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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking the Government of Austria for hosting this important Conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

It has been almost 70 years since humankind witnessed the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons for the first time in history. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings in war, Japan believes that it has a special mission to convey what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 by spreading awareness of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons across national borders and generations. In particular, Japan's Foreign Minister Kishida, who is from Hiroshima, where an atomic bomb was dropped, has a strong sense of mission, and therefore raised the level of representation to the ambassadorial level and instructed me to attend this Conference.

Based on this unique historical background, Japan has exerted various efforts, such as promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education, dispatching atomic bomb survivors, or *Hibakushas*, and the next generation as "Special Communicators" or "Youth Communicators" to various countries, and inviting political leaders from around the world to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to witness first-hand realities of the devastation that occurred there. In addition, we also display overseas atomic bomb exhibitions as we are doing here at the Hofburg Palace. I would say that this Conference itself is a very important part of such efforts to raise awareness.

We will continue these efforts to bring the reality of atomic bombing into the hearts and minds of people. Japan invites all other states to join our efforts. In this regard, Japan highly appreciates and welcomes the participation from the U.S., the U.K., and other States possessing nuclear weapons to this Conference. Constructive engagement with these states is needed if we want to make progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons. I hope that wider participation in this Conference, including nuclear-weapon States, will lay the groundwork for a successful 2015 NPT Review Conference.

However, it is evident that we have still a long way ahead of us to achieve our goal. While the

number of nuclear warheads has largely decreased since the peak of the Cold War, there still remains over 16,000 nuclear weapons in existence—more than enough to destroy all of humanity many times over. Although a nuclear-free world appeared to be within reach when the Cold War was over, the lack of a collective sense of ownership of nuclear issues allowed them to fade from public awareness. That is why we must recall the horrific consequences for humanity that would result from the use of nuclear weapons so that the nearly 70-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons be extended forever.

Now is the time for the international community to be united under growing awareness of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. The discussion on the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons should be inclusive and universal, where every voice should be heard, as well as a catalyst, instead of a dividing factor, for a united global action towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. It fundamentally underpins all nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation work, including progressive approaches, in pursuit of a more secure world, particularly through the NPT. It is vital to avoid mutual distrust, lack of confidence, and fragmentation of the international community which would counter sincere, effective disarmament and non-proliferation efforts and delay the entire process of nuclear disarmament.

States may differ on the means or sequencing for achieving a secure world free of nuclear weapons. However, the international community should focus not on differences but on common ground by identifying concrete and practical “building blocks” that are multilateral, plurilateral, bilateral or unilateral measures going on in parallel. Increasing awareness of the humanitarian aspect can be a driving force for “building blocks” of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, including the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the immediate commencement of Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) negotiations, and the universalization of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Additional Protocol, in particular. There are no short-cuts to achieve effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament, taking into account the prevailing severe international security environment.

We encourage all states to contribute actively and constructively in all fora to pursue practical and effective measures that will strengthen the international disarmament and non-proliferation regime based on the NPT, while dealing with diverse nuclear risks. Japan will continue to steadily promote effective “building blocks” for global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and continue to pursue various efforts to achieve a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.