Remarks by Ms. Angela Kane
United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

at the Acceptance of a Petition for Nuclear Disarmament

Dag Hammarskjold Plaza

Sunday, 26 April 2015
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to meet with you and receive your important petition today. For decades you and your groups have been collecting signatures in the hundreds of thousands and handing over your petitions on nuclear disarmament. Yet it is an act that never diminishes in importance and relevance.

We all share the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We all know how hard the Hibakushas have worked to abolish nuclear weapons; how strenuously they have spread the message of peace to the world; and how arduously they have striven to preserve the memories of the unspeakable devastation they survived. But with the average age of the Hibakusha at 79, we must take this opportunity to renew our commitment to carry the heavy torch of responsibility for achieving the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

In the five years since the NPT Review Conference, a clear majority of United Nations Member States have reaffirmed the belief that the continued existence of nuclear weapons poses the greatest danger to humanity and to the survival of civilization, and that their elimination must be pursued with vigor and urgency.

However, there remains a strong belief held by some that nuclear deterrence should be a central pillar of national security.

On the eve of the 2015 NPT Review Conference, such opposing views have emerged as a real challenge to the goal of the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Humans are inherently fallible. There is no guarantee that nuclear weapons will ever be used either deliberately or by accident.

Enlightened global leadership is necessary in order to change the paradigm of international security. The power of civil society is one of our greatest assets in seeking this change.

On behalf of the United Nations, I humbly accept your petition. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to each person who signed it. I hope that the delegates of the Review Conference will take your message to heart and join you in the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.

Let me conclude by repeating something we all know to be true: Disarmament is the right thing to do and it works.

Thank you.