

SSD II NATIONAL LIAISON COMMITTEE FOR NUCLEAR & GENERAL DISARMAMENT

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Statement by Senji Yamaguchi on behalf of the
SSD II National Liaison Committee for Nuclear &
General Disarmament at the UN Second Special
Session on Disarmament, June 24, 1982

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished delegates,

Brothers & Sisters,

In the name of the SSD II Japanese National Liaison Committee for Nuclear and General Disarmament, which represents practically all walks of life in Japan including women, religious, peace, youth, consumers, trade unions and A-bomb victims organizations and other grassroot movements, we should like to express our respect and gratitude to the United Nations for giving us the opportunity of addressing this historic Second Special Session on Disarmament. We believe that the General Assembly is engaged in deliberations that have a crucial bearing on the very survival - or annihilation - of the entire human race.

As Japanese NGOs, we have delivered to the U.N. a petition signed by 28,862,935 persons, requesting the General Assembly take steps for nuclear and general disarmament. Entrusted with their delivery, our delegation transmitted the petition to the U.N. Secretary General in a public ceremony on June 10th.

With a great regret, however, in this delegation were 223 absent places for our colleagues who had their visas refused by the U.S. government and thus were effectively denied their rightful access to the U.N.. We therefore, humbly request of you to seriously inquire into this matter, which may well be a violation of the Host Nation Agreement between the U.N. and the United States. In the future, the right of participation in the work of the U.N. of all NGOs at all levels should fully be recognized by the Host Nation and implemented so that this denial of visas shall never become a precedent.

Mr. Chairman,

On August 9, 1945, as the bomb struck the city of Nagasaki, I happened to be 1.4 kilometers away from the hypocenter. I sustained serious burns from the waist up and have been left with unhealing scars, as you can clearly see. On that day, I saw people all around me, with extruded eyeballs, men and women showered with penetrating splinters of glass and wood, and weeping young mothers frantically holding on to their lifeless, all but decapitated babies. Multitudes of others lay

dead in the charred ruins of the city. In an instant the atomic bomb had decimated thousands and thousands of people, combatants and civilians alike. It appeared to annihilate all life, and seemingly destroyed human society and its environment.

For about 40 days after the bombing, I remained at the brink of death due to high fever. After leaving the hospital seven months later, keloids covered my entire upper body and I continued to suffer from various illnesses which struck me one after another. In times of deep despair, I attempted suicide on several occasions.

The inhuman and exhaustive devastation visited upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki was unprecedented in history. By the end of 1945, some 210,000 people are believed to have died from the bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Over 90 percent were civilians. Many of those who managed to survive the nuclear onslaught continue to suffer from or live under the fear of delayed effects of radiation such as leukemia and other cancers. Their predicament is compounded by mental anguish and social-economic hardships, which defy all explanation.

May I ask the Assembly, Mr. Chairman, as Hibakusha, as a survivor of the nuclear inferno, whether this kind of genocide should ever be allowed to happen again?

Nuclear arsenals of today are far more destructive than their prototypes of 37 years ago. If a nuclear war should break out, whether it be

a "limited", a theatre, or an all-out conflagration, it would undoubtedly result in the destruction of countless numbers of people and may very well annihilate civilization and humanity.

Mindful as we are of the aggression and crimes perpetrated by Japanese militarism during the Second World War, we Japanese, the first victims of nuclear war, have committed ourselves to both the letter and spirit of post-war Japanese Constitution. In so doing, we are dedicated to a world at peace through nuclear and general disarmament. In particular, we call for the outright abolition of nuclear weapons because they constitute an immediate and present danger of humankind.

Our undertakings have enjoyed broad support of an overwhelming majority of the Japanese people as evidenced by our successful petition campaign of millions in the past seven months to both the U.N. and the government of Japan; the massive rally of 200,000 people in Hiroshima in March; and, the mass demonstration of over 400,000 in Tokyo in May.

This movement is part of an unprecedented, global upsurge of movements and public opinion in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere calling for nuclear and general disarmament. It has surfaced deep concerns among all peoples of the immediate danger of nuclear war, a threat that hangs over us all.

We can wait no longer.

Facing this crucial moment, we request the General Assembly to adopt the following four items of our petition to be implemented without any further delay.

1. To make known to the people of the world the terrible effects and suffering caused by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima-Nagasaki and nuclear tests.
2. To adopt immediately an international convention outlawing the use of nuclear weapons as a crime against humanity.
3. To expand nuclear-free-zones in many parts of the world where production, possession, introduction or attack with nuclear weapons will be totally prohibited.
4. To draft a treaty for disarmament to be strictly implemented within a limited time-frame, in which measures for nuclear disarmament shall be given top priority.

Mr. Chairman,

After meeting and discussing in New York with other colleagues from all over the world, we are now more firmly convinced that our four-point request is in full concord with the world public opinion.

First of all, we would like to propose that the program of the World Disarmament Campaign include the dissemination of correct information and knowledge on the damage and after-effects of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (especially among younger generations who have no experience of the disasters of war). To this end, we Japanese NGOs are fully prepared to cooperate with such projects by sending teams of Hibakusha (A-bomb victims) and scientific experts throughout the world.

Secondly, we urge the General Assembly to immediately adopt an international convention outlawing the use of nuclear weapons as a crime against humanity.

Thirdly, the General Assembly is urged to make every effort to build favourable conditions for establishing regional nuclear-free-zones, including a much needed nuclear-free Pacific, rather than to wait for such conditions to ripen.

Fourthly, United Nations holds the primary responsibility for overcoming the present global crisis which is unprecedented in the human history. We strongly urge that the United Nations decide on a Comprehensive Program of Disarmament with a definite time-frame, with the highest priority attached to the prohibition of nuclear weapons, and thus make an all-out effort to eradicate the danger of nuclear war.

Let me also remind you of the existence of thousands of nuclear victims

who are in need of relief and reparations. They must be responded to by legislative action in the nation-states where they reside.

Furthermore, we are convinced that all of humanity shares the hope of transferring, through disarmament, the material and human resources now squandered on the arms race to meeting human needs, especially in the developing countries.

Distinguished delegates,

Brothers & Sisters,

I ask you; please take a good look at my face and my hands. What happened to me and thousands of other Hibakusha, the death and suffering in a nuclear war, must never happen again.

Please give us your solemn pledge and assurance of peace so that I and my fellow Hibakusha shall be the first and the last to suffer from the death and agony caused by a nuclear war.

We, Hibakusha speak out. I continue to speak out as long as I live.

May there be No More Hiroshimas, No More Nagasakis, No More Wars, and No More Hibakusha!