Keynote Address

A Race between Education and Catastrophe

By

Angela Kane
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations

The Global Forum on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education
Nagasaki, Japan
10 August 2012
I am very pleased to address this Global Forum on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education and wish at the outset to thank the Government of Japan and United Nations University for co-organizing it.

Although this is my first visit to Nagasaki, I know that your citizens have worked hard over many decades for global nuclear disarmament. You have been speaking and acting from a position of high moral authority and your words and actions have great weight throughout the world. It is especially fitting that this Forum would be held here, following the launching last April of the Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition at Nagasaki University.

We are today at an important juncture. Ten years have passed since the adoption of the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education in 2002. This anniversary provides an excellent opportunity to review disarmament and non-proliferation education efforts by Member States, the United Nations, international and regional organizations as well as civil society organizations. I hope we can find ways to deepen that commitment.

In his great work, *The Outline of History*, H. G. Wells wrote “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.” As we consider the devastating effects of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, it becomes quite clear that that education will have vital roles to play both in preventing arms races and in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

So I would like today to say a few words about what we are doing in the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to promote disarmament and non-proliferation education activities with Member States, non-governmental organizations and the general public. As always, we are continuing to rely upon the internet, print publications, conferences and workshops, media events and public speaking engagements.

In recent years, we have been closely engaged in reaching out to a younger generation, who will soon assume many of the responsibilities in disarmament that their elders are carrying today. How are we doing this?

Well, we believe first of all that words and images can inspire both thought and action. So, working jointly with the Government of Japan and UN Department of Public Information (DPI), we launched a “Poetry for Peace” contest challenging young people to respond to the testimonies of the *hibakusha*. We also just concluded an “Art for Peace” contest, in collaboration with the Harmony for Peace Foundation and DPI, in which we invited young people to paint their visions of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Both of these were disarmament education programmes launched in 2011 and 2012 respectively via the internet—and both were specifically addressed to children, teens and young adults worldwide to make them better acquainted with nuclear disarmament issues. Social media tools including Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest were widely used to disseminate information and reach wider audiences.

In September 2011, UNODA relaunched its disarmament education website in the six official UN languages. We also introduced “Disarmament Today”, a series of podcasts in

---

which experts are interviewed about present-day disarmament issues.\textsuperscript{2} In 2011, the podcasts covered topics such as the status of disarmament and non-proliferation education, issues relating to space security, and the experiences of a \textit{hibakusha} whose life was transformed into becoming a peace activist.

Many of you here today will remember the Secretary-General’s visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2010 and you might recall his support for preserving and disseminating the testimonies of the \textit{hibakusha} to ensure that their stories are available for generations to come. Following up on that visit, UNODA created a dedicated webpage focused on these stories, which is likely the most comprehensive web-platform for such material in languages other than Japanese.\textsuperscript{3} We have also just launched a multimedia website focusing on \textit{hibakusha} now living outside of Japan, offering them an opportunity to tell their own stories, which are being made available in six UN official languages and in Japanese.\textsuperscript{4}

In addition, UNODA worked with educators at Tokyo University who created an undergraduate class with our input in which they interviewed \textit{hibakusha} and presented us with their translated testimonies.

Since May 2011, UNODA in collaboration with a New York-based non-governmental organization called “Hibakusha Stories” has organized bi-annual briefings by the survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear attacks for UN tour guides, staff and permanent mission interns.\textsuperscript{5} I very much welcome the participation at this Global Forum of the Program Director of Hibakusha Stories, Dr. Kathleen Sullivan, who is one of the world’s leading disarmament educators.

On 11 November 2011, at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, the UN opened an exhibition entitled “Toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons” co-sponsored by the Government of Japan, UNODA, UN Office in Geneva, and the Atomic Bomb Museums of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The exhibition is composed of text and photographs explaining the history of nuclear weapons and what governments and civil society organizations are doing to achieve a world free of such weapons. The Government of Japan donated artefacts from the Urakami Catholic Cathedral near the hypocenter of the nuclear attack here in Nagasaki.

With respect to training, UNODA implements the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament launched by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament in 1978. The Programme is addressed to national officials in more Member States, especially developing countries, and is intended to enable them to participate more effectively in international deliberating and negotiating fora. The Programme has trained over 800 public officials from over 160 Member States, a large number who are now in positions of responsibility in the field of disarmament within their own Governments. From 25 to 30 fellowships are awarded every year.

Yet our training initiatives are not limited to government officials. Each year, over 30 graduate students participate in the UN internship programme at UNODA offices in New York.\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2} http://www.un.org/disarmament/education/podcasts/.
\item \textsuperscript{3} http://www.un.org/disarmament/content/slideshow/hibakusha/.
\item \textsuperscript{4} http://www.un.org/disarmament/education/hibakusha/.
\item \textsuperscript{5} http://hibakushastories.org/.
\end{itemize}
York and Geneva. These interns gain a unique inside view of how the multilateral disarmament process operates.

In January 2012, the Office for Disarmament Affairs published a booklet entitled “Disarmament — A Basic Guide” in collaboration with the NGO Committee on Disarmament, Peace and Security. The Office for Disarmament has been seeking partners to translate the guide into as many languages as possible for educational purposes. To date, the University of Tokyo has agreed to produce a version in Japanese.

My Office has also been aware of the need to work closely with other parts of the United Nations Organization in advancing our common educational goals. On 10 May 2012, we organized an inter-agency meeting on disarmament and non-proliferation education—which included participation by United Nations University—to share information and experiences and explore opportunities for collaboration and mutual support.

With this overview, I will now conclude my statement today with some words of encouragement. Education is, as H.G. Wells suggested, one of humanity’s greatest assets in the race to prevent future catastrophes and this is nowhere truer than with respect to the need to prevent any future use of nuclear weapons. I hope this Global Forum will generate some new ideas on how the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs can further contribute to this great cause, and we certainly stand ready to work with all of you as we confront the new educational challenges that lie ahead.

---