Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

We are grateful and honored to have the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the youth. We stand before you representing voices that come from Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Republic of South Korea, Singapore, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Viet Nam. We are here not only for our nations, but for the common goal of making the world a safer place for all.

NOW is the time for change. NOW is the time for us to come together regardless of our nationalities and borders. NOW, is the time for our generation to put an end to the nuclear age.

As many of you have pointed out in the preamble of your own working papers, the situation that we are currently facing has not seen significant improvements for decades. It took 10 years for you, the states parties of the NPT, to inadequately follow-up the “13 practical steps” of the 2000 agreement. It’s taken another 8 years to partially implement a mere 5 out of “22 action points” of the 2010 agreement. 8 years have gone by since then, and nuclear weapons continue to pose a major threat to our world. We cannot continue down this same path and expect significant changes to fall into place. Now, we have the opportunity to move things forward.

Distinguished delegates, we need to act upon our recognition that nuclear weapons pose an insurmountable threat to humanity. In this increasingly interconnected world, no place is safe and no one is left untouched by an atomic scar. The Hibakusha and victims of nuclear testing are a visible pieces of this scar and of the sufferings our world has already experienced. They will never be the people they were before those tragic days. Let us make sure that history does not repeat itself and act immediately, while we still have the chance to enact change before it’s too late. We, the youth of the world, have the right to live in peace, free from the anguish of the nuclear threat.
Distinguished delegates, we need to acknowledge, once and for all, that nuclear weapons are a risk to humanity itself. How many more near misses, accidents, political miscalculations and technical missteps can we afford? In a time in which hate speech and fake news increasingly influence and distort our perceptions, we cannot rely on the judgement of a small number of countries to decide the future—or the end—of our planet. It is thus imperative that leaders come together to create solid regulatory mechanisms, which effectively commit states to “the elimination of all nuclear materials and technology.” This is exactly what the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons can achieve; and this is why it is of the utmost importance for states to promptly sign and ratify the Treaty.

Distinguished delegates, the political relations today are increasingly strained and the old paradigm of a balance of power is no longer stable. Unfortunately, the “world order” still seems to follow the rules of the Cold War. These rules were made in times different from ours; subsequently, they should not be applied today. Nuclear arsenals are modernized as we speak and are used for political powerplay. There is nothing modern about nuclear weapons. As we now have a chance to help shape the future, we want to see the nuclear arsenals reduced and not renewed. We want you to invest in our future, not on weapons of mass destruction. Our mindset needs to change to achieve this goal. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by 122 states, an overwhelming majority of the world, signals that the mindset is slowly starting to change. We are demanding to speed up the process, are we not all here to show our commitment to make this change?

Rusty gears in the disarmament and non proliferation machinery need to be renewed by fresh parts. In order to change the rusty system into a catalyst for real change we have to teach the new generation about the catastrophic consequences that occur each time nuclear weapons are used. Youth all over the world are taught the misconception that nuclear weapons are needed for security, leaving us to wonder what this security entails. They need to be taught that nuclear weapons actually pose a threat to security because they are weapons of mass destruction. They create disastrous humanitarian, socio-economic and environmental consequences, regardless if they’re used by accident or intentionally. Through education we can teach a new generation that our security is stronger without nuclear weapons than it is with them. Therefore, we call upon you to invest in educational systems that raise awareness about the unacceptable consequences of nuclear weapon use.

Today, we represent the generation, determined to live in a world free from nuclear weapons, a goal everyone in this room agreed upon.

Distinguished delegates, we have asked you to recognize the humanitarian, socio-economic and environmental impact of nuclear weapons, we have called upon you to fulfill your commitment to disarm the nuclear arsenals, we have urged you to invest in education that reflects the reality of the danger that nuclear weapons pose. This is important not only for us, as youth coming here as participants, but also for the senior diplomats coming as experts, and for
the people who served you coffee this morning and the baby in the stroller you smiled at while walking to the UN building. Consider us--the youth of the world--and perhaps even your children. All of our lives are impacted by the success or failure to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

We do not want to sit in your seat ten years from now, realising that nothing has changed. We need you, distinguished diplomats, to not only talk about visions of a world without nuclear weapons, but to actually achieve it. We are looking forward to being your partners in our shared mission of immediately achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

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