

Youth Symposium

"Talk Session with Ms. Beatrice Fihn: Abolishing Nuclear Weapons and Role of Youth"

NOTE: Consecutive translation. Pause after each paragraph for translator. Speech is allotted 40 minutes, of which 20 minutes will be you and 20 minutes the translator.

First let me say thank you for having me here, and thank you to RECNA, PCU-NC and Nagasaki University for hosting me and hosting such an important topic.

I have been amazed by how committed everyone I have met here in Nagasaki are to abolishing nuclear weapons. The energy and passion I have seen here will inspire ICAN in its work.

It is not surprising — Nagasaki knows better than anyone the consequences of nuclear bombs.

But it is not just the hibakusha that know this, not just the people who lived through the experience and the rebuilding of this cities from the

ashes that know this — the young people I have met here carry the stories with them, and carry the passion to make sure this is never done to anyone else again.

That makes me so happy, because in many ways ICAN is a youth-led movement. Traditionally, nuclear disarmament was an issue not led by young people.

The first people to speak out against nuclear weapons were old men and women — scientists, intellectuals and academics, many of whom had worked on creating the nuclear bomb but regretted it once they realised the destructive power of the thing they had created.

The first ever petition against nuclear weapons was from 70 scientists who had worked on the Manhattan Project to build the first nuclear bomb.

Even the politicians that now had this power to destroy cities, nations and the entire planet knew this was too much power for any individual or government to hold.

The very man who gave the order to drop the bomb on this city, President Truman, then turned around to tell US Congress these weapons should be controlled by international agreements — not controlled by one man.

But over 70 years later, the problem has not been solved. We are not free from the threat of one man holding the power to end the world in his

hands.

So it falls to a new generation to solve the problem that previous generations have not.

We are that new generation, and having met so many young people here, it gives me great hope and optimism that we will succeed.

My biggest impression from my time here is that the Japanese people know the cost of nuclear weapons, and are dedicated to eliminating them.

Everyone I have talked to was clear they wanted to do whatever they can to make sure there are no more hibakusha, anywhere in the world, ever again.

It has been such a great honour to meet so many hibakusha and tour the sites here. I have known many of their stories, but nothing could prepare me to see the bomb sites in person.

There is so much pain and destruction written over this city, but there is also so much hope and determination to use that pain to prevent further nuclear war.

These cities are cities of hope. They have emerged from the ashes of nuclear darkness to become beacons of light for the rest of the world.

It inspires me that we can do the same with this campaign to ban nuclear weapons world wide.

The reason I am so optimistic that we will succeed, is that young people have three incredibly powerful weapons that are nearly impossible to stop once combined.

Those secret weapons are: hope, energy and social media.

Hope is what drives us to do this work. Fear has guided global relations for over 70 years. The powerful created nuclear weapons to control the world, but it's clear that the weapons have controlled us. And we are right to be afraid of these weapons.

But the antidote to fear is hope, and young people must harness our hope if we are to ban nuclear weapons.

We will do that using our second secret weapon: energy.

I am so inspired to see the energy that young people bring to this movement.

It can be hard, when you see people who have been working on this issue for decades, when people tell you day after day that what you are trying to achieve is impossible, that you are naive.

But the young people in this movement overcome that pessimism with their energy. They bring new hope and breathe new life into the issue, as well as new ideas and innovations.

And the third secret weapons is what could be the difference: social media.

Young people don't just have the hope and energy to come up with great ideas, they have the technology to connect those ideas to other likeminded people around the world to join forces.

How did everyone in this room hear about this event? How will you tell your friends about what you heard here? Facebook? LINE? Twitter?

Together, we are more powerful. And social media allows us to connect.

An ICAN campaigner in Nagasaki can share his or her ideas with an ICAN campaigner in Mexico that they have never met, who can connect them with another ICAN campaigner in Indonesia.

All three of them can then reach and inspire a young person in Sweden who has never heard of ICAN but cares about the issue. This group can then get in direct contact with their politicians to tell them to ban nuclear weapons.

Hope, energy and social media is a powerful combination.

And we have another reason to be optimistic: we are closer than ever to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Last year, 122 countries signed the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

This Treaty gives us a framework to eliminate nuclear weapons entirely.

History shows that the prohibition of certain types of weapons is the first step towards their elimination.

Weapons that have been outlawed by international treaties are increasingly seen as illegitimate, losing their political status.

Arms companies find it more difficult to acquire funds for work on illegal weapons, and such work carries a significant reputational risk.

Banks, pension funds and other financial institutions divest from these producers.

Underpinning the decision by governments and civil society to pursue the ban was our belief that changing the rules regarding nuclear weapons would have a major impact even beyond those nations that would formally adopt the treaty at the outset.

With this treaty, we have the framework to create a new international norm that casts these weapons not as a symbol of power but as a symbol of shame.

They said banning chemical weapons was impossible. Biological weapons. Land mines and cluster munitions. But we banned them.

They always say something hard is impossible. But ICAN campaigners showed that it can be made a reality if there are enough of us all calling for change loud enough.

Governments answer to people, people know nuclear weapons no longer make sense, and they are demanding change.

That is where you all come in: there is one particular audience that needs to hear your message. One group of people that must be encouraged to share the values of young people from Nagasaki — and that is your government in Tokyo.

The Japanese Government should know better than any other nation the consequences of nuclear weapons, yet Tokyo is happy to live under the umbrella of US nuclear protection, and has not joined the Treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.

Is your government ok with repeating the evil that was done to Nagasaki and Hiroshima to other cities?

We must harness your voices to show your national government in Tokyo that it is unacceptable to be a willing participant in this nuclear umbrella. That Japan must be a leader in the global movement for nuclear disarmament. That Japan must join this Treaty.

Japan, as a democracy, is answerable to the wishes of the people. If you can unite your fellow citizens in one clear voice, it will be impossible for your government to ignore you.

Encourage your politicians to take up your cause.

Grow louder if they do not listen. Know that you have millions of people around the world who share your values and your cause.

Join with them to create an unstoppable force of democratic disarmament.

We are closer than ever to eliminating nuclear weapons, but there is much work to be done.

We live in democracies, so there is a choice. If our political leaders refuse to join us on the side of hope, on the side of rationality, on the side of a future, then we must elect different leaders that will.

If our countries refuse to join this Treaty, then we must grow louder until we are impossible to ignore.

We must make those countries that live under the protection of nuclear weapons isolated on the world stage, and the countries that possess those weapons surrounded by shame and stigma.

What happened to Nagasaki must not be forgotten. You have such an important part to play in this story.

Nagasaki has a unique place in history. Our challenge is to make sure Nagasaki remains unique. That there are no more cities that join Nagasaki in the list of nuclear bomb sites. That there are no more hibakusha.

You have already done such an important contribution by carrying with you the memories of the hibakusha. By not forgetting their stories, their pain and their resilience.

But that task becomes even more important as they become older. Only young people can carry their memories. Only you will be left to bear witness to the horrors they experienced.

Already in Europe, Russia and America, young people can easily forget the time when the Cold War made them live in constant fear that at any

moment, without any notice, fire could rain down from the sky and end life as we know it.

But even though the constant fear of armageddon within an instant is gone, the thousands upon thousands of nuclear warheads that filled us up with that fear still remain.

The risk for nuclear weapons use is even greater today than at the end of the Cold War. But unlike the Cold War, today we face many more nuclear armed states, terrorists, and cyber warfare. All of this makes us less safe.

And now we have North Korea and the United States in a war of words that could at any moment become a war of weapons.

We have just seen a leaked copy of the United States' Nuclear Posture Review.

What is contained in that review should deeply worry us all.

It has revealed that the US, instead of making progress towards disarmament, instead of admitting the failure of deterrence and forging a new safer reality, they are wanting to *increase* their nuclear weapons stockpiles and create new 'low yield' nuclear weapons that they say will make them *more* likely to use them.

The US already has the nuclear ability to destroy the world many times over.

The idea that they need *more* not *less* nuclear weapons would be laughable if it wasn't so dangerous. Their 'low yield' nuclear weapons would still be more powerful than the one that fell here in Nagasaki, so they are really saying they want the world to think they are prepared to destroy cities in the same manner this city was destroyed.

It is up to the people of Nagasaki to tell the story of what happened here, or else people around the world will think what happened here was 'minor', and is likely to happen again.

It is up to the people around the world to share your stories with their own people, so their own governments do not buy into this dangerous thinking that insults the memory of the hibakusha and all the victims of nuclear attacks.

It is up to young people like yourselves to defeat these nuclear weapons with weapons of your own: your hope, your energy, and the connections with others that share your passion on social media.

ICAN wants to harness your energy, your passion and your hope.

Go to www.nuclearban.org or find us on Facebook to join us and connect with other young people around the world who share your hope.

That hope is the hope for a better future. A future where we are not living under the constant threat that we may be destroyed in a flash.

That is what we deserve, and that is what we should expect of our political leaders.

Let them know that is what you expect, and use your voice to abolish nuclear weapons.

Thank you.