



Remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu

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**United Nations Conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to
prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination**



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Ambassador Elayne Whyte

Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to warmly congratulate you on the historic adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This Treaty is a product of the strong desire on the part of majority of UN member states to make progress in nuclear disarmament, and the creativity, hard work and constructive engagement of all of you. I also wish to pay tribute to members of civil society, whose pioneering efforts and demands for progress have made possible much of what has been achieved today.

I would like to particularly recognize the heroic efforts of the Hibakusha, whose unspeakable suffering and tireless endeavors are captured for the first time in a multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty. The conclusion of the Treaty should be seen as a beacon of hope for all those who have dedicated their lives to the pursuit of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The outcome of this Conference represents a clear message on behalf a large majority of nations of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from any use of nuclear weapons, and the risks posed by nuclear weapons. This message needs to be heard. Despite the major reductions in many arsenals since the height of the Cold War, the risks to humanity posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons remain serious.

Current events around the world serve to remind us of this truth and of the urgency of finding ways forward to achieve our common destination. I hope this treaty will be an important step towards the end of our seven decade-long journey to seek a nuclear-weapon-free world.

In this regard, it is important that the Treaty seeks to cover all aspects of nuclear weapon activities, and consolidate the norms and undertakings found in the other components of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

We also note that you sought to reinforce and complement the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). You designed the new Treaty to ensure that no State can evade the basic safeguards that underpin the NPT. The NPT will have to remain the corner stone of the overall nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. The provisions on safeguards in the new treaty recognize the significant efforts over recent decades to improve the safeguards system and require parties to maintain the standards they apply, without prejudice to additional instruments they may adopt in the future. I hope that efforts to further strengthen standards will continue.

The innovative disarmament provisions in the text reflect a strong desire to ensure that the process of nuclear disarmament is inclusive. As the preamble rightly points out, the risks posed by nuclear weapons concern the security of all humanity and thus all States share a responsibility to prevent any use of nuclear weapons. The inclusion of a pathway to allow nuclear-armed States to participate from day one should be seen as a signal that the door to multilateral dialogue remains open.

This aspiration of openness is also embodied in the approach of the disarmament provisions. These reflect the reality that the verification of nuclear disarmament will be a sensitive process that must occur within an appropriate institutional context. As it is not possible now to identify the international authority that could take on these responsibilities, the drafters of the treaty have prudently decided to leave this matter to future negotiations.

Your motivation for this treaty was a desire to fill a legal gap. I now appeal to all prospective parties to use this treaty wisely to help fill the political gap. I also recognize the views held by those member states who decided not to take part in the negotiation for this Treaty. Perhaps path for nuclear disarmament is not only one. I appeal to those member states to continue to seek visible, practical steps towards nuclear disarmament in their own ways, but with increased vigor and renewed commitment towards the common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. I urge all member states to re-engage in, and deepen, dialogues to find ways to move towards nuclear disarmament.

Finally, the Treaty entrusts the Secretary-General with a number of important depositary and administrative functions related to the operation of the Treaty. This ensures that the institutional home for the process of nuclear disarmament remains situated at the same place of its birth. The United Nations remains the most appropriate venue for this cause, by virtue of its near-universal membership, its primary responsibility for peace and security, and its role in upholding the principles of humanity.

Congratulations to you all one again.

Thank you very much.