

Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

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Disarmament and non-proliferation education

Working paper submitted by Japan

I. Introduction

1. Achieving a world without nuclear weapons requires long-term commitments and constant efforts. In this context, the final document of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in 2010, underscored the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education as an effective means to advance the goals of the Treaty in support of achieving a world without nuclear weapons.
2. A global commitment to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament can play an important role in reversing the continued deterioration of the international security environment. The awareness of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of the use of nuclear weapons ought to underpin our approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament. In this regard, Japan has consistently been playing a leading role in the efforts to achieve a peaceful and safe world without nuclear weapons, and thus would like to contribute to further strengthening the current momentum towards that goal.
3. Education provides knowledge and skills to individuals to empower them to make contributions to the achievement of concrete disarmament and non-proliferation objectives. For this reason, disarmament and non-proliferation education should nurture critical thinking skills that enable people to consider how to steadily advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.
4. Disarmament and non-proliferation education and awareness-raising should be undertaken in an inclusive and collaborative manner. Various actors, including educational and research institutions, think tanks, the scientific community, the civil society, the private sector, media, local municipalities, international organizations and governments, should learn from one another and create synergies to advance educational initiatives. Japan welcomes each State's efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education, inter alia, efforts in which the younger generations can actively engage, including through dialogue platforms, mentoring, internship, fellowship, scholarships, model events and group activities.



II. Continuous efforts and initiatives of the Government of Japan

5. As the only country ever to have suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan is committed to ensuring that the humanitarian consequences and tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will never be forgotten. With this aim, and also as champion of action 38, entitled “Establish a platform for youth engagement” of the Secretary-General’s disarmament agenda, Japan places utmost importance on disarmament and non-proliferation education, especially for the younger generation, to encourage it to think on its own and act on matters of international security, as well as on disarmament and non-proliferation at the national, social and individual levels. Specific activities include:

(a) Japan has invited young diplomats from various countries through the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme every year since 1983, and, to date, 958 fellows have travelled to Japan and visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki to learn about the realities of the use of nuclear weapons;

(b) Japan has sponsored the United Nations Conference on Disarmament Issues in different cities since 1989, where representatives of States, the United Nations, academic institutions and civil society from around the world engage in useful discussions;

(c) During the preparatory process for the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Japan submitted a joint working paper on disarmament and non-proliferation education, together with the members of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, to the first and third sessions of the Preparatory Committees for the Review Conference, following a joint working paper submitted to the 2015 Review Conference. Japan made a joint statement on disarmament and non-proliferation education on behalf of the 55 countries at the third session of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee and on behalf of 89 countries at the tenth Review Conference;

(d) Japan started a programme entitled “Special Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons” in 2010 for the purpose of sharing the first-hand experience of atomic bombing survivors (hibakusha). In addition, Japan launched a programme entitled “Youth Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons” in 2013. Under the programme, young people are expected to share the tragic consequences of nuclear weapons and their thoughts about possible steps across borders and generations. As at 31 January 2023, a total of 302 special communicators, on 102 occasions, and 569 youth communicators, on 42 occasions, had been dispatched around the world through such commission programmes;

(e) Japan has held the forum of Youth Communicators for a World without Nuclear Weapons three times since March 2016, with a view to revitalizing the activities of the youth communicators for a world without nuclear weapons and strengthening the networks of youth communicator alumni in Japan and other countries;

(f) Japan has undertaken efforts to make testimonies of hibakusha more widely available and translated them into the following languages: Dutch, English, French, German, Hindi, Indonesian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Ukrainian and Urdu;

(g) In 2015, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in cooperation with the Government of Japan, opened a permanent exhibition on the atomic bombings at the United Nations Office at Vienna, following those in New York and Geneva, to promote understanding of the terrible devastation caused by the use of nuclear weapons.

III. Youth leaders fund for a world without nuclear weapons

6. On 1 August 2022, at the tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, announced the Hiroshima action plan which is rooted in five actions. The fifth action highlighted the promotion of the accurate understanding on the realities of nuclear weapons use through encouraging visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others. As a concrete measure in this regard, he proposed the establishment of a fund for disarmament and non-proliferation education and youth outreach programme in support of a world without nuclear weapons with the United Nations, the youth leaders fund for a world without nuclear weapons, and to which Japan contributed 10 million dollars.

7. The primary goal of this multi-year programme is to bring future leaders from both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States to Japan to learn first-hand the realities of nuclear weapons and bring the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to the world. In this way it will contribute to nuclear disarmament and international peace and security more broadly, through enhanced engagement with youth, education and future leadership.

8. The programme starts in 2023 and culminates in 2030 – the 85th year from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and the sixtieth anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The eight-year period will be divided into four phases (two years for each phase). Over the course of two years, the selected participants will receive training on issues relating to nuclear disarmament and arms control through online courses, with a selected cohort going on a week-long in-person study tour to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Upon completion of the programme, the alumni will play a key role in training and mentoring the next cohort of interested young nuclear disarmament advocates. Following the 2023–2025 inaugural training programme under the Youth leader fund, three more rounds of similar trainings will be conducted, consolidating a worldwide network of talented future leaders with the shared goal towards a world without nuclear weapons. This new initiative by Japan was welcomed by the Group of Seven leaders at the G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament.

IV. Conclusion

9. Japan is determined to continue its efforts on disarmament and non-proliferation education and encourages other countries and international and civil society organizations to join efforts in this field and recognize the power and promise of education to achieve a world without nuclear weapons. This would contribute to reinforcing a culture of peace, to building bridges through dialogue and to forming an alliance of civilizations as a basis for peace and a sustainable future.