

Intervention by Peace Depot

UN Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination (2nd session)

New York, June 19, 2017

Thank you, Madam President.

As a civil society group based in Japan, we regret that the delegation of our own government, which is the government of the only a-bombed nation, is absent from this negotiation conference. Our disappointment towards Japan's absence deepens even more, as we highly welcome the Japanese word Hibakusha appearing twice in the Preamble of the draft Convention.

In our view, it would be difficult for Japan to become party to the currently negotiated Convention, so long as it continues to adopt a security policy relying on nuclear weapons. As I believe is widely recognized at this conference, the concept of nuclear deterrence is incompatible with the spirit of the Convention.

As citizens of Japan, we aspire that our government move to the right side of history, overcome its reliance on extended nuclear deterrence and join in the path to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons under this Convention. It goes without saying that those attempts on the part of Japan as well as other nuclear-allied states, should have positive impacts for nuclear-armed states in joining this Convention in accordance with Articles 4 or 5 of the draft.

To make this happen, we will strengthen our call that our government undertake to review its security doctrines and policies so as to reduce and eliminate the role of nuclear weapons therein, and further to accede to this Convention. And in doing so, we assume it would be of great help if there were specific provisions directly relevant to nuclear-allied states, which we can draw on in our campaigns to raise public awareness and to encourage our government for policy change.

From that perspective, we suggest that **Article 2 on declarations provide that states parties should declare nuclear weapons do not play any role in their military and security concepts, doctrines and policies.**

In the context of Japan, the government's policy to depend on and cooperate with the nuclear programs of the U.S. is clearly stated in its *National Defense Program Guidelines* endorsed by the Cabinet. The latest version includes a sentence which reads: "With regard to the threat of nuclear weapons, *the extended deterrence provided by the U.S. with nuclear deterrence at its core, is indispensable.*"

Unless this sentence is deleted from its official policy documents, and unless this policy is replaced with other security frameworks that do not rely on nuclear weapons – for example a North-east Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone –, it is of our view that Japan would not be entitled to join the prohibition Convention.

The Japanese government plans to revise its National Defense Program Guidelines, most likely by the end of this year. We hope to make use of that opportunity to urge the government to review and alter its nuclear reliant policy. It is in this context that we propose the above-mentioned revision in Article 2.

In closing, please let me reiterate that explicit calls in the Convention's text for policy changes of nuclear-umbrella states may well play a significant role in building strong public opinion within the states concerned, calling for their accession to the Convention.

I thank you, Madam President.