

Speech by H.E. Yohei KONO

(former Speaker of the House of Representatives, National Diet;
Member of the Senior Advisory Committee for Pugwash Japan) on the Occasion of the
Pugwash Nagasaki Conference, on the evening of 3 November 2015, at Glover Garden

(A tentative translation)

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is my great pleasure to address to you this evening, on the occasion of the memorable meeting of the Pugwash Conference held in Nagasaki. I am not sure if I am fully qualified to address such a distinguished audience. However, if there is any reason why I was nominated to speak in front of the Pugwashites, it is because, I believe, that 21 years ago, as the Foreign Minister of Japan, I took an initiative to submit a “Resolution on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” to the United Nations. This resolution was adopted by the General Assembly, supported by more than 150 countries, and, since then, the Japanese government has been submitting a similar resolution to the UN every year, which has been successfully adopted each time.

This is our achievement. This means at the same time, however, that, after 21 years, the purpose of our resolution, i.e. the elimination of nuclear weapons, has not been achieved yet! A deplorable situation.

This evening, in my modest speech, I'd like to talk briefly on the question of nuclear disarmament, and on the question of peace.

1. The Importance of Understanding the Nuclear Threat

The essential message of the Russel-Einstein Manifesto was that: Scientists should inform peoples of the world about the danger of nuclear weapons, in its full scope. Another essential message of the Manifesto was: The world is full of possible causes for international disputes behind the Cold War, and any war could develop into a total nuclear war. If we are to evade the end of the world by nuclear weapons, we must abolish war itself. These have been the two essential points of the Russel-Einstein Manifesto.

The Manifesto, which was published after the “Fifth Lucky Dragon” Incident (“Daigo Fukuryu-Maru”) referred, when it discussed the crisis of life caused by nuclear weapons, not only to the damages directly caused by the explosion of nuclear bombs, but also to the effect of radioactive pollution on humanity and nature. As a country which experienced the serious accident at the nuclear power station in Fukushima in 2011, Japan should seriously examine this question.

In fact, at this Pugwash Nagasaki conference, this afternoon, a session concerning the Fukushima accident was held at Nagasaki University, inviting Prof. Kiyoshi KUROKAWA (who served as the chair of the Parliamentary Investigation Committee on the Fukushima nuclear accident) as one of its main speakers. I was not able to attend this session, for I was on my way back from Beijing, but I am sure it was a most important occasion, and I hope I'll be able to read the report of the session later.

Concerning the civil use of nuclear energy, I know that the Pugwash Conference has not assumed a specific united position. There are different views and attitudes. As for myself, I am keenly interested in the choice of the German government, which decided to phase out nuclear power generation, learning a lesson from the Fukushima accident. However it might cost, I believe it is a quite attractive choice, for, firstly, by doing so you produce no more radioactive waste, which up to now, we have not found ways of final disposal. Secondly, there will be no more nuclear power station accidents, which, once one happens, inevitably pollutes the atmosphere with radiation, and brings about radioactive contamination.

As for the threat of nuclear war, I believe that visiting Nagasaki and Hiroshima, two Japanese cities destroyed by atomic bombs, is one of the most effective ways for learning and understanding its real meaning. In September 2008, as the Speaker of the House of Representatives, I chaired a meeting of the G8 Parliamentary Speakers in Hiroshima. I remember how the participants were impressed by their visit to the Atomic Bomb Museum and by their conversation with the *Hibakushas*, and how, as a result of these experiences, perhaps, all of the nine Speakers of G8 and EU including Ms. Nancy Pelosi of the US House of Representatives agreed that the conclusion of the meeting was: that “they aim for a nuclear-free world.” This was one of the factors that led to President Obama’s speech in Prague the following year, in which he declared his intention to build a “nuclear-free world,” and consequently led to him being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, I believe.

The NPT Review Conference held in New York this year ended without adopting the final document, because of the failure in reaching an agreement on the question of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in the Middle East. Although we have had some good news as the recent rapprochement between Iran and the Western countries, we are still faced with many difficulties in our endeavors for nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Unless Nuclear Weapon States make serious efforts for nuclear disarmament, which are promised in accordance with the NPT, it is quite natural that the calls for an international treaty delegitimizing nuclear weapons will increase. As for the question of non-proliferation, it is my belief that Japan should be careful not to damage the credibility of NPT regime by concluding an atomic energy agreement with a country, such as India, which has developed nuclear weapons outside the framework of NPT.

2. The Abolition of War

Concerning the abolition of war, another mission advocated by the Russel-Einstein Manifesto, we must admit that we are faced with great difficulties. The world today is witnessing numerous serious phenomena such as: the emergence of the so-called “IS”, the crisis in Syria, and millions of refugees and internally displaced people living under very difficult conditions because of this crisis, and the situation in eastern Ukraine.

I believe, that if we seriously hope to abolish war, it is necessary, first, to abandon the idea that we can solve a problem by means of military force, an idea which has been becoming influential again recently. Secondly, unlike the argument presented by the late Professor Samuel Huntington in his *Clash of Civilizations* (according to which, a difference in religion or culture inevitably leads to a war), peoples all over the world should respect each other and cooperate, regardless of difference in national affiliation and religion.

If we disagree on something, we must sit together, discuss, and finally find a solution through dialogue. We must stick to this principle. Concerning the Syrian crisis, it is a positive development that, recently, a dialogue has been taking place between the United States and Russia. It seems necessary that all concerned parties sincerely respond to the call for resuming the dialogue between different political forces, including both the Opposition and the Assad regime, just as the UN special envoy to Syria, Mr. de Mistura, once mentioned that “to defeat terrorism, we need a political

process; military force alone is not sufficient to solve the question.”

When the September 11 incident took place in the United States in 2001, the late Pope John Paul II declared that he was against the idea of revenging by force, for this would inevitably lead to the “spiral of hatred and violence.” If the President of the United States and the other leaders of the world had paid more attention to this advice, we would be living in a completely different world today.

As for Japan, we used to have a policy according to which arms exports had been basically prohibited in Japan since 1976, but this policy was abandoned by the Abe administration. In addition, the cabinet declared, last summer, that henceforth Japan would be able to exercise its “right to collective self-defense,” changing the traditional interpretation of the Japanese constitution. As a culmination of these developments, this summer, the cabinet submitted the “Security Bills,” aimed at strengthening US-Japan military cooperation worldwide (including logistic support for the US Army) and enabling the Self-Defense Forces to play a more active role overseas (remarkably relaxing the restrictions on the use of arms). These bills were eventually passed, in spite of the upsurge of a popular protest movement of unprecedented scale. Moreover, the government is now trying to forcibly impose a new US military base on the people of Okinawa. While building a new US military base is becoming a rather “out-of-date” story in other parts of the world, here in Japan, we are going to build a new military base for the US Marines, a base suitable for the large-scale battleships, destroying the beautiful nature of Okinawa in that process.

I fear that, regrettably enough, these policies pursued by the present Japanese government are not in harmony with the ideal of the “abolition of war,” which is the right direction for the future of humanity. These policies are often justified under the pretext of “China’s threat,” and the rapid growth of China’s military budget is mentioned in this context. However, in Japan’s case as well, the military budget increased rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, increasing nearly 4 times (while it started at approximately one trillion yen, it ultimately reached approximately four trillion). In any country, as the national economy grows, the military budget tends to increase as well, and China’s case is no exception.

On the occasion of UNESCO’s decision to register the documents on the Nanjing Massacre in 1937 as a part of its “Memory of the World Heritage” program, the

Japanese government protested vehemently. The Chief Cabinet Secretary even referred to the possibility of halting Japan's funding for UNESCO. This sort of hostile attitude on the part of Japan contributes neither to the promotion of peace in the region nor to the enhancement of Japan's prestige. It even arouses a suspicion in the international community that the present Japanese government has a "revisionist" inclination. Rather, we should explain to China that Japan is sorry for what took place in Nanjing and is determined not to repeat it again, and propose that, based on this common understanding, China and Japan work together for carrying out various procedures required after the UNESCO registration.

3. Conclusion

In our dealing with both China and Korea, Japan should abandon the idea that: "we are opposed with each other! We must win this power game!" Whether it is a territorial issue, or a historical issue (such as the question of sexual exploitation of women in wartime), we should sit together and discuss, recognizing that these are crucial matters for both of us and we must work together for the solution.

In this brief speech, I was not able to discuss in detail the complicated process of actual negotiations over disarmament and non-proliferation. Nor have I been able to talk about other important topics in the field of recent military technology such as "drones," military robots, etc. Forgive me, but after all I should not keep you waiting for dinner too long!

I suppose this Nagasaki conference has now approximately finished half of its program, and from tomorrow, you are entering the second half of the conference. The advance of nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved, in the final analysis, without the voice of the international community. International public opinion is the driving force of disarmament, and the Pugwash Conference is playing a crucial role in the formation and activation of this international public consciousness. I hope this Nagasaki conference will be a great success.

Thank you.