

Y. Komizo remarks at the Pugwash Conference Plenary Panel on
“Practical Steps and Instruments for Nuclear Disarmament”
(2 Nov. 2025 in Hiroshima)

In the time of growing conflicts and military buildup, one of the most critical tasks for us all is to work together to search effective way forward to advance nuclear disarmament for a peaceful future. I therefore extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Pugwash Conference and to host city Hiroshima for enabling us to discuss such a vital issue.

In this context, I would like to renew my respect and thank *Hibakusha* for their enduring efforts for peace and abolition of nuclear weapons. ***Hibakusha* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have continued to tell the world their unbearable sufferings and devastation of the atomic bombing in their genuine desire that “no one else shall ever again suffer as we have.”** Their message is to protect, without distinction, every person’s right to live a good life. I will speak today, keeping this powerful message in mind.

This year, the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists set its **Doomsday Clock** to 89 seconds to midnight---the closest ever been to Doomsday. The main reason is failure of political leadership to cope with the danger of nuclear weapons use and climate change. Nuclear threats and climate change are both global challenges that require consolidated efforts of entire world community to address them. Regrettably, however, the current international community is plagued with mutual distrust, division, and growing conflicts.

(1) Against the drive of military buildup, advancement of nuclear disarmament requires not only practical measures but also more fundamental and longer-term search of a paradigm shift or change of mindset into a collaborative one. The latter is not a prerequisite to the former but without it, sustainable disarmament will not be possible.

To address this issue, we need to ask “why nuclear disarmament is stagnant?” Together with insufficient awareness of risks and grave consequences of nuclear weapons, many argue that concept of nuclear deterrence hinders significant nuclear disarmament. Nuclear deterrence

is confrontational in nature because it is a scheme to contain opponents with nuclear threat and not an approach to overcome differences to search common ground. Thus, Recommendations in 2018 of Group of Eminent Persons organized by then Foreign Minister Kishida included a statement with consensus support of experts from major nuclear powers that “**Although nuclear deterrence may arguably enhance stability in certain environment, it is a dangerous long-term basis for global security and therefore all states should seek a better long-term solution.**”

(2) Then who shall take initiatives to advance nuclear disarmament?

By far the main responsibility for nuclear disarmament rests on nuclear weapons possessing countries. However, countries not possessing nuclear weapons also have their own share of responsibilities and right to engage in nuclear disarmament, since the risk of nuclear threat and use overshadows entire world. Likewise, civil society has important roles to play, in particular, for the development of shared sense of community worldwide as well as encouraging and assisting political leaders to take bold steps for disarmament. *Hibakusha* and their call for peace provide most significant motivation and inspiration for nuclear disarmament as acknowledged by Nobel Peace Prize to Nihon Hidankyo. I would also like to praise Pugwash Conference for its longstanding contribution to our common aspiration for a world free from nuclear weapons.

(3) Before addressing roles of nuclear powers, I would like to talk about positions of countries not depending on nuclear deterrence.

They have been active in the pursuit of creating nuclear weapons free world. Such efforts started, after the Cuban crisis, by Latin America and Caribbean countries to create nuclear weapons free zone that was crystalized in Tlatelolco Treaty in 1967. Other regions follow suite and various regional treaties on Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone have been created. They have also been advocating legal prohibition of all nuclear weapons, in close collaboration with civil society such as ICAN. In this context, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) was adopted in 2017. Background was lack of progress in **NPT Article VI obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament negotiation in good faith.** Adoption of TPNW under the auspices of UN General Assembly with the support of 122 countries is an attempt to advance stagnant nuclear disarmament by making legal declaration of nuclear weapons ban as a crucial first step, in the heightened awareness of risks and grave

humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use. So far State parties to TPNW have increased significantly but they are limited to countries not depending on nuclear deterrence. It may be considered as weakness of TPNW but TPNW community's voices shall be heard and respected because they reflect genuine concern of countries fully subscribed to non-proliferation obligations under NPT that they are nonetheless exposed to grave risks and consequences of nuclear weapons threat and use.

(4) Now, responsibilities and concrete actions required of nuclear weapons states. This issue has already been discussed thoroughly by Dr. Simon and in the previous session. I will try to be brief on this point.

First, **most urgent task is to ensure nuclear weapons is never used.** An important starting point of this task is to reaffirm Reagan and Gorbachev's joint declaration in 1985 that: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.". While In January 2022, P5 reaffirmed this principle in their joint statement, after Russia's repeated threat of nuclear weapons use, in the war in Ukraine, no such joint statement has been issued by P5, raising concerns that Russia's stance may have changed. P5 can reaffirm this principle as a shared understanding among them.

And **secondly**, supporting this principle, they may jointly commit to measures such as **"no-first-use"**, and negative security assurances.

Thirdly, maintaining legal framework and standing communication channels among them is also crucial to averting the risk of nuclear war and to facilitate nuclear disarmament.

But now between U.S. and Russia only remaining instrument is the New START Treaty, which sets limits on nuclear arsenals and establishes a framework for bilateral consultations, and it expires next February. They need to maintain such legal frameworks. Reportedly, Putin and Trump may be prepared to voluntarily maintain the limits of their deployed strategic nuclear weapons for an additional year. We encourage them to do so and the resulting time shall be used to advance negotiations on a successor agreement to the New START.

Forth, China shall also be advised to participate in a joint disarmament scheme, in view of US-China rivalry and China's expansion of its nuclear arsenal,

Fifth, **nuclear test ban** is also important. While comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty (CTBT) is not yet in force, nuclear test ban moratorium shall be preserved. Unexpected Trump announcement on resuming nuclear

weapons test is worrying. I hope it shall not lead to resumption of explosive nuclear testing.

Sixth, rapid development of AI needs to be addressed in the context of nuclear weapons, in particular, on how to ensure human oversight in all decisions related to nuclear weapons.

Lastly but importantly, on top of dialogues in professionals and track 2 level, let me endorse the value of **nuclear disarmament summit** proposed by many including recent call by Tom Countryman. Since past nuclear disarmaments have been achieved through bold initiatives of political leaders who reached out their opponents to engage in dialogue, even at the peak of confrontations. Now is the time for the world leaders to take similar initiatives.

As a venue for such a summit, Hiroshima or Nagasaki can be considered because in these cities, leaders will be reminded of their heavy responsibility to protect people's lives in the reckoning of grave humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use and the urgency of disarmament.

(5) Now I like to briefly touch upon the roles of countries dependent on nuclear deterrence. They can discuss with nuclear weapons states on how to reduce the role and dependence of nuclear weapons. They can bridge the gaps between nuclear weapons states and TPNW member states. They can disseminate Hibakusha's testimony and calls for a world without nuclear weapons and promote disarmament educations. They can support civil society initiatives to create foundation of inclusive global community through dialogues.

(6) For all the countries and civil society partners, in conducting disarmament talks and decision makings, multilateral structures should be better utilized.

First, United Nations is, of course, the most universal structure and the usefulness and effectiveness of the UN depend upon the attitudes of member states. And currently, General Assembly is conducting two important ground work related to nuclear weapons: They are resolution A/RES/79/238 that established an independent Scientific Panel on the Effects of Nuclear War. And A/RES/79/60 is on legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons. We shall support these important efforts to achieve successful outcome.

Secondly, NPT is the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. In order to preserve its precious function, we shall strive to make Review Conference next spring has tangible outcome. I trust my fellow panelists for their rich input on it.

Thirdly, the Conference of Disarmament in Geneva needs to be made functional.

(7) In closing, I would like to emphasize again the role of civil society to create common ground to turning the confrontational security mindset into a collaborative security architecture for a lasting peace. Pugwash Conference, ICRC, Mayors for Peace, youth, women, faith-based organizations, teachers, scientists, artists, and many more can combine their efforts and, with conscientious initiatives of political leaders, we can change the world a much better place. Looking into the future, I would like to invite young leaders, in particular, to listen and appreciate the message of Hibakusha, because we know that a person who has a capacity to understand, with compassion, the deep struggle, misery and genuine aspiration of others can be trusted. I can believe in the bright future such youth can create together.

Thank you very much!

[In the Q&A session, I commented on an classical example of civil society movement that prompted political leaders to disarmament action]

Let me cite one example: Shortly after the irradiation of a fishing boat Lucky Dragon by the Castle Bravo nuclear test on 1 March 1954, a small group of grandmothers and mothers in a book-reading circle in Tokyo, began a petition campaign against nuclear weapons tests and gathered signatures of 32 million people---about one third of the Japanese population. An associated global petition campaign collected 600 million signatures. These wide-ranging popular calls prompted world leaders to action. *In 1958, both the Soviet Union and USA announced a suspension of nuclear tests. Then after Cuban crisis, in July 1963, the Partial Test Ban Treaty was signed.*

The petition campaign was driven by the mothers' strong desire to protect their children's future. Its success depended on the inclusive nature of the campaign, which was based on universally shared humanitarian values. It also demonstrates how a partnership between an inclusive civil society movement and conscientious political leadership can make a real breakthrough.