Ms. Setsuko Thurlow  
Nuclear Non-Proliferation Review Conference  
NGO Presentation to the Delegates  
Check Against Delivery

Madame President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentleman

On the cenotaph in the Peace Park in Hiroshima is an inscription that reads, "Rest in peace, the error will not be repeated." Instead of pointing an accusing finger at the United States the statement treats the issue reverently and philosophically as a crime against all of humanity. This has become the prayer and vow of many survivors who are determined to make sure that the deaths of their loved ones have not been in vain, and that no other human being will ever have to suffer the inhumane, immoral, cruel and indiscriminate effects of nuclear bombs.

Over the years, I have travelled the world to share my testimony as a Hiroshima survivor to help raise people’s awareness of the danger of nuclear weapons. People’s attitudes toward nuclear weapons have varied from indifference, justification and denial to fear and outrage. I find youth today more open and ready to learn the almost forgotten history of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Never before in my work for nuclear disarmament have I felt such a sense of hopefulness and excitement as I do now.

Why do I feel so hopeful? It's because of the birth of a rapidly growing global movement with humanitarian initiatives in the recent years. This movement has been reframing the problem of nuclear weapons from deterrence credibility and techno-military issues to the issue of the humanitarian consequences. The result is a strong push for a nuclear Ban Treaty to achieve the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons. Countries like Norway, Mexico and Austria, and international organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, and all of those who have collaborated to organize the three successful International Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons.

At the end of the Vienna Conference last December the Austrian Government unveiled the "Austrian Pledge" to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and
elimination of nuclear weapons. They invited all NPT member states to support the Pledge so that meaningful discussion could take place at this Review Conference.

However, according to the news media, high-ranking officials of Norway and Japan admitted that the United States shamelessly approached them and pressured them to refrain from supporting the Austrian Pledge. Japan, a loyal ally and dependent of the US “nuclear umbrella”, has not yet signed the Pledge. This kind of contradictory behavior of words and actions by the Japanese government has been deepening the distrust in the minds of Japanese people.

In international politics this kind of arm-twisting tactic or sabotaging behavior may be common among the Nuclear Weapon States and Nuclear Dependent States, but from the perspective of the majority of the people of the world such shady diplomacy is nothing but repugnant, and blasphemous to the lives of those incinerated by the bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In 2009, in Prague, President Obama stated “As the only power to have used nuclear weapons, the United States has a moral responsibility to act” and he added “So today I state clearly and with conviction, America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.” Several Japanese Prime Ministers have likewise publicly stated their support for nuclear disarmament. The often-repeated sentiment is that Japan, as the only nation that has suffered the atomic bombing, has a special responsibility to be at the forefront of the movement to abolish nuclear weapons. These leaders, of the nations that both introduced the nuclear age to the world and have the most intimate knowledge of the humanitarian harm that nuclear weapons cause, have described a role for themselves that they are currently negating.

Not only President Obama and Prime Minister Abe, but you, each and everyone of you NPT member delegates, agreed to Article 6 of this Treaty “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.” You are part of the decision making body for the fate of the human community and your responsibility is grave. Please break away from the non-productive past record on disarmament. After all, the NPT is 45 years old. The world is impatient.
As Foreign Minister of Sweden, Margot Wallström, has said, “If the current mechanism and forum continues to fail, we will need to consider other possible avenues for bringing disarmament work forward.”

It is the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings and the 70th anniversary of the United Nations. We need to reflect once again on the meaning of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the meaning of the UN Charter “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.”

On behalf of all the victims, from Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the Marshall Islands, French Polynesia, Chernobyl, Three Mile Island, US down-winders, Australian aboriginals, Kazakhstan, Fukushima and many others; and on behalf of all of us in the global community, I demand to the leaders of all nations: ban nuclear weapons, ban nuclear weapons now!

Thank you.