



Presentation by Michiko Eto, Third Generation Hibakusha

Article 9 and Article 12 Conference – Peace Constitutions for Global Disarmament

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Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I would like to thank every one of you for this great opportunity to be here today and to share my thoughts on peace.

My grandmother was a victim of the atomic explosion in Hiroshima and was hospitalized for more than 15 years before leaving this world. Many of my relatives were the victims of that incident. I also remember my grandfather's affliction rooted to his experience as a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union. Since witnessing the suffering of my close relatives from a young age, I decided to dedicate my life to promoting a better world where children will not inherit the burden of a war, distress, and distrust.

While in University, I spent one month in China in order to write a research paper on the Beijing massacre and the Japanese invasions in China. I spoke to the elders who still remembered the war. At first, they showed their feelings of resentment by throwing rocks at me, but later they broke down into tears and called the names of loved ones whose lives had been brutally taken away by the Japanese soldiers.

In New York, I worked closely with children in the slums. One day, a Puerto Rican boy invited me to his home on the 11th floor to show me the views of Manhattan. He pointed in the direction to where the World Trade Center used to be. From the window, he saw the second plane hit the twin towers on September 11, 2001. Since that day, he had been determined to join the navy to punish his enemy. I have encountered many similar children, who struggled to cope with the incident and could not let go of the hatred and distrust of Muslims in general. When Peace Boat stopped in New York several weeks ago, I went to visit that Puerto Rican boy and learnt that he had joined the paramilitary training. I hope one day

that joining military organizations becomes no longer a career option in all countries.

My traveling experiences have strengthened my ambition towards eliminating discrimination and developing mutual understanding amongst people from different backgrounds. When we actually realize the power of open-mindedness, acceptance, and mutual respect and love, we become aware of how fragile social and cultural barriers are.

I would like to see the new generation inherit a true appreciation for peace and a state of stability in the world. Not only for our children, but also for children of the world, we need to stand up and show our solidarity in achieving an enduring peace.

Thank you very much for listening.