

International Group of Eminent Persons
for a World Without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP)
The 2026 NPT Review Conference Side Event
Opening Remarks
by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kunimitsu
April 27, 2026

Ambassador Viet,
Ambassador Zlauvinen,
Under-Secretary-General Nakamitsu,
Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all today to this side event of the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons, or IGEP, hosted by the Government of Japan.

Today, the path towards our shared goal, a world without nuclear weapons, is becoming increasingly challenging and uncertain. The international community is faced with deepening divisions and confrontation. These challenges are caused by the most significant ongoing structural changes since the end of World War II. Precisely for this reason, we need dialogue and joint efforts involving both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Back in 2022, driven by this same conviction, Japan launched the IGEP, bringing together fifteen distinguished experts on nuclear and disarmament affairs from both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. They represented diverse nationalities, areas of expertise, and professional backgrounds. Over the course of around three years, they engaged in earnest and candid discussions across six meetings held in Japan, including visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The recommendations compiled for the 2026 NPT Review Conference, I believe, represent our collective wisdom, which transcends differences in perspectives, positions, and opinions. The recommendations serve as a guiding light illuminating our path towards a world without nuclear weapons, amidst an increasingly uncertain and unstable global landscape.

If human wisdom is capable enough of discovering atomic energy, it must also be capable of leading us on the path towards a world without nuclear weapons. Here in Manhattan, we stand at the birthplace of the nuclear weapon development project. At the same time, this city was also the global epicenter of the nuclear abolition movement during the Cold War. You might also know that on the Upper West Side stands a statue of Shinran Shonin that withstood the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Here at United Nations Headquarters is a statue of Saint Agnes recovered from the ruins of Nagasaki. Both quietly convey to visitors the reality of the atomic bombings and the prayers of citizens.

Last year marked the 80th year since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. My high school in Hiroshima, and the medical school in Nagasaki where I studied, both suffered tremendous losses at that time. The unwavering wish of the hibakusha is that such devastation must never be repeated. It is the moral conscience and the will of humanity that guide human wisdom towards the good.

Let us renew, here in Manhattan, our pledge to unite our wisdom to identify realistic and practical steps to move forward towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In closing, Julius Nyerere, the founding President of Tanzania, once observed that it is not in the nature of human action that the will and the fulfilment should be simultaneous. He noted; In human action, there is an inevitable progress between the will to do and the fulfilment of that action, and what is required is that immediately after the will, the first step should be taken.

We need to immediately identify this first step, one that brings together both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States. Japan, as the only country to have suffered atomic bombings in war, remains committed to promoting a deeper understanding of the realities of the atomic bombings, while advancing realistic and practical approaches. At the same time, Japan reaffirms its determination to work with all countries to lead efforts to maintain and strengthen the NPT regime.

Thank you for your attention.

End.