

TOWARD A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida speaks at the Ninth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in New York, September 2015
Photo: Courtesy of MOFA



As the only country in the world to have suffered the devastation of nuclear attack, Japan is playing a leading role in promoting global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

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SINCE the end of World War II, Japan – a country which suffered the loss of many lives due to the dropping of atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 – has been engaged in the national mission of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, based on the idea that such horrors, caused by the use of nuclear weapons, should never again be repeated.

“There are two wheels to these efforts towards the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. The first is the wheel of heralding the philosophy of a world without nuclear weapons, sharing a global norm of the inhumanity of nuclear weapons widely throughout the international community, and working toward building a world order in which nuclear weapons do not exist,” says Nobumasa Akiyama, Minister-Counsellor for the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna. “The other wheel is to cope – both realistically and practically – with the threats of nuclear weapons that currently exist in reality, and work to minimize those threats. I believe that it is only when both of

these wheels are rotating and moving forward that we can achieve the realization of a secure and sustainable world without nuclear weapons.”

One of the actions in Japan’s efforts in sharing norms of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation was the submission of a Resolution on Nuclear Disarmament made at the UN General Assembly. The proposal has been made every year since 1994, and incorporates statements of the importance of steadily advancing practical and specific efforts, and joint actions between both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states, towards the abolition and eradication of nuclear weapons. This year 108 countries (including the United States) participated in making a joint proposal, and 167 countries voted in favor of the proposal, exceeding the previous year’s total. The only countries opposed to the proposal were Russia, China, North Korea and Syria.

Japan is also working to create political momentum in various other international arenas in order to promote nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. For example, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Japan worked with various countries to ensure that the international community issues strong, unified messages to North Korea to cease and desist from developing nuclear technology and conducting missile tests. Japan serves as a Co-President of the Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-

Ban Treaty (CTBT) for banning nuclear tests, which has still not entered into force despite its adoption by the UN General Assembly in 1996.

Furthermore, Japan is also proactively involved in strengthening a global nuclear non-proliferation framework, and in initiatives for human resource development and sharing of knowledge in relation to enhancing nuclear security¹, both of which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) promotes. For example, in 2010, Japan established the Integrated Support Center for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Security (ISCN) within the Japan Atomic Energy Agency in Ibaraki Prefecture with the objective of strengthening nuclear security in Asia, and is supporting capacity building in various fields, such as in the establishment and management of physical protection systems at facilities using nuclear material as well as in the transportation of nuclear and other radioactive materials.

The post of Director General of the IAEA is currently held by Yukiya Amano, who was formerly a senior member of staff at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA). Since his appointment in 2009, Amano has been working to tackle various issues such as strengthening nuclear security, handling the North Korean nuclear problem, and promoting the peaceful use of atomic energy for development. The IAEA also plays a major role in verifying and guaranteeing the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)² agreed in 2015 between Iran and the P5+1.

“The IAEA properly fulfilling its role of verifying that Iran honors its commitments under the JCPOA will lead to the successful resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue. It is extremely important that the IAEA conducts activities, under Director General Amano’s leadership, that will gain the trust and confidence of

Nobumasa Akiyama, Minister-Counsellor for the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Vienna
Photo: Courtesy of Nobumasa Akiyama



all the relevant countries,” says Akiyama. “Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear security are crucial elements in building the foundation for a world without nuclear weapons. If we are unable to ensure the effectiveness of these, then nuclear disarmament will surely be impossible, too. There are some countries in the world that want to proactively advance the strengthening of nuclear security; and then there are those that are not so proactive. It is Japan’s role to fill this gap and make it possible for the entire international community to share the ideal of creating a world without nuclear weapons through addressing and reducing all kinds of nuclear threats and risks.”

Currently, the movement – centered mainly around non-nuclear-weapon states – towards legally banning nuclear weapons is intensifying. In the meantime, countries with nuclear arsenals assert that nuclear deterrence is necessary to maintaining stable international security. While the Japanese government recognizes the necessity of nuclear deterrence of its ally the United States, it also continues in its pursuit of improving the security environment in order to advance nuclear disarmament.

“There is not necessarily only one path to achieving the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Japan will continue to steadily implement effective measures to move forward to that goal,” says Akiyama. “At the same time, I think we should continue to actively hold dialogues with both nuclear-weapon states and countries that promote nuclear disarmament, and fulfill our role in leading the debate for bringing us nearer to the realization of a world without nuclear weapons.” ■

1 Nuclear security refers to preventing non-state actors and other entities from illegally acquiring nuclear weapons and nuclear or radiological materials, or manufacturing nuclear explosive devices using stolen nuclear materials, as well as actually using these materials and devices to damage society or conducting sabotage against nuclear facilities.

2 The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is an agreement that was reached in July 2015 between Iran and six countries including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China, Russia and Germany to solve the Iranian nuclear problem. The JCPOA ensures non-diversion of Iran’s peaceful nuclear activities into military purposes by restricting its nuclear fuel activities, and defines conditions and procedures for lifting the various sanctions imposed on Iran so far.