

Opening Remarks by Mr. Kiyoto Tsuji, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan

Third Meeting of the “Group of Eminent Persons for Substantive Advancement of Nuclear Disarmament”
(14 November 2018, Nagasaki Prefectural Art Museum)

Good morning, I am Kiyoto Tsuji, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. It is a great honor and pleasure to meet distinguished members of the “Group of Eminent Persons (EPG)” who have extensive knowledge of nuclear disarmament. I attended programme on the reality of atomic bombings together with you this morning and renewed my determination to make utmost efforts towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

It is of great significance that the meeting of the EPG is held here in Nagasaki, followed by its first meeting in Hiroshima last November, as both the cities suffered atomic-bombings. With regard to the recommendations compiled through your vigorous discussion in March, Foreign Minister Taro Kono attended the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference in April and introduced that the recommendations would be a meaningful reference for the international community. At the side event during the session, Minister Kono also stressed the significance of bridge-building that the recommendations aim for. They have received a high evaluation from the international community, indeed.

Some key elements of the recommendations have also been incorporated into the resolution on the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which the Government of Japan submitted to the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The resolution was adopted with support of 160 countries. I would like to extend my sincere respect and gratitude for the endeavors of the EPG members in drafting the recommendations.

There continues to be a severe security environment and differences in the position among states with divergent views on how to proceed with nuclear disarmament. With this harsh reality in mind, we need to take practical and concrete disarmament measures steadily and gradually. While promoting interactive discussions to advance such measures and by making best efforts to building bridges among states, the Japanese Government would like to contribute tenaciously to creating a common ground where the international community can work together, towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

I'm aware that during this session the EPG members are expected to discuss issues including "hard questions" on the relations between nuclear disarmament and security from a mid- and long-term perspective, as shown in the recommendations by the EPG.

I hope that the EPG will examine various arguments that legitimize and delegitimize nuclear weapons, and will have candid discussions regarding challenges and solutions in advancing the efforts to reduce nuclear weapons. We believe that the outcome of your discussions will contribute to the progress in the NPT review process, touching the NPT Review Conference in 2020.

It is our sincere hope that through this meeting we will see meaningful ideas and proposals that could serve as a useful guide for bridge-building the divergence in position among states.

Thank you.

(END)