

Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education

Presented by Mr. Takaya Suto

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Mr. Chairman,

I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations on the convening of the 10th anniversary meeting of the Kanazawa Symposium on Northeast Asia. This symposium has handsomely contributed to energizing international debate on core issues of disarmament and non-proliferation. It also gives an excellent opportunity for citizens of Kanazawa to become more familiar with current issues of disarmament and non-proliferation. It is thus an honor for me to be here today, and to speak before such a distinguished audience on disarmament and non-proliferation education.

Mr. Chairman,

The overall objective of disarmament and non-proliferation education and training is to impart knowledge and skills to individuals in order to empower them to make a contribution, as national and international citizens, to the achievement of concrete

disarmament and non-proliferation measures. Education on disarmament and non-proliferation is an important tool for advancing towards the goals of disarmament and non-proliferation, but under-utilized so far in my view.

As the only country to have experienced devastation from nuclear bombing, Japan has been playing an important role in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation education, aimed at realizing a peaceful and safe world free of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. The task is not easy. We are convinced that such a world can be realized only through the incremental and realistic approach, which requires considerable time and efforts. As the history of negotiations for major disarmament treaties eloquently demonstrates, enduring endeavor should be carried out, sometimes even over decades, to achieve meaningful result in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. From this point of view, Japan considers it essential to gain the understanding and support of young people who will lead future generations, as well as civil society as a whole.

Based on this policy, Japan has carried out a lot of activities in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation education. I would like to share with you some of these activities.

Mr. Chairman,

The first example is the UN Disarmament Fellowship Program. Following the decision taken at the First Special Session of the General Assembly in 1978, the Fellowship Programme was implemented for the first time in 1979 to train experts, mainly from developing countries, on disarmament issues. Japan has been inviting around 25 people to visit Japan each year since 1983, amounting to a total of around 480 participants to this day. Participants receive briefings on the disarmament and non-proliferation policies of Japan. The programme also includes visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to learn about Japan as the only country to have suffered from the devastation of the atomic bomb and to gain an insight into the reality of atomic bombing.

Last year, for instance, thirty two young diplomats from all over the world participated in the Program, and indeed all of them were astonished with the atrocities that two nuclear bombs caused in Hiroshima and Nagasaki including lasting tragedy of Hibakusha (those who suffer from after-effects of the bombs). At the end of the Program, each one of them expressed his or her personal determination to contribute to international efforts promoting disarmament and non-proliferation. They also highly valued the Program and hoped it to continue for a long period of time.

Secondly, Japan invited famous foreign experts on disarmament and non-proliferation education in order to raise public interests in this important issue. Under this initiative, in November 2002, Ms. Kathleen Sullivan, a representative of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), conducted a nuclear disarmament education tour, in which she lectured to and discussed with a wide range of audience, including high school students, civic leaders and Hibakusha in Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Tokyo. Also in January 2004, Dr. Natalie Goldring from the Programme on Global Security and Disarmament at the University of Maryland was invited to Japan to give lectures on disarmament and non-proliferation, in particular concerning nuclear weapons and terrorism.

Thirdly Japan has sponsored the UN Conference on Disarmament Issues in a different local city each year since 1989. This conference provides a valuable opportunity for distinguished disarmament experts from around the world to engage in useful discussions. This year the conference will be held in Sapporo, in July.

In this regard, we should note that this Kanazawa Symposium has also played an important role in promoting disarmament and non-proliferation education. I would like to convey my sincere

appreciation to all the people who have made significant efforts to organize the Symposium.

Last but not least, the Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, for which I am currently working as director, also plays a certain role in this regard. For instance, the center held a Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Seminar in March 2004, for three days, with the aim of deepening understanding on recent WMD disarmament and non-proliferation trends mainly for graduate students. The center is planning to hold this seminar every year.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan also makes various efforts to disseminate its policies and activities of disarmament and non-proliferation. Publication of white paper on “Japan’s Disarmament Policy” is one of these efforts. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs published both Japanese and English versions in 2002 and 2003 respectively. This provides fairly comprehensive information on disarmament and non-proliferation, so that general public will be able to have better understanding on this matter. The Ministry also regularly updates its web site with readily available information on Japan’s activities in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

Japan also submitted a working paper, which introduced Japan's efforts in pursuing disarmament and non-proliferation education at the third Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference held in NY from April to May this year.

Mr. Chairman,

In spite of the various efforts mentioned above, there remain a lot of works to be done in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation education. I would like to draw your attention, in particular, to the fact that high schools and junior high schools in Japan do not sufficiently teach such important issues related to disarmament and non-proliferation as the current international political and security environments or basic international norms and regimes like NPT.

To this end, relevant curriculum materials should be made available in order to familiarize the young students with those important facts concerning disarmament and non-proliferation. The Government of Japan, together with other like-minded countries, is recommending to develop and disseminate specific curriculum materials addressing the issues and consequences of proliferation and the importance of disarmament in the working paper that it submitted in the third preparatory conference of the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, as well as other relevant institutions in Japan, to start implementing the recommendation as soon as possible. The Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation may be able to contribute something in this regard, as well.

Mr. Chairman,

Long-term and enduring peace can only be ensured through a deeper and shared understanding of the underlying causes of conflict and how they can be resolved peacefully. Education is essential to encourage critical thinking and attitudinal change so that the next generation can choose a culture of peace over violence. We hope our effort will encourage all States to take active measures to this end.

I would like to conclude my presentation by quoting a part of the Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on its study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, which says:

There has never been a greater need for education in the areas of disarmament and non-proliferation, especially with regard to weapons of mass destruction, but also in the field of small arms and international terrorism. Since the end of the cold war, changing concepts of security and

threat have demanded new thinking. Such new thinking will arise from those who are educated and trained today.

Thank you very much.