



NPDI meeting in Hiroshima “a wasted opportunity”

April 12, 2014, Hiroshima

International NGOs attending events around the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) meeting in Hiroshima were disappointed that the Foreign Ministers were unable to agree that the world needs to close the legal loophole on weapons of mass destruction, and outlaw nuclear weapons.

We welcome the NPDI ministerial meeting taking place in Hiroshima. All government leaders should visit Hiroshima or Nagasaki, to invigorate their commitment to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

Meeting in Hiroshima, NPDI officials have heard the testimony of survivors of the atomic bombing, and seen first hand the indiscriminate impact of nuclear weapons. These survivors have dedicated their lives to calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Hiroshima is the right place to reiterate that nuclear weapons must never be used again by any actor, under any circumstances.

The only logical response to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons is to start a process of negotiation for a legal prohibition on these weapons, even if the nuclear-armed States refuse to participate at the outset. Such an instrument would fulfil and strengthen the NPT and create conditions for disarmament by establishing a clear norm against possession of nuclear weapons; challenge the assertion that nuclear weapons provide security; provide a strong moral incentive for nuclear possessor States to eliminate their arsenals; and reinforce non-proliferation efforts worldwide.

We share the NPDI minister’s assessment that any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences; that the goal must be their eradication; that the risk of nuclear weapons being used is real as long as these weapons exist; that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are the responsibility of all states; and that established multilateral forums for nuclear disarmament are failing. We welcome the interaction with civil society, albeit limited, which occurred during this ministerial meeting.

Seven NPDI governments bear a particular responsibility in removing the threat to the world posed by nuclear weapons, as they rely on nuclear weapons in their security strategies. This is a conflicted position especially as these states have eliminated other inhumane, indiscriminate weapons from their security policies.

Japan, under a policy re-affirmed by the Cabinet yesterday, looks set to continue to accumulate large quantities of weapons-usable plutonium; and Australia sells uranium - the raw material for nuclear weapons - to all the NPT nuclear weapon states, and is currently negotiating to sell uranium to India, which has not signed the NPT, has not committed to end nuclear tests, and is still producing fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

In a letter to all the NPDI ministers prior to their meeting, we urged that they:

- support commencement of negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons and requiring their elimination;
- emphasize the common human security imperative for elimination of nuclear weapons;
- where applicable, remove nuclear weapons stationed on their soil;
- where applicable, remove threat of use of nuclear weapons from their own security policies; and

- commit to participate in the 3rd intergovernmental conference on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons scheduled for Vienna later this year.

We are disappointed that the opportunity of this meeting in Hiroshima did not result in any clear statement of support for a new legal instrument to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons, or any other significant new commitments on the part of the NPDI governments.

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All are members of the ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) International Steering Group.