

Nagasaki Conference: Plenary

LEE Youngah,

(Activist of Center for Peace and Disarmament, PSPD)

Hello, Nice to meet you. My name is Youngah from South Korea. I am an activist of the Center for Peace and Disarmament of People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak at the 75th Gensuikin Online Conference.

First, I would like to ask all of you to remember those who lost their lives by the nuclear bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 75 years ago. My heart also goes to many hibakushas who are still in pain. I would like to send my greetings on behalf of the Koreans who agree with all of you gathered here today to create a world without nuclear weapons, and a world safe from all kinds of nuclear disaster.

The world clearly witnessed the cruel and inhumane nature of nuclear weapons through the bombs dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 75 years ago. This weapon of mass destruction is against humanity, and the voice of mankind that claims for the permanent disappearance of this weapon is growing louder than ever.

However, tensions rise among nuclear-armed states. Billions of dollars are being spent on modernizing and upgrading nuclear weapons, so-called 'low-yield', and the risk of actual nuclear use is growing. Some of the important treaties that have kept the nuclear arms race under control, such as the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, are also at risk of being terminated.

The Korean Peninsula was always under the threat of atomic warfare during the Cold War. In 1957, not long after the armistice agreement was signed, the US Army brought tactical atomic weapons into South Korea and more than 1,000 of them remained and were placed in the country until the early 90s. The nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula did not end even when the Cold War was over.

Only two years ago, the leaders of the two Koreas declared that "there will be no more wars on the Korean Peninsula," but now we are worried about military conflict again. This is

because the agreement between the leaders of the two Koreas and the US and North Korea was not properly implemented and failed to build trust. The old inertia of trying to subdue the opponent through pressure in a one-sided manner rather than "reverse" from the other's point of view has prevented progress in the negotiations.

However, the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is inherent in the long-standing, unstable armistice regime. In order to induce the DPRK to give up its nuclear weapons, it is essential to understand that the DPRK's missile and nuclear development program stems from the decades-long military conflict and arms race on the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, the nuclear issue in Korea is deeply related to the fact that the neighboring countries have continued to strengthen their military reliance on nuclear weapons ever since the horrendous fighting in Korea was halted with a ceasefire agreement. This is why the process of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula must go hand-in-hand with the permanent peacebuilding in Korea, including the establishment of diplomatic relations between the DPRK-US, and the DPRK-Japan, along with efforts to fundamentally eradicate any source of nuclear threats surrounding the Korean Peninsula.

Therefore, the international community, including the US and ROK, should take steps to build trust and ensure mutual security against the DPRK's suspension of nuclear and missile tests. Also, the ROK and other countries should move away from their military strategy of relying on nuclear weapons. The "Korean Peninsula without nuclear weapons or nuclear threats" is possible only after the U.S nuclear umbrella over South Korea is removed as well as North Korea's nuclear weapons.

It is ironic that the ROK and Japan are enthusiastically depending on the U.S nuclear umbrella. Japan is the first country to be destroyed by atomic weapons and the more than 70,000 Korean nationals who were working in Japan were damaged by the nuclear attack. A bigger irony is that being under the nuclear umbrella increased the threat of atomic attack rather than reducing it.

This year, being the 75th year since the conflict first surfaced, is the best chance to mobilize public opinion on conflict structures in Asia and the Korean Peninsula and its negative impacts. Let's stand in solidarity for moving towards a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, nuclear-free Northeast Asia, and the nuclear-free world. Thank you.