

Statement by Foreign Minister KAMIKAWA Yoko
at the Security Council Ministerial Briefing
on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation
18 March 2024

Opening

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

I thank you all for joining me today. I also thank Secretary-General António Guterres, Dr. Robert Floyd, and Ms. Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova for their insights.

Japan's Commitment

Distinguished colleagues,

The catastrophes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki must never be repeated. Based on this firm belief, Japan, as the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, has been a global leader in the quest to realize a world without nuclear weapons.

As part of this endeavor, since 1994 Japan has submitted annual UN General Assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament, which have been widely supported by the UN membership.

At the last NPT Review Conference, Prime Minister Kishida proposed the “Hiroshima Action Plan.” Moreover, Japan hosted the G7 summit in Hiroshima last year. On this occasion, not only the G7 leaders but also the Ukrainian president and representatives of ASEAN, the AU, the PIF and the G20 deepened their understanding of the realities of the atomic bombing. Their visit to Hiroshima sent a strong message in support of a world without nuclear weapons.

Why we discuss now on “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation” in the UNSC

Distinguished colleagues,

The international security environment is becoming more severe. The international community has become even more divided over how to advance nuclear disarmament. Nevertheless, we must steadily advance realistic and practical efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons.

The NPT is the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Next year, the International Group of Eminent Persons, established under Prime Minister Kishida’s initiative, will issue recommendations for the NPT Review Conference in 2026.

This is why it is extremely relevant and meaningful to hold this briefing today at the Security Council, in the mid-term year of the NPT review cycle with the participation of both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Japan's commitment toward a world without nuclear weapons

Distinguished colleagues,

I would like to stress the following four perspectives.

First, the high importance of the five actions set forth in the “Hiroshima Action Plan.” These are (1) a shared recognition on the importance of continuing the record of non-use of nuclear weapons, (2) enhancing transparency, (3) maintaining the decreasing trend of the global nuclear stockpile, (4) securing nuclear non-proliferation and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and (5) encouraging visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki by international leaders and others. We must implement these actions with an ever greater sense of urgency.

Second, Japan will further strengthen and lead the efforts to embody the five actions of the “Hiroshima Action Plan”. As a new step toward that end, I am delighted to announce the establishment of the “FMCT Friends.” This is a cross-regional group of friends, which aims to maintain and enhance political attention toward a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.

The importance of an FMCT in limiting the quantitative improvement of nuclear weapons by banning the production of fissile materials is indisputable. Japan will further increase international and political attention toward an FMCT.

Empowering young people is the key for our future. We will create a global network among the youth towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. In this context, Japan welcomes the start of the “UN Youth Leader Fund for a world without nuclear weapons,” in which future leaders visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki will learn firsthand of the realities of atomic bombings.

In addition, we need to overcome the dichotomy between “deterrence or disarmament.” Through the “Japan Chair for a world without nuclear weapons”, Japan aims to deepen international discussion in this area.

Japan promotes further cooperation with international organizations. The IAEA plays an extremely important role in promoting the international nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Last week, the Director General of the IAEA, Mr. Grossi, visited Japan. Japan reaffirmed its commitment to cooperate with the Agency to promote peaceful use of nuclear energy which contributes to the SDGs. Japan fully supports the first Nuclear Energy Summit by the IAEA taking place this week.

Third, the international community must be united with one voice against any movement that runs counter to a world without nuclear weapons. A rapid build-up of nuclear capabilities by certain countries could spark a nuclear arms race.

Russia's nuclear threats, let alone any use of nuclear weapons in the context of the situation in Ukraine, are absolutely unacceptable. Japan urges Russia to return to full implementation of the New START Treaty. In addition, Japan expresses strong hope for dialogues leading to the development of a broader framework of arms control that covers a wider range of weapons systems with appropriate governance.

North Korea has advanced its nuclear and missile activities. It launched ballistic missiles yesterday in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. Such activities by North Korea threaten the peace and stability of the region and the international community. It is totally unacceptable. Moreover, there is a possibility of further provocations, including a nuclear test. In this context, the role of the 1718 Committee and its panel of experts is critically important, and its function needs to be maintained.

With no clear outlook in resolving Iran's nuclear issue, restraint by countries concerned including Iran is necessary, particularly in light of the current heightened tensions in the Middle East.

Furthermore, Japan promotes the implementation of UNSC Resolution 1540, with the aim of preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-state actors.

During the Cold War, despite the confrontational environment at that time, the international community established legal frameworks to ensure the peaceful and sustainable use of outer space, which prohibit placing nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction in outer space. Even now, Japan firmly believes that outer space must remain a domain free of nuclear weapons and that it is our common responsibility to fully comply with the existing legal frameworks, including the Outer Space Treaty.

Fourth, Japan is closely following the possible impact of emerging technologies such as AI on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In this context, Japan welcomes the commitment to maintain human control and involvement made by the US, UK and France during the last NPT Review Conference. Japan strongly calls for other nuclear-weapon States to follow this commitment.

I stress also the importance of the WPS perspective. We will continue to emphasize the importance of gender perspectives being taken into account in the decision-making process, as Japan has called for in its annual GA resolutions on nuclear disarmament.

Closing

Distinguished colleagues,

I look forward to a vibrant discussion to share ideas and proposals to accelerate concrete actions toward the next NPT Review Conference.