



SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL (SGI)

UN Liaison Office in Geneva

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Open ended working group to develop proposals to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons

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ORAL STATEMENT delivered by Ms. Hayley Ramsay-Jones, 22 August 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chair,

I speak on behalf of Soka Gakkai International (SGI). I thank you for this opportunity to share our views on this important issue.

SGI regards the existing huge number of nuclear weapons in the world today as a grave concern.

The SGI's efforts to grapple with the nuclear weapons issue are based on the recognition that the very existence of these weapons represents the ultimate negation of the dignity of life. These weapons represent the idea that states can justify the sacrifice of untold numbers of human lives and disruption of the global ecology. This is inhumane and must be challenged today. Civil society is also responsible for this enterprise.

When people become sensitised to the realities of nuclear weapons, they naturally develop strong feelings of abhorrence and rejection.

However, most people in their daily lives are not conscious of the threat of such weapons. People have become inured to the continuing existence of these weapons as though such weapons do not even exist. This cannot be considered a healthy state in terms of the human spirit.

Recalling the lesson from the utter misery and horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the very existence of these devastating weapons, even one single weapon in any part of the world cannot be acceptable.

In this regard, SGI believes that there is a real need for nuclear disarmament education, not just as a means of information giving, but as a viable tool for working towards a nuclear weapons free world. Nuclear disarmament education has the potential to help foster people to develop skills, knowledge and attitudes for a nuclear weapons free world, whilst also providing new perspectives and mindset in helping to achieve this goal.

This point was demonstrated through the survey that SGI recently conducted on youth attitudes towards nuclear weapons and their humanitarian consequences.

There were 2,840 youth who participated in this survey from nine countries. Among many things according to the survey, more than 90% of respondents feel that nuclear weapons are inhumane, and more than 80% believe that there should be a ban on nuclear weapons.

However the survey also highlights that less than 20% of respondents are able to identify the nuclear weapon states, and only 40% of 15-19 year olds can answer Hiroshima as a place where a nuclear weapon was used.

In light of these facts, it is our hope that nuclear disarmament education is given high priority in the combined efforts of all actors including states and civil society organisations in working towards a nuclear weapons free world.

Mr. Chair,

There has been an emerging approach supported by non-nuclear-weapon states on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Greater humanitarian focus and renewed awareness of the fundamental nature and consequences of nuclear weapons could alter the discourse and normative questions more effectively towards a nuclear weapons free world.

In parallel to such efforts of non-nuclear-weapon states, other intergovernmental action should be possible.

In this regard and being mindful that 2015 will mark the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, SGI calls upon all United Nations Member States to consider holding an expanded summit for a nuclear weapons free world in Hiroshima and Nagasaki¹.

Such a summit in those cities could be a good opportunity in deepening the understanding of the inhumane nature of these weapons and identifying the necessity of disarmament education, and could help move forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. There is no place more conducive to considering the full significance of life in the nuclear age than Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Thank you Mr. Chair

¹ Daisaku Ikeda, SGI President, *2013 Peace Proposal – Compassion, Wisdom and Courage: Building A Global Society of Peace and Creative Coexistence* (2013). See, <http://www.sgi.org/assets/pdf/peaceproposal2013.pdf>