

Address by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio at the opening session of
the first meeting of the International Group of Eminent Persons for
a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP)

December 10, 2022
[Provisional translation]

I would like to thank all distinguished participants for gathering here today for the first meeting of the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP). It is my great pleasure to welcome you all in my hometown of Hiroshima.

We must take the path toward a “world without nuclear weapons,” however difficult it may be. This is the strong aspiration, not only of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also of Japan, the only country to have suffered atomic bombings during war. It is also my strong personal, as well as Japan’s determination as the chair of the G7 Summit meeting here in Hiroshima next May.

The post-Cold War era has come to an end and we are now at a historic turning point. The global security environment has become increasingly severe. The threat of the use of nuclear weapons is higher than at any time since the height of the Cold War. Russia's nuclear threat during its aggression against Ukraine is absolutely unacceptable, let alone their actual use. It has also been pointed out that North Korea may conduct another nuclear test.

The harsh reality surrounding nuclear disarmament continues to loom over us, or rather, looms even higher and larger than before. Coupled with the increasing complexity of the international security environment and the rapid development of emerging technologies, the division among States in their positions and views on this matter is becoming increasingly pronounced. There is even no clear path for dialogue.

Even in the face of this harsh reality, I have continued my efforts to build international momentum for nuclear disarmament once again since assuming office as Prime Minister. In August, I attended the NPT Review Conference for the first time as Prime Minister of Japan based on my belief that maintaining and strengthening the NPT is the only realistic path forward. At the meeting, I announced the “Hiroshima Action Plan.” Unfortunately, despite the hard work of Ambassador Zlauvinen as the President, the conference did not achieve the outcome we had hoped for. However, we believe that the draft final outcome document, which was prepared after serious discussions among

the Parties, will serve as a foundation for the international community to make future progress on nuclear disarmament.

We don't have the luxury to stand still. Mindful of the G7 Hiroshima Summit next year, Japan intends to take realistic and practical steps forward in accordance with the "Hiroshima Action Plan."

During my time as Foreign Minister, I organized the "Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament" with the participation of experts from various positions, including nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states. The group presented valuable recommendations including the identification of issues that needed to be squarely dealt with to realize nuclear disarmament, measures to resolve such issues that governments and civil society should take, and the importance of civility in discourse.

The newly established IGEP enjoys the support from global political leaders with deep insight and great influence, backed by years of experience and significant responsibility. Their support will help us once again lay a solid foundation for us to make progress towards our ideals even in the midst of these increasingly difficult times. We are deeply grateful to many political leaders, including former U.S. President Barack Obama, for sending us messages.

The newly appointed 15 IGEP members are all experts in the field of nuclear disarmament who have great passion, deep knowledge, and the wisdom to foresee the future. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of the members in their acceptance to take this role. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Shiraishi for again serving as the chair.

I look forward to a free and robust discussion among members. I have high hopes that this group will produce ideas, the way forward and accompanying concrete measures on what governments, civil society, and the international community as a whole consider and act on to move closer to the ideal, while simultaneously taking into account the harsh realities, need to maintain and strengthen NPT to which both nuclear and non-nuclear states are parties, and the 11th NPT review conference planned to be held in 2026.

I sincerely hope that today's first meeting will be an important step in building international momentum toward a "world without nuclear weapons" and in building on our tireless efforts toward the ideal. I would also like to reiterate my pledge to continue holding the torch aloft, strong and high, together with all of you, to find a path to leading from the harsh reality to the ideal.

Thank you for your kind attention.