

Introductory remarks

Reception for the UN Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament and the Peace Messengers

21 August 2023

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all at our place this evening. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the organizers of both groups present today, namely the UNODA and the Secretariat of Hiroshima Nagasaki Peace Messenger, for their efforts and commitments to organizing their respective valuable programs.

For over a decade, our delegation has been hosting separate receptions each year for these two groups, namely, the participants of the UN Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament and the Peace Messengers coming from Japan, to provide them with an opportunity to exchange views with their peers and with more seasoned diplomats in the disarmament community here in Geneva. This time, I discovered that these two groups are coincidentally staying in Geneva during the same period. So, I decided to invite participants of both groups to this reception, convinced that it would be a wonderful opportunity for participants of both groups to mingle each other across borders and generations.

As the only country, that has ever suffered a use of atomic bombs during war, Japan has been deeply committed to the international efforts to disarmament, in general, and nuclear disarmament, in particular. The tragedies of Nagasaki and Hiroshima must not be repeated. Raising awareness of the experiences lived in Nagasaki and Hiroshima after the use of nuclear weapons should underpin our collective efforts towards a world without nuclear weapons. Japan considers it its duty to pass over these experiences over generations and across borders.

Since 2013, given the aging of Hibakusya, survivors of use of atomic bombs, the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Japan started to appoint youngsters as *Youth Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons*, to convey their message abroad. The high school students I invited today and present here have been appointed as such. Their visit here is all the more important as Japan has taken initiatives to make the voices of younger generations more widely heard, for example by cosponsoring a draft resolution on Youth at the First Committee of the UNGA. The activities we are undertaking in the disarmament machinery today will have long-lasting consequences and effects over generations. For example, the NPT, the cornerstone of a nuclear non-disarmament, entered into force in 1970. So, incumbent diplomat should be accountable to younger generations and their voices should be better heard by us. With this, I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to them and hope that their missions be constructively completed during their stay in Geneva.

To the participants of the Disarmament Fellowship program, allow me to share three pieces of my personal advice.

First, please make sure to fully enjoy your current program. The time when you can behave without instructions from the capital and without the reporting obligations will be very short across your long careers. Without these obligations, you can more openly and freely communicate with your peers, which I believe, enables you to understand better the positions of others. This opportunity will be a precious asset for your career, since in-depth understanding of different positions is a key to consensus building.

Second, please do not be pessimistic about the future of the disarmament machinery, despite it being largely hindered by stalemates across many fora. My experiences over three decades in this field tell me that the grander situation has and will greatly change in terms of decades. More favorable eras for consensus building in multilateral diplomacy will not fail to return. For example, it will most probably be the case once the war in Ukraine is over. The expertise needed for building such consensus, of which you are now heavily invested in, will certainly and handsomely be rewarded when the time comes.

Third, please don't be shy before those elder diplomats with long-established experience in this field. At disarmament debates, you will easily be able to find those diplomats and experts who can remember the results of conferences which they attended even decades ago. In fact, I may be one of them. Their experiences and knowledge are simultaneously both their assets and liabilities. Their way of thinking tends to be so rigidly forged by their past experience so as to leave little space for innovative ideas. To break the impasse in which we find ourselves across many fora, fresh thinking is required. For this, we are pleased to rely upon you.

I would now like to conclude my short address by thanking you all for being with us and hope you can enjoy this evening.