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Report

2011 World Conference against A and H Bombs Hiroshima and Nagasaki 3. – 9. August 2011

No more Hiroshima, no more Nagasaki, no more Fukushima!

First I would like to express my gratefulness to the Gensuikyo for inviting me to the conference, which was a huge learning and humbling experience.

Hearing the testimonies of the many victims of nuclear radiation about their suffering and their fight for compensation, combined with theirs and other participants' reflections, anger, fear and resolve to get rid of nuclear arms, was a major call for action.

We heard the Hibakusha (representatives of the some 300.000 survivors of the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, friends and family of the some 210 000 who were killed by the blasts), and also victims of nuclear testing, e.g. in the Pacific and in Nevada, victims of uranium mining and nuclear research, and victims of accidents of nuclear reactors such as Chernobyl or Fukushima, of nuclear waste processing plants and mobile platforms (in submarines, aircraft carriers or planes). We heard victims of nuclear radiation and reports and analysis also from many other sites where accidents had taken place such as Cheliabinsk, Three Mile Island, US Downwinders, Guam, Bikini, Marshall Island, Moruroa and Viet Nam (spraying of the toxic chemical Agent Orange 50 years back).

The catastrophe, on 11 March of this year, at Fukushima, one of the world's biggest power plants, was naturally very much at the forefront during the conference. Fukushima reminded the world of the dangers of nuclear power 25 years after the accident of Chernobyl and as people were starting to forget and as the nuclear mafia again was about to convince governments that nuclear power is needed, safe, clean and cheap.

The message that was heard the most often during the conference was: No more Hiroshima, no more Nagasaki and no more Fukushima! Thereby acknowledging the dangers of nuclear power and the links between nuclear power and nuclear arms. This was also reflected in the final declaration, although perhaps less strongly than some would have liked to see it. The marking of the 66th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima ("Little boy") 6 August at 08.15 and the H-bomb in Nagasaki ("Fat man") 9 August at 11.02 was a plea for peace and drastic disarmament, and an urgent call for Japan (and the world) to review its energy policies.

The conference, that took place first in Hiroshima and then in Nagasaki, was particularly well organized. Besides the many plenary sessions, ceremonies and workshops, there were visits to schools, hospitals, local organisations, peace museums and peace monuments. The organizers will make a full report with speeches from the plenary sessions containing a wealth of information, analysis and plans.

This year the biggest participation was in Nagasaki with up to almost 8000 participants. (The two cities are given a lead every second year). Some of the Japanese participants had walked very long distances with banners and mobilization events along the route. They all presented their situation and work on stage. The Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Kan, talked at the official commemoration of the attack on Hiroshima 6. August. He stated e.g. that he did not want Japan to be dependent on nuclear power. There were some 88 international guests from some 25 countries and international organizations. Sergio Duarte, the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, represented the UN Secretary General. Malaysia, which again took the initiative to present a resolution in the UN (December 2010) demanding a convention banning nuclear weapons, was represented by the undersecretary for disarmament and non-proliferation, Mr Raja Reza Raja Zaib Shah. (Nearly 2/3 of the UN Member states voted for the resolution (133 in favour, 28 against, 23 abstentions (including Japan)). Egypt, which is presently heading the Non-Aligned Movement (122 countries) which has the fight against nuclear arms as the number one priority,

was represented by the ambassador to Japan, Mr. Abdelnasser, who was about to return to Cairo to take up a top position in the post-revolutionary Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Arab League was represented by a special advisor on disarmament, Mr Mohammed Ezzeldine Abdel-Moneim. A video message from the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs was shown in both locations.

Banning of nuclear weapons

An estimated 27.000 nuclear weapons exist in more than 100 locations globally (Hans Blix in the report of the Commission on weapons of mass destruction). About 2000 are kept on high-alert status. The nuclear powers invest some 100 billion \$ a year bolstering their nuclear forces.

Obama's famous anti-nuclear speech in Prague was no longer trusted, his nuclear policy was by many seen as "schizophrenic". The USA was heavily criticized by a large number of speakers for its militarization and fight for dominance around the world, e.g. building and planning of new bases (including at the idyllic Jeju Island in South Korea), its continued testing of nuclear bombs (so called subcritical testing), the modernization of its nuclear arsenal for a "Full spectrum Dominance" by the "Global Strike Command" project and developing new flights and drones to carry nuclear bombs such as the Joint Strike Fighters (F-35). NATO's nuclear policy was also criticized, actually the whole new "strategic concept" - e.g. the first strike doctrine, the "out of area" policy, (including the war in Libya) and the keeping of nuclear bombs in Europe in non- nuclear states. There are some 200 bombs in Turkey, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany –some 20 of the bombs in Büchel (Germany) have nine times the explosive force of the Hiroshima bomb. NATO countries count for some 75 % of the world's defense costs and some 65 % of the sales of military equipment.

Many spoke in favor of a new convention against nuclear weapons, and a series of activities were reported and planned. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), established by the nuclear weapons-possessing states, was by some considered as giving double standards allowing the nuclear powers to keep their monopoly of nuclear weapons. In order to restrain nuclear proliferation the Treaty has a provision allowing the right to so-called "peaceful use" of atomic power (Art. 4). A nuclear weapons convention would help monitor and contain all nuclear equipment and facilities, which again could build international trust and facilitate disarmament. Intermediate steps and agreements, timetables and benchmarks should be part of an urgent process towards such a convention. Much support was given to the plans to have a conference in 2012 on a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East (outcome of the last NPT review conference), but there is no place nor exact timing fixed. Two-thirds of all governments are for a convention against nuclear arms, and opinion polls show that a majority of people everywhere want a total ban on nuclear weapons. And we need to get more contact with the big and influential corporations.

More fear of nuclear power post Fukushima

Several scientists present at the conference gave strong warnings about nuclear power and also strongly criticized the nuclear industry for misleading people both in relation to its safety and cleanliness, as well as the economic aspects of nuclear energy. The Italian physicist, Angelo Baracca, from the University of Florence, said that nuclear energy has nothing to do on earth – nobody is able to handle it safely and it is impossible to control radioactive contamination. The negative consequences of nuclear accidents are irreversible. He, and others, is searching for ways to keep the nuclear industry responsible for the human and environmental costs of nuclear energy.

Over the last years, the debate on nuclear power had become quite muted, and the public had grown complacent as to the nuclear threat. The conference, however, reflected a rapidly growing opposition around the world and came up with a strong urge to use the terrible disaster at Fukushima to oppose the misinformation from the nuclear lobby, with a view to getting rid of nuclear power. The meltdown has in effect caused a global nuclear rethink.

Worldwide there are presently some 400 nuclear power plants, roughly half of them located in Europe. Japan is said to have 54 reactors throughout the earthquake-prone, densely populated country – many of them, like the Fukushima plant, at sea-level. Many wanted to hold the nuclear industry and the government accountable for

propagating a "safety myth" around the nuclear power plants, and insisted on the need for a drastic change in the energy policy towards renewable energy sources, as well as a reduction in consumption. And how much of the world's energy consumption is the military responsible for? E.g. the steel production gets heavily subsidized electricity in several countries. More research is needed.

According to what was expressed by people from Fukushima, the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) and the Government, as well as scientists and doctors, kept facts about the danger of radiation from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant from public knowledge, creating distrust and fear among people. According to testimonies from Japanese participants, including IPB Vice-President Mr. Terumi Tanaka, the media did not provide appropriate explanations and advice to the public. And the plant is still not under control, many have been evacuated, families have been split as people try to send their children away to safer areas. There is a growing anxiety for the safety of food and water, and the possibility of farming the land.

The Nihon Hidankyo, the Confederation of A- and H- bomb sufferers organizations, established 55 years ago after the crew of a Japanese tuna fishing boat were showered with nuclear fall-out after the US hydrogen bomb test at the Bikini Atoll (1946), reminded the government that their fight for compensation and support took 12 years before being recognized as victims. They urged the Government to issue immediately disaster-victim certificates and health books for victims of internal and external radiation from the reactor meltdown at Fukushima and introduce free-of-charge medical check ups twice a year.

Internationally, Germany has decided after the Fukushima accident, to close down its nuclear power plants, and Italy and Switzerland are indicating similar policies. Hopefully, many other countries will follow this trend. Germany has become a role model with its "Renewable energy law", now copied by more than 40 countries, allowing grid providers to buy and feed electricity produced in a renewable manner into the grid at stipulated prices. This is a showcase for the potential of renewable energy, it breaks the monopoly position of energy companies and gives individuals and communities the possibility of a self-sufficient and decentralized energy supply.

Nuclear power is not cheap as its protagonists claim. Dismantling costs are the same as installation costs. Without the heavy subsidies, it would, according to e.g. the Indian professor and peace activist Geetha Thachil, be costlier than other sources of energy. In addition, the social costs are tremendous and almost beyond imagination.

Tim Wright, ICAN Australia, underlined that "phasing out nuclear power globally will greatly facilitate progress towards nuclear disarmament". According to him and others the nuclear power/nuclear weapons nexus is glaringly obvious. For instance, plutonium for nuclear bombs is extracted from the "spent" fuel rods from nuclear power plants in nuclear reprocessing facilities such as LaHague and Sellafield.

Many think that the only safe nuclear power reactor that exists is 93 million miles away from earth: the sun. Hopefully the disaster in Japan will help open our eyes – so we do not continue to tempt fate and compromise health for power and greed. Better to use solar energy – and in democratic ways! A moratorium on nuclear energy is required – and as stated by the representative of the Arab League, the IAEA should be given a new role as the International Atomic Energy Eradication Agency.

For the peace movement, the just and widely-felt anxiety after the Fukushima accident gives a new momentum to seek new partners in the fight against both nuclear arms and nuclear power. It gives also a new impetus to seek more knowledge beyond the rhetoric, and secrets, of the nuclear industry.

IPB got a lot of visibility at the conference since the organizing committee asked me to perform several tasks:

- I made a presentation both at the opening in Hiroshima and at the closing in Nagasak (attached). Since I have never spoken for 8000 people before, it was a powerful experience, probably even more so in that particular setting.

- As co-chair for the Hiroshima part of the conference, I was with the others kept on the podium throughout, and

in that capacity I also participated actively in the development of the final conference declaration.

- Together with Dave Webb, head of the British anti-nuclear organisation CND, I made a presentation to the very well attended workshop: "For a total ban on nuclear weapons. Discussions with international movements". I mostly spoke in practical terms on how IPB works to keep contact with, support and inspire member organisations and cooperate with other partners, including governments and the media (meetings, conferences, workshops, webpage, newsletter, face-book, twitter, exhibitions, publications, educational material, posters, statements, lobbying...). The meeting was both interactive and useful. Many expressed interest in IPB's work, not least young people, teachers, women and peace activists. Some of the Japanese teachers voiced concern as to the "glossy" way that Japanese history, not least the war history, is presented in school text books.

- Together with Yayoi Tsuchida, prominent member both of Gensuikyo and the IPB Board, I had a pleasant and fruitful meeting with the new mayor of Hiroshima, Mr Kazumi Matsui, who is also the chair of the Mayors for Peace. He took office in April, but was already well informed about IPB and recognized our common goals. He was grateful for the Sean MacBride peace prize and the nomination by IPB for the Nobel Peace Prize, and he was willing to consider practical ways of cooperation. The Mayors for Peace hope to reach soon the goal of 5000 mayors in their network (representing nearly one billion people). They are interested in having events/conferences in Hiroshima around the year.

- I was invited as a special guest to speak at a gathering of some 40 women from the New Japan Women's Association and the Women's Peace Fund together with the German anti-nuclear activist Marion Kuepker and the professor and activist, LisaLinda Natividad, from Guam. (Guam is a highly-militarized US colony, negatively affected by the nuclear testing in Bikini in 1946 and facing the present threat of having to be on the receiving end of the moving of some 8000 marines from US military bases in Okinawa.) I spoke about IPB's work, about the importance of women's involvement in decision-making, not least in relation to conflict-resolution and peace, and mentioned "foremothers" like Bertha von Suttner and Lysistrata! (Japan has presently no women in the government and only one in the local government in Hiroshima.)

- Invited by the New Japan Women's Association, I also spoke at the Women's Forum: "No nukes" with some 1300 participants. (Speech attached) Contact person: Emiko Hirano (S-intl@shinfujin.gr.jp).

- I was interviewed by Japan state television notably on scientific research on nuclear power and arms – and the need for a possible code of conduct for scientists (reference to UNESCO's efforts in this regard).

IPB and the nuclear threat

My recommendation to the board of IPB would be to keep the fight against nuclear weapons high on the agenda, and in particular focus on the promotion of a comprehensive convention against nuclear arms. I would also like to see IPB engage in gathering more information on the links between civil nuclear energy and nuclear arms as part of the Disarmament for Development program. At the same time, I would recommend to support the groups that use the post-Fukushima momentum for developing a moratorium/ban on nuclear energy.