

The 20th IPPNW (International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War) World Congress

Remarks by

Mr. Tadateru Konoé,

President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)

also as the president of the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS)

I feel very honoured to join you today at the historic 20th IPPNW World Congress. It has been 23 years since this conference was last held on Japanese soil, and I imagine that there was a great deal of effort involved in organizing the event, especially on the part of the Hiroshima Medical Association, which also serves as the Japanese affiliate of the IPPNW. Before all else, I would like to congratulate the organizers on their fine work. We meet today in Hiroshima, where humanity first confronted the horror of nuclear weapons. Uniquely qualified to spread the message of humanitarianism by this legacy, Hiroshima has continued to play a large and indispensable role in the movement for abolition of nuclear weapons. I hope that this time, once again, this city will be the source of a message that reaches an even greater number of hearts and minds.

Two years ago, in November of 2010, I had the an opportunity to speak at the 11th World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates held under the theme, “The Legacy of Hiroshima,” in my capacity as the president of the International

Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The founder of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Henry Dunant, was also the first-ever Nobel Peace laureate. Like the Red Cross Red Crescent, the IPPNW was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985, and I very much welcome this opportunity for the IPPNW to discuss the prevention of nuclear warfare for the building of a lasting culture of peace.

The Movement's involvement in the nuclear weapons debate dates back to the moment when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. On August 6, 1945, at 8:15 in the morning, there was a flash of light over Hiroshima. An instant later, the city was in ruins, and 140,000 people would die by the year's end. Hospitals and clinics that should have cared for the survivors were obliterated in the same moment. Of 300 doctors working in the city, 270 were killed. Of 1,780 nurses, 1,654 lost their lives.

But in the midst of this appalling devastation, one hospital still stood. The Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital, which miraculously escaped destruction despite its nearness to ground zero, immediately filled with casualties. There was nowhere near enough equipment or medicine, and nearly all of the doctors and nurses had been killed or injured. But there was dedication, and there was help for the helpless.

One month later, Dr. Marcel Junod of the International Committee of the Red Cross heard of the devastation, and became the first non-Japanese doctor to

see what had happened to Hiroshima.

He described his arrival in Hiroshima as follows: “At twelve o'clock, we flew over Hiroshima. We ... witnessed a sight totally unlike anything we had ever seen before. The center of the city was a sort of white patch, flattened and smooth like the palm of a hand. Nothing remained. The slightest trace of houses seemed to have disappeared. The white patch was about 2 kilometers in diameter. Around its edge was a red belt, marking the area where houses had burned, extending quite a long way further, difficult to judge from the airplane, covering almost all the rest of the city. It was an awesome sight.” Dr. Junod then successfully interceded with the U.S. occupation force for some 15 tons of medical supply and equipment, working to help Hiroshima in its darkest days. He is still considered a “friend of Hiroshima,” and a memorial to the doctor stands in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park.

Dr. Junod’s report sent a shockwave through the International Committee of the Red Cross headquarters in Geneva, prompting the Red Cross to take a major step towards the abolition of nuclear weapons, a threat to humanity itself. To date, over a dozen resolutions have been adopted at International Conferences of the Red Cross Red Crescent, including the ban on nuclear testing proposed by the Japanese Red Cross Society at the 1963 International Conference marking the centennial of the Red Cross’ foundation.

In more recent times, November 2011 saw the Council of Delegates of the

International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Geneva adopt a groundbreaking resolution that clarified the Movement's stance on nuclear weapons as never before.

Why has the Red Cross Red Crescent grown more vocal about nuclear weapons, here and now? The answer is that there is a growing sense, internationally, that the time is right to discuss the nuclear issue from a humanitarian perspective. For instance, we can recall the initiatives of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and U.S. President Barack Obama, which consequently encouraged people to study and acknowledge the 1996 advisory opinions of the International Court of Justice once again. And for the first time, we are seeing references being made to International Humanitarian Law, which the Red Cross has promoted for so long, in the resolution adopted by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference.

In the 2011 resolution, the Movement asserted two things. One is that the use of nuclear arms, a weapon of mass destruction, is against the principles set forth by International Humanitarian Law. This assertion takes into account the 1996 advisory opinions issued by the International Court of Justice. The second is that in the event of a nuclear weapon being used, nobody has the capability to mount a sufficient response to its humanitarian consequence. As the guardian of International Humanitarian Law and as an international relief organization that upholds humanitarianism, the Red Cross cannot help but be alarmed by the current state of things, where nuclear weapons still exist in large

quantities and the number of nuclear-weapon states is on the rise. By sharing that concern with as many members of the public as well as the people and organizations involved, we are committed to continuing the journey towards the non-proliferation and the ban on the use of nuclear weapons, and ultimately, to a complete abolition, jointly with IPPNW.

We also welcome the fact that this IPPNW World Congress is addressing the topic of the nuclear disaster in Fukushima.

What happened in Fukushima led people to confront anew the fact that no nuclear power generation is 100% safe, and that once an accident occurs, its consequence reaches across space and time to wreak havoc on the health of an untold number of people, their everyday lives, the environment, and economies. In response, at last year's General Assembly of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, we resolved to advocate for improved nuclear disaster preparedness from the public's point of view. As a follow-up, National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies from 16 countries, many of them nuclear-weapons states, gathered in Tokyo this May to discuss specific plans for action. The idea is to eventually create a standard guideline for nuclear disaster preparedness.

It is true that the message of advocacy for the ban and abolition of nuclear weapons, and the message of preparedness for nuclear disaster, have a basic difference. However, there is a great deal of common ground between the

repercussions for human health, which so attracted the public's attention following the accidents at Fukushima and even Chernobyl 26 years ago, and the *hibakusha* injury not only in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also in cases of exposure through nuclear weapon production and testing. We believe that a shared response is not only called for, particularly in the medical area, but feasible. If we accept the reality that the world already has many nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants, and may have more in the future, then we absolutely must prepare a response based on the possibility of all the humanitarian risk inherent in this reality. In any case, information about the possible impact of nuclear accidents should be widely disseminated to the public, and only then a discussion held on who should prepare for what in concert with whom, and in what manner. In closing I would like to salute the IPPNW for all that it has done, and to say that as your like-minded in both nuclear weapons abolition and nuclear disaster preparedness, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement wishes you the best in this conference, so that our two organizations may continue to strengthen our cooperative bond.

Thank you for your time.