

**Address by Foreign Minister HAYASHI Yoshimasa at the first session of the Second Meeting of the “International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons ”(IGEP)**

I welcome all of the Eminent Persons participating in this Second Meeting of the “International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons”, or the IGEP. For those who are attending this meeting in person, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to Japan, especially as we are starting to enjoy the beautiful spring season.

Now, I will start by highlighting that the international community is currently at a historic turning point, and we are in the most severe and complex international security environment since the end of the Second World War. The free, open, and rules-based international order is now facing grave challenges, due to the historic shift in the balance of power and intensifying geopolitical competition. In this sense, cooperation among the international community is becoming ever more important.

Circumstances for advancing nuclear disarmament are becoming increasingly severe. However, it is precisely because of this dire situation that it is even more important that we do not stop moving forward. This is the very reason why the Government of Japan established the IGEP, as a forum to facilitate open and candid discussions among experts from both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states, to share their wisdom beyond their respective countries’ positions.

In this severe security environment, it is important to promote realistic and practical efforts and bolster international momentum. It was with this conviction that Prime Minister Kishida attended the NPT Review Conference last year for the first time as a Japanese Prime Minister and announced the “Hiroshima Action Plan.”

Professional and constructive discussions are indispensable to promote realistic and practical efforts more concretely and robustly, while taking into account the current international situation. In this regard, efforts such as the IGEP are increasingly indispensable.

The first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference will take place at the end of July. I am aware of the lively discussions that were held during the first IGEP meeting last December, which covered issues ranging from the current state of the NPT to the significance of arms control negotiations and the challenges they face.

I hope this second meeting will be as candid as the first meeting, and that discussions will be held in a manner that doesn't lose sight of the future trajectory of international trends and developments.

The Government of Japan will closely follow the discussions including those at the IGEP as we approach the G7 Hiroshima Summit next month, where we will send a strong message for realizing a world without nuclear weapons. I will take advantage of occasions, such as the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting this month, to deepen discussions with fellow G7 members on how to advance nuclear disarmament.

In closing, I would like to conclude by wishing you all every success at this second meeting of the IGEP. (END)