Closing Plenary of the 2016 World Conference against A and H Bombs
“A Nuclear Weapon-Free, Peaceful and Just World”

Mr KIM Won-soo
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations

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Mr Hiroshi Taka, Co-chair of the Steering Committee
Esteemed Hibakusha
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to be here with you once again as we commemorate this sombre occasion – the first use of nuclear weapons in war. This is my second visit to Hiroshima and the impact of this memorial is no less moving.

I bring you the greetings of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He has asked me to convey his commitment to the pledge he made six years ago to stand with the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And his unwavering commitment to the imperative of nuclear disarmament.

As the Secretary-General likes to say, “Disarmament is in the DNA of the United Nations”. Our organisation was formed in the shadow of World War II. For seven decades we have dedicated ourselves to achieving a world, safer and more secure world, and without nuclear weapons.

In this cause, the United Nations has no greater ally than the brave survivors of the atomic bombings, the Hibakusha. Today I acknowledge the suffering the Hibakusha have endured, both during the bombing and in the years that followed.

I also pay tribute to their determination to transform their personal tragedy into a message of hope. They have become, as the Secretary-General said, “True champions of peace.” As the embodiment of the human costs of nuclear war, the Hibakusha are unique. However, most Hibakusha are now in their eighties or older. We need to make sure that their legacy is secured.

I take this opportunity to call on the young peacemakers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to ensure the voices of the Hibakusha echo down the years so that future generations fully understand the toll these weapons take.

Throughout his tenure, the Secretary-General, and especially in his five-point plan on nuclear disarmament, has highlighted the steps that must be taken without delay if the world is to achieve nuclear disarmament.

Yet our efforts to adopt effective measures for disarmament continue to be frustrated and the gap between positions on how to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons grows wider.

We must work together to fill this gap. The community of nations, led by those states possessing nuclear weapons, needs to come together in inclusive dialogue. All nations need to find common ground and a way forward.
The stakes are too high not to. The human and environmental consequences of the use of one nuclear weapon would be devastating.

I call on you, civil society, to also play your part. Civil society is central to prompting the public conscience to advance disarmament. Raise your voices and let them be heard. Keep your governments accountable for their actions and policies.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki remind us of the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons. But, as the Secretary-General has said, “the only absolute guarantee that they are never used again is through their total elimination.”

I count on you all to help attain that goal.

Thank you.