

Speech by youth engaged in peace activities in Hiroshima

We are here today to humbly report to you, the victims of the atomic bombings, that on October 24, the number of countries ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons reached 50, ensuring its entry into force.

Each *hibakusha* has gone through an indescribably painful experience, suffering physical and emotional trauma for many years. Yet they continue to make appeals that “no one else should suffer as we have.” This desire so sincere for peace has led to the conclusion of this treaty. We pledge to continue working to ensure that more and more people respect the importance of peace.

There are no small number of people around us who think that “the atomic bombings and World War II are things that happened a long time ago.” However, this year, the world is again confronted with a threat common to all nations—the COVID-19 pandemic. I have now come to be keenly aware that our ordinary daily lives were actually not something we should have taken for granted.

The daily lives we have today are built on and by the efforts of our predecessors, devoting themselves to reconstruct the once-devastated Hiroshima despite their pain and deep sorrow. We, young people, are the ones responsible for the future. We will keep working to expand our circle of friends. And with that bond of friendship, we commit ourselves to maintain our precious everyday lives, and make our future days even more peaceful.

I am engaged in “the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons! Signature Campaign.” This campaign had its origins at “the Middle and High-School Student Peace Summit in Hiroshima” held in 2008, with this concept: “what we, students can do to realize a world free of nuclear weapons.” On school holidays, we have conducted petition drives in the streets, together with students of supporting schools in and out of Hiroshima. As a result, we have collected about 630,000 signatures to date. We will go on making more friends who stand with us, and work further on expanding not only domestic but global support for our activities.

As a Youth Peace Volunteer, I take visitors from overseas for tours in Peace Memorial Park, conveying the realities of the atomic bombing in English. Last year, we had 232 tour participants from 41 countries and regions, including the US, France and India. We not only guided them but also had opportunities to exchange opinions on nuclear weapons with them and learned many things through such discussion. We will come through the pandemic eventually, and when we can commence our activities again, we will make sure that the *hibakusha*'s message is faithfully conveyed to the people of the world.

For many years, many citizens all around the globe extensively sought greater understanding of *hibakusha*'s messages. We would like to rejoice that such efforts have been successful, and led to ensure the treaty's entry into force.

On the other hand, I think we are now faced with a significant challenge—that is, what we, the young generation, can do to encourage international society, including nuclear-armed states, to make steady progress toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Aiming to realize a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons, we hereby determine to continue our utmost efforts with our friends. Please watch over us.