

Plenary Session

What Should the World Do Regarding the Inhumanity of Nuclear Weapons?

Date: November 3, 2013 10:00-12:30

Venue: Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum Hall

Participants: About 100 people



Coordinators



Akira Kawasaki

(Japan, Co-Chair, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN))



Jacqueline Cabasso

(USA, Executive Director, Western States Legal Foundation)

Panelists



David Krieger

(USA, President, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation)



Susi Snyder

(The Netherlands, Program Manager, Nuclear Disarmament, IKV Pax Christi)



Tilman Ruff

(Australia, Co-President, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW))

Below is the summary of the brief report from Plenary Session presented to the Closing Assembly by Jacqueline Cabasso. The Nagasaki Organizing Committee takes responsibilities of this summary.

In general, in this session the speakers explored with some depth a variety of different initiatives and ideas and the participants were able to frankly discuss both the promising campaigns that are now underway while also acknowledging some of the very profound challenges in order to reach the objective. The Session also highlighted the significance and important roles of both the hibakusha and the young people.

Tilman Ruff talked about the significance of the upcoming Mexico conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons as well as the importance of evidence in our work for nuclear abolition. Since the 2010 NPT Review Conference, international attention has increasingly been focused on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons. 125 countries, including for the first time Japan, signed the statement on humanitarian impacts in the United Nations General Assembly.

The first ever intergovernmental meeting on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons hosted by the Government of Norway was held in Oslo earlier this year. Two-thirds of the world's governments attended but the permanent five members of the Security Council that is the permanent five nuclear weapon states parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty boycotted the Oslo Conference, calling it a distraction. The follow-on conference in Mexico in February of 2014 will be very important and ICAN hopes it will lead to negotiations on a treaty to ban nuclear weapons within a specified timeframe.

Ruff then talked about the importance of evidence. Evidence, he explained, has played a very important role in banning atmospheric nuclear testing and discrediting civil defense programs. Medical reality in these cases became political reality and was a motivation for Mikhail Gorbachev to work to end the Cold War. Now it is necessary to update the evidence about global famine, which would be caused by a very limited nuclear exchange. No government has yet examined the impacts of global famine on their own countries and regions.

You should urge governments to attend the Mexico Conference and urge them to include hibakusha and civil society experts in their delegations. The conference in Mexico should be a point of no return. The nuclear dependent states have a special responsibility since they are also nuclear targeted states to contribute evidence. This includes Japan and Australia.

Susi Snyder talked about the need to create and maintain a global architecture to achieve a nuclear weapon free world. To do this, she said, you need a whole world approach to stigmatize, ban, and eliminate nuclear weapons, and this includes engaging with the financial sector. Her organization has issued a new report called 'Don't Bank on the Bomb' to strengthen the global stigmatization of nuclear weapons production, maintenance, and modernization. They found 298 financial institutions in 30 countries that invested US\$314 billion over the past 3 years in maintaining and modernizing nuclear arsenals. These include five Japanese banks.

The report also found 12 financial institutions with excellent policies and 20 more with good policies, and these can serve as a model for other financial institutions. This campaign to divest from these financial institutions or convince them to change their financial policies regarding nuclear weapons will contribute to the whole society approach to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Snyder explained that the Netherlands hosts 20 US nuclear weapons and works closely with Japan as part of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, NPDI. The 12 members of NPDI have broad geographical representation and they could influence the nuclear weapon states, but first they will have to challenge the policies of the nuclear weapons states.

Four of the members of the NPDI actually engage in planning or training to use nuclear weapons. Three members actually host US nuclear weapons on their territories. All NPDI members have close ties with the United States, and they have the potential to be leaders in rejecting US nuclear deterrence. The NPDI will meet in Hiroshima in April 2014 and there they have the opportunity to live up to what they say they want others to do, and this meeting is, the panelists agreed, an important focal point for Japanese NGOs.

David Krieger then spoke and underlined that we've learned that governments will not do the right thing on their own especially the nuclear weapon states. It's the voices of the people that will move governments to action. He said that the role of citizens and hibakusha is centrally important to delegitimizing nuclear weapons. To do so, you will need to deconstruct arguments that are still used to legitimize nuclear weapons. These include arguments which you know to be untrue that nuclear weapons ended World War II, that nuclear weapons prevent wars, that no rational leader would use

nuclear weapons, that nuclear weapons make you more secure, and that nuclear weapons are needed to protect against nuclear attack.

Krieger stressed the uniquely important role of the hibakusha in telling their stories to the world and he urged young people to learn from the hibakusha and to spread their stories throughout the world. He stated that now is a moment of shared danger, but also one of shared opportunity to take action. He suggested that a new ethic for the nuclear age is needed, an ethic to counter the reality that nuclear weapons are the ultimate evil and the ultimate suicide note for human beings. He elaborated the principles of this new ethic; reverence for life, earth's citizenship, universal human rights including the human right to peace, the need for each generation to be responsible to pass the planet on intact to future generations. Nuclear weapons of course are the antitheses to all of these.

In the short-term or in the immediate term, Krieger suggested the importance of no first use pledges or treaties by the nuclear weapon states. The nuclear weapons states are urged to dealert their nuclear weapons and to commence negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention.

He then elaborated 12 reasons to work for nuclear abolition, which were to inspire thoughts for action. He closed with a poem entitled "Hibakusha Do Not Just Happen." It said that in order for a hibakusha to be created, all kinds of other people have to be complicit in developing the bomb, delivering the bomb, and making the bombing possible.

Following the informative, sobering, and inspiring panel presentation, Jacqueline Cabasso made some remarks emphasizing the importance of being vigilant to the differences between the good, positive rhetorical hearing from some of our governments and the reality of their policies. One example Cabasso cited was the Japanese government signing on to the humanitarian impact statement in late October whereas in earlier October the Japanese and US foreign ministers and defense ministers had issued a Joint Security statement reaffirming the alliance's commitment to protect Japan with the full range of US military capabilities both conventional and nuclear.

Cabasso also gave an example of a case in which persistent and consistent NGO advocacy for a nuclear weapons convention is making demonstrable progress. That is the new resolution introduced in the United Nations General Assembly by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which calls for commencement in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, a comprehensive prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. The NAM is 120 countries. It includes three nuclear weapons states, and this resolution was expected to pass. A problem is that the CD has been deadlocked for 17 years but this resolution anticipates an alternative to the CD should that not be feasible because it also establishes a High-Level Confer-

ence on Nuclear Disarmament no later than 2018. This NAM resolution is almost identical to the program of action put forward by the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons in its founding statement in 1995. Cabasso believed that it had come a long way since that time to now manifest itself in the form of this resolution.

Akira Kawasaki talked about some activities, particularly focused on Japan, which NGOs should be encouraged to get involved with. Those include the Global Voyages of the Peace Boat, which bring together hibakusha and young people. He underscored the importance of the NPDI meeting in Hiroshima in 2014. And, he also brought up another one of the unpleasant realities and that is the potential for the restart of the Rokkasho Nuclear Reprocessing Facility. This should be considered as a great danger along with Fukushima.

The question and answer period was very lively. A high school student, who spent a year living in Belgium and sharing hibakusha testimonies with young people there, talked about a petition campaign that high school students are conducting in Fukuoka and asked what other grassroots activities young people can be engaged in. That led to a number of suggestions, one of which is a campaign that David Krieger is organizing called "Nukes are Nuts." It means that nukes are crazy or insane. And his organization is trying to launch a social media campaign with people recording short statements about why they think nuclear weapons are insane such as nuclear weapons threaten everything you love or other things. That was a creative suggestion.

On the other end, Snyder pointed out that some of the most important things to do are the simplest things to do and you shouldn't forget that. Talk to our friends over dinner about what you learnt at this conference, get together to write letters to newspapers, basic simple activities that everyone can do in their everyday life. Kawasaki pointed out that Nagasaki or high school peace ambassadors go to Geneva every year to the United Nations and encouraged young people here to talk to those high school students when they come back, try and make friends with them and find out what they have learnt from their experiences.

Finally in wrapping up, Cabasso identified a couple of other potential directions for action, one of which being supporting the NAM resolution that she mentioned, another being to work closely with Mayors for Peace, who are very strong in Japan and who have terrific international leaders like Mayor Taue of Nagasaki. Another point was that with regard to Fukushima and Rokkasho, you have the opportunity to delegitimize nuclear technology more broadly because nuclear technology is still seen as a marker of technological sophistication by many developing countries and by working to

delegitimize all nuclear technology including “peaceful” nuclear technology, this will contribute to the de-legitimization of nuclear weapons.

A lot of talk was conducted at this conference about the possibilities for a nuclear weapon free zone in Northeast Asia, along with the ongoing efforts in the Middle East to create a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. Israeli NGOs very courageously were calling for an international conference on a nuclear weapon free zone in December in Haifa. Cabasso encouraged Japanese colleagues to go and, if they can't go, to send messages of solidarity.

It was finally noted that as an action item for Japanese colleagues December 8, 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the Tokyo District Court's decision in the Shimoda Case. This is a case where the Tokyo District Court found that the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were illegal under international law. This December 8th presents a very important opportunity to remember that decision to bring it to public attention, to bring it to the Japanese government's attention, and to spread it with the world.

Cabasso closed her report by quoting from Senji Yamaguchi, the prominent Nagasaki hibakusha who died earlier this year, who in 1982 went to the United Nations and brought the message of the hibakusha: no more Hiroshima, no more Nagasaki, no more hibakusha, no more war.