unwavering commitment. Japan will continue to place great value on constructive dialogue and cooperation within the international community. To advance effective and inclusive efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, we will demonstrate our initiatives, such as providing a venue for interactive exchanges of views among countries that hold varied approaches on nuclear disarmament.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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