

Press Statement (Tokyo, November 22, 2012)

**Japanese Government declines outlawing of nuclear weapons
for reasons of “deterrence”
NGOs and Citizens Call for Fundamental Policy Change**

On the afternoon of November 21, 2012, a roundtable between NGOs and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was held to discuss Japan's nuclear disarmament policy. 13 representatives of 11 NGOs including from Hiroshima and Nagasaki exchanged opinions with Parliamentary Vice-Minister Kazama Naoki, Deputy Director-General for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Hirose Yukinari and others from MOFA on the United Nations General Assembly First Committee and the Oslo Conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, to be held next spring.

Discussions focused particularly on the fact that Japan refused to sign the 35 country joint statement on the inhumanity of nuclear weapons, announced on October 22 at the UN General Assembly. The explanation given by Vice-Minister Kazama on the reasons for denying to join this initiative was as follows:

Explanation by Vice-Minister Kazama (summary)

The Japanese Government shares the same recognition in regards to the issue of the “inhumanity of nuclear weapons” referred to in this statement. The tragedy of nuclear weapons must never be repeated. Nuclear weapons must never again be used. The issue is how to prevent them from being used.

There are two approaches to this. The first is the approach of outlawing nuclear weapons. However, as there is no institution within the international community which could control unlawful acts, this approach is not guaranteed to ensure that nuclear weapons are definitely not used, and thus concerns remain.

In the case of Japan, we are following the approach of locating ourselves under the US nuclear umbrella in order to prevent nuclear weapons from being used again in our country.

As this joint statement had elements which deny such nuclear deterrence, Japan did not sign.

This explanation deeply shocked the NGO representatives present. While acknowledging the inhumanity of nuclear weapons, and submitting to the United Nations every year a resolution calling for a “world free of nuclear weapons,” the Japanese government is also publicly and unapologetically stating that the United States' nuclear weapons are necessary for Japan. Furthermore, the clear statement was made that it is not the outlawing of nuclear weapons that is necessary to prevent them from ever being used again, but rather that nuclear deterrence is necessary for this end.

There is no way to realise a “world free of nuclear weapons” without outlawing them. The Japanese government, with its talk of a “world where nuclear weapons are not used,” is not truly aiming for a “world without nuclear weapons.”

This position is utterly unacceptable to us as citizens and NGOs.

Firstly, as a country which has experienced the devastation by the use of nuclear weapons, and thus knows first hand the tragic humanitarian consequences, Japan has the responsibility to take the initiative to lead the world in the path to outlaw these weapons. The Hibakusha (survivors of the atomic bombings) have continued to appeal that the very existence of nuclear weapons themselves morally degenerates humanity.

Furthermore, there is no evidence of the theory of nuclear deterrence that the retention of nuclear

weapons can prevent their use. Rather, as long as there are states which place value on nuclear weapons, other nations will also seek to obtain them, and nuclear weapons will proliferate throughout the world. In reality, the 1970 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) permitted five nations to maintain nuclear weapons, however there are now 9 nuclear-armed states, if North Korea is included. The potential risk of the use of nuclear weapons is increasing. The only certain guarantee for preventing the use of nuclear weapons is the total ban of these weapons, and their abolition.

Finally, is the fact that the Japanese Government is not taking sincere steps even to implement interim measures towards the outlawing of nuclear weapons, in particular regarding the limitation of the role of nuclear weapons or prohibition of first use. The Vice-Minister explained during this meeting that Japan's position is that nuclear deterrence is necessary to prevent nuclear weapons from being used against Japan, however until now the Government has repeatedly given the position of allowing the use of nuclear weapons even against attacks by non-nuclear weapons. This can only be called a critical dependence on nuclear weapons.

The Government of Japan's policies regarding nuclear weapons as listed above are implicit with contradictions, and deceitful to the public. This does not represent the feelings of the Japanese people. We call for a fundamental change in policy, and particularly emphasise the responsibility of politicians now in light of the upcoming Lower House Election to take place on December 16, 2012.

November 22, 2012

Japan NGO Network for Nuclear Weapons Abolition

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