

Statement by Dr. Toshiko Abe
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Conference on Disarmament
Geneva, 26 February 2013

Madame President,
Secretary-General Tokayev,
Distinguished representatives,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor to have this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament today. I welcome and strongly support the efforts of the President to pull the CD out of its prolonged stalemate and to revitalize its work.

Disarmament and non-proliferation comprise one of Japan's most important policy areas. Foreign Minister Kishida, who assumed office in December of last year, comes from Hiroshima, and at his first press conference stated that it was his "strongly held intent to deal with nuclear disarmament in a pro-active manner." Along with the Foreign Minister, I am determined to work earnestly for progress in this area, and it is indeed for that reason that I am here at the CD.

The international community presently faces a number of difficult challenges to its efforts to further disarmament and non-proliferation. In order to find a way forward, it is especially important for all countries to deepen engagement and involvement at the political level.

Madame President,

The DPRK announced that it had conducted its third nuclear test on 12 February and it is totally unacceptable, as it constitutes a grave challenge to the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime centred on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and seriously undermines the peace and security of Northeast Asia as well as the international community. In addition, remarks made in this CD plenary session by the DPRK about the Republic of Korea (ROK) on 19 February were utterly inappropriate to this venerable multilateral disarmament negotiating body, and were unacceptable to Japan. Japan renews its strong demand for the DPRK to immediately and fully implement relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

In addition, Japan once again strongly urges the DPRK to take concrete action towards comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern, including its abductions, and its nuclear and missile programs.

Madame President,

To advance disarmament, both unilateral steps by states with nuclear weapons and bilateral cooperation between countries are of undeniable significance, but in Japan's view, it is particularly important to move forward with multilateral efforts that reflect the concerns of states that have no nuclear weapons. And yet, as I was astonished to learn, the CD -- the world's sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body -- remains mired in a 16-year standstill. That the Conference, in spite of the exertions of the Hungarian President, once again failed to adopt a programme of work is cause for grave concern.

At the end of last year, the United Nations General Assembly adopted multiple resolutions to hold discussions of disarmament issues under the auspices of the UN General Assembly. Among these resolutions, decisions were taken to establish an open-ended working group to take forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, convene a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, and create a group of governmental experts to contribute to a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons purposes (FMCT). What these resolutions share in common is that they are surely manifestations of the international community's impatience with the protracted impasse in this Conference.

Within the international community, there is broad understanding that the next logical step in multilateral disarmament negotiations is to commence work on an FMCT. Why the CD has for so many years failed to initiate such negotiations despite the wide support for them is hard to understand. It is no wonder, then, that in the eyes of the citizens of each of our countries -- burdened as they are by the fiscal predicament of recent years -- there may appear to be no choice but to explore alternatives to the deadlock in which we find ourselves in this Conference. I therefore call upon all state representatives to redouble efforts to reach a breakthrough and resolve this problem.

Madame President,

Even as we extol the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, in order to advance nuclear disarmament, it is necessary to propose concrete steps for achieving this aim.

Accordingly, Japan has until now devoted itself to realistic and steady diplomatic efforts to this end.

One example of this is the launching, with like-minded countries, of the Non-proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI). The NPDI is an action-oriented group that will continue to contribute to progress in disarmament and non-proliferation by putting forward concrete proposals such as the reporting form it drafted to enhance transparency of nuclear armaments. As I stated at the start of my remarks, political engagement is indispensable to the success of our efforts here. Hence, all ten NPDI members have committed to the group's activities at the minister level.

Madame President,

As the only country ever to have suffered nuclear bombings during wartime, Japan knows from its own experience the appalling humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, at the international conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons to be held this March in Oslo, our experts and other representatives will thus participate and actively contribute to the discussion. In addition, through disarmament and non-proliferation education, Japan is determined to build a foundation for a world without nuclear weapons by passing on knowledge of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use to the world, and especially to younger generations. The disasters of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated. Yesterday, I took the opportunity to view the permanent exhibit on the atomic bombings here in the United Nations Office at Geneva. It is my sincere wish that the exhibit promotes understanding of the reality of the tragedy caused by the use of nuclear weapons and further deepens awareness of the need for the entire international community to strengthen efforts to bring about disarmament. I encourage all of you here on the front lines of nuclear disarmament to go and see it.

I thank you, Madame President.