

**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. TARO KONO,  
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2018 Second Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference  
24 April 2018, Geneva, Switzerland

Mr. Chairman,  
Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The Treaty of Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is a cornerstone of international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. We have overcome several crises and fortunately, during the past 73 years, no nuclear weapon has been used since the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Approximately 85% of nuclear weapons have been reduced from its peak during the Cold War. Although there are some regrettable cases, nuclear proliferation has been limited more than it had been foreseen at the time of the establishment of the NPT. For example, South Africa abandoned its nuclear development program and joined the NPT to demonstrate its return to the international community. The reduction of weapons and slowing of their proliferation are without a doubt the outcomes contemplated by the enactment of the NPT. Nobody wants nuclear weapons to be used. The international community shares the common goal to eliminate nuclear weapons towards “a safer world free of nuclear weapons.”

Once nuclear weapons are used, they would cause tremendous devastation. As the only country that experienced nuclear devastation during war, Japan knows how catastrophic the consequences would be. Thus, Japan has responsibility to lead international efforts towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Threats of nuclear weapons still exist, however and the security environment is deteriorating. A sovereign State must protect lives and properties of her people. We need to seek security and nuclear disarmament simultaneously. We need to avoid the humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons and to deal with real security threats. We need to strike a balance of these two viewpoints, creating concrete and practical measures under the cooperation of both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states. As the most universal framework that enables such balance, maintaining and strengthening the NPT will be the core of Japan's efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

Today, I come all the way to Geneva with one text of recommendations. They are the recommendations that I myself, as the Foreign Minister of Japan received on March 29th from the “Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament” or “EPG.”

The group is composed of 16 members from both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. Japan announced the launch of the EPG at the First Preparatory Committee last year.

In the recommendations, the EPG presents its views that the States with divergent views are currently unable to engage with each other in dialogue. This divergent trend has occurred in the deteriorating strategic environment in recent years. In pursuing “a world free of nuclear weapons” in line with the Article VI of the NPT while improving the security environment, the recommendations stress the necessity of “civility in discourse” and respect for divergent views must be restored, rather than criticizing others with different positions. The recommendations also stress that all NPT parties should demonstrate their “ownership” of the treaty. They proposed concrete measures to lay the groundwork to converge different approaches and pointed out several issues that need to be solved in pursuit of “a world free of nuclear weapons.” The recommendations are an attempt to converge different views through free and active discussions by experts in their personal capacities, from both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. I am confident that the recommendations are a meaningful reference for the international community.

Let me draw your attention to three points today from the bridge-building measures proposed in the recommendations. Based on the following points, Japan would like to call upon the international community for concrete actions.

First: Efforts to increase transparency. Transparency contributes to communication, avoiding distrust and misunderstanding among states, thereby leading to risk reduction. Transparency contributes to confidence building among states. Transparency contributes to a stronger NPT review process. With the member states of the NPDI, Japan has called for an agreement on a standardized form and regular reports by nuclear-weapon States. This year, Japan has submitted a new working paper as a member of the NPDI. Japan will continuously promote measures to improve transparency of nuclear forces.

Second: Nuclear disarmament verification. An effective verification mechanism is an essential component in order to realize total elimination of nuclear weapons. This also applies to the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization (CVID) of North Korea, including the dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. The process of developing such an effective verification mechanism itself helps confidence building among the international community. Japan views this issue as an urgent task and will actively contribute to the discussion of the UN Group of Governmental Experts on nuclear disarmament verification.

Third: Interactive discussion involving both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. From medium- to long-term perspectives, it is necessary to discuss what is called “hard questions,” such as how to effectively contribute to threat reduction or how to address security concerns that may emerge from the nuclear disarmament process. To promote fruitful dialogue in the international community, Japan expects the EPG to continue its discussions to further identify “hard questions”, and also consider benchmarks in nuclear disarmament, including “minimization point” that Japan has been suggesting.

Further details will be explained by a member of the EPG at the side event held at this assembly hall during today’s lunch time. I am looking forward to see many of you at the event.

Mr. Chairman,

It is the shared responsibility of all NPT state parties to increase momentum of the international community towards the 2020 NPT Review Conference. Japan will lead the effort, together with the NPTDI, a cross-regional group of twelve non-nuclear weapon states. With regards to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), Japan will further promote its early entry into force and its universalization, which has received widespread support. While making use of Ministerial Meeting of the Friends of the CTBT, Japan will continuously ask all non-signing and non-ratifying states of the CTBT for their commitment to the treaty. Japan will also call for further participation to the International Monitoring System (IMS). With regards to the FMCT, the Fissile Materials Cut-Off Treaty, Japan is committed to early commencement of its negotiation. Japan will contribute to discussions on substantive components of a treaty at a high-level FMCT preparatory group.

It is also the priority of Japan to convey to the world the reality of atomic bombing.

Japan will invite the world leaders and young generations to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan will also promote disarmament education and capacity building of practitioners on nuclear disarmament. I would like to renew my respect for the tireless efforts of the Hibakusha, the Atomic Bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who have conveyed to the world the reality of the atomic bombings.

Mr. Chairman,

To maintain and strengthen the NPT, along with nuclear disarmament, accelerating efforts on the other pillars of the NPT, in particular, nuclear non-proliferation is essential.

North Korea's nuclear and missile programs pose a grave challenge to the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. North Korea's moves toward dialogues from their side are the outcome of the international community's coordinated efforts of the maximum pressure campaign against North Korea. Last week, North Korea announced discontinuation of nuclear test and ICBM test-fire as well as dismantlement of northern nuclear test ground. We welcome the announcement as a positive development and hope that it will lead to North Korea's concrete actions to dismantle its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. We need to urge North Korea, however, to do more than what was announced. A nuclear armed North Korea will never be accepted. 【Japan requires North Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT. 】

Based upon our past experiences, it is important not to ease pressures at a wrong timing. To realize CVID of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles by North Korea, the international community as a whole must maintain the maximum pressure campaign against North Korea.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) contributes to strengthening the international non-proliferation regime centered on the NPT. Its continued and full implementation is important. We expect that the issue of ballistic missiles of Iran will be solved through the consultations among related countries.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s safeguards are essential tool in the efforts to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and Japan supports the IAEA's efforts to enhance the mechanism and improve its efficiency. As the most practical and effective way to enhance the mechanism, it is necessary to

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universalize the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and Additional Protocol.

Mr. Chairman,

Pledging shared commitments by nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States to achieve the goal of the NPT will be a meaningful starting point for bridge-building towards nuclear disarmament. I sincerely hope that all NPT state parties and civil society will act unitedly so that the future generation would recall the 2020 NPT review process, as the process which has created the momentum to overcome different approaches and has made significant step forward towards “a world free of nuclear weapons.”

Thank You.

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