

Comments for the Launch of the Religions for Peace Nuclear Disarmament Resource Guide

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Ms. Moderator, esteemed guests, religious leaders from the world, and ladies and gentlemen, gathered here for this Ninth World Assembly of *Religions for Peace*, firstly I would like to express my gratitude for giving this opportunity to speak to you all.

Before starting my speech, I would like to express my sincere condolence and sympathy for the victims in the Philippines by the recent mega typhoon. Let us pray for the lost lives and for the recovery from the severe damage.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude that *Resource Guide on Nuclear Disarmament for Religious Leaders and Communities* has been published, and I sincerely hope that this practical guide will be of service to religious leaders the world over who are working, in their diverse capacities, toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons exist under the premise that they intimidate other countries, whereby enabling the nuclear weapons state to protect its security. However, we live in an age where even non-state actors can potentially possess nuclear arms. Nuclear weapons are threats to all life forms; it is not an exaggeration to say that nuclear weapons threaten national security, rather than protect it.

The problems that confront the world today, be they economic or environmental or issues to do with immigrants, refugees or migrant workers, are increasingly issues that transcend national frameworks and boundaries, and are therefore impossible to solve through conventional concepts of national security based on the pursuit of national interest. In other words, we need to consider human centered security that transcends national borders. This is none other than the concept of shared security proposed at the 8th World Assembly, which involves collective actions to protect all life forms and is what religious leaders should aspire to.

In 1945, atomic bombs—the first nuclear weapons in the world to be used on humans—were dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For the sole purpose of never letting anyone

experience the same hell on Earth ever again, the A-bomb survivors or *hibakusha*, have continued to talk about their experiences. They have demonstrated through their actions the philosophy of reconciliation rather than retaliation, underpinned by a strong wish for nuclear abolition. The average age of *hibakusha* today is over 78. All of us share the duty of passing their voices onto future generations. During the *Roundtable Discussion on Nuclear Weapons* organized by Religions for Peace Japan in September, former Hiroshima mayor Dr. Tadatoshi Akiba pointed out the flaws of the nuclear deterrence theory, arguing that the true deterrent of nuclear weapon use had been the A-bomb experiences recounted by *hibakusha*—a very penetrating observation that religious leaders should lend a serious ear to.

In addition to being tools of war, nuclear weapons, if used, could have tremendous impact not only on human life but also on levels of poverty, the environment and ecosystems. These and other humanitarian impacts are today driving increasingly active moves by states, NGOs and citizen activists to draw attention to the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, and to call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In October this year, the “Joint statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons,” which highlighted the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons and appealed for their non-use, was signed by 125 countries, including New Zealand, and presented at the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security) of the United Nations General Assembly was issued. On November 4, a Japan-led draft resolution, “United action toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons,” which urged compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and efforts toward realizing a nuclear-free world, was approved by 164 countries and adopted at the UN General Assembly First Committee (Disarmament and International Security). The draft resolution is expected to be formally adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in December.

As a member of the religious community, I welcome these global moves toward nuclear abolition. However, it is also true that inconsistencies remain within the NPT, such as allowing some states to retain nuclear weapons, while banning other states from having them. It is also totally unacceptable that states possessing nuclear weapons are allowed to withdraw from the NPT or remain non-signatories. I made a strong point on behalf of religions about these issues at the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT held at the UN Headquarters in 2010. As the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention already exist, why can't we achieve a convention banning nuclear weapons, another type of mass destruction weapon? Is there not a need to review the NPT once more from the viewpoint of religions, and campaign for a new framework? Each time I listen to the voices of the *hibakusha* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who have consistently spoken up about their plights brought about by the use of nuclear weapons, I keenly feel the role religions need to play.

Meanwhile, the threat does not come just from nuclear weapons but also from the use of nuclear energy for “peace”. The mega-quake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011 triggered an accident at the Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power

Station, resulting in radioactive releases and the mandatory evacuation of more than 300,000 Fukushima Prefecture residents. No end is in sight for the post-accident cleanup operations, the fundamental problem of radioactive waste management remains, evacuees are still enduring difficult living conditions, and there are lingering concerns over the grave future effects of radiation on the natural environment and other aspects. The issue of nuclear energy is thus riddled with concerns, for both the present and future generations.

The main theme of this Assembly is “Welcoming the Other.” The “Other” could be understood to mean not just the people who live with us in the present but people who are no longer with us, especially those who have met untimely deaths—hibakusha, victims of war and natural disasters. The “Other” could also include the future generations of people. To protect the lives of the future generations yet to be born, I implore all of you here today to seriously recognize that nuclear energy itself may in fact threaten the lives of not just humans but all living things, and to join forces with the world’s many religious leaders in taking the first step toward its elimination by supporting the abolition of all nuclear weapons.