

# The International Civil Society Forum To Abolish Nuclear Weapons: What The Minute Hand Teaches Us

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## Introduction

*“[Nuclear Bombs are] the weapon that attacked Hiroshima and Nagasaki, destroying two cities and killing hundreds of thousands of people. There are currently 12,000 of these weapons still on Earth...I hope that the younger generation will take over the movement that the Japan Atomic Bomb Victims Association has been carrying out” - Tanaka Terumi*

On February 8 and 9, a collection of over 85 experts, leaders, survivors and speakers convened at the University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo. The goal was to create a set of recommendations for the third Meeting of States Parties for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), taking place between March 3-7, 2025. This was the 2025 International Civil Society Forum To Abolish Nuclear Weapons. The Forum presented itself with a core theme, this one centred around the phrase “From Japan to the World”, highlighting a call to amplify all the discussions, debates and sentiments accumulated here on a global pedestal. This theme further underscores an acute sense of urgency to be heard, a need to get things moving. It is not a coincidence that this urgency settles on the 80th year since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nor that it follows the new appointment of the Doomsday Clock at 89 seconds to midnight: the closest humanity has ever been in its entire history to disaster. The quote above was spoken during the Forum’s opening ceremony by now 92 year-old Tanaka Terumi, a Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivor) and Secretary General of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nihon Hidankyo (the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations), which

broaches the topic that the fight against nuclear weaponry is in many ways entering a new era, one without firsthand accounts of its horrors. There is a heavy burden placed on the next few decades, where minutes and seconds will mean more than hours or days, as the deadline for change gets shorter and shorter. The Forum, as such, bears many questions surrounding the passage of those minutes: Who and how many will carry the torches past the Hibakusha's eve? How much longer will the world last with nuclear weapons pointed at each other? What are the alternatives? Finally, what has history taught us about the way things are now?

### The Abstract Status Quo: Rethinking Deterrence, and Raising the TPNW

One large issue with dialogue surrounding nuclear weapons regulation is a lack of clear-cut rules. When is their use, or threat of use, acceptable? Is it even ever acceptable? Is there anything to police this? Or if there is, does it even work? This is the scary part. Since a lack of nuclear war does not signify that nuclear weapons are under control. "We do not know what works or doesn't work, but we do know [nuclear deterrence] can fail," says Director of the Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation Department in the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Alexander Kmentt. He continues that failure, however small the chances, cannot be considered an option, as even a low possibility presents an unacceptable level of risk to human life. Which means: "every single being on this planet is dependent on nothing going wrong with nuclear weapons". It seems that the world still hinges on a ticking clock, as we wait for the atomic penny to drop. Many leading minds and experts in the field of nuclear disarmament and arms control around the world joined Kmentt in weighing in on this. Two particular sessions highlighted this topic, the first being '*Universalizing the TPNW : How to Engage Nuclear Armed and Allied States*' including ICAN Deputy Director Daniel Hogsta, joined further by Arms Control Authority (ACA) director Daryl G. Kimball in '*Rethinking Nuclear Deterrence: Risks and Alternatives*'. Over the Forum's two day span, more voices such as

Former Head of Verification and Security Policy, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Tariq Rauf, Senior Research Fellow at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) Tim Caughley, and Yuri Kryvonos, Former Director of the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament, lent their expertise across various discussions on the trajectory of nuclear disarmament trends, or lack thereof, and the role of the TPNW.

A main argument for the possession of nuclear weapons is the theory of nuclear deterrence, a concept that, as explored during the Forum, is its own worst enemy. Deterrence theory essentially adopts the motto that a good offense is one's best defense: nuclear states can ensure that neither person will initiate attack, for the cost of retaliation would be too great. This is where the contradiction comes in: the potential of threats. Firstly, nuclear states abstaining from conflict simply disperse their battles into adjacent non-nuclear states, starting a series of proxy wars that result in equally egregious damages, albeit over a period of time. Secondly, by simple addition, the perception that more nuclear weapons equals more safety. As Daryl Kimball highlights, this begins an arms race between nuclear states attempting to one-up each other to sustain the idea of deterrence by closing the gap, defying this intimidation. This staggered power struggle emboldens states to strong-arm each other with the promise of violence and non-compliance as tensions rise, fostering a period where the overt threat of nuclear warfare, is as common as the insistence that such threats will deter. Put simply, deterrence is an intimidation tactic in a situation where both sides cannot allow themselves to be intimidated - a false choice that only works if one side gives up. But no side wants to give up. Hence, the contradiction. As Hogsta points out in the Forum, the threat of nuclear war is built into the concept of nuclear deterrence, which brings us closer to conflict, rather than away from it.

Lee Youngah, Manager of Center for Peace and Disarmament at People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy (PSPD) echoes this in her own speech on tackling nuclear

disarmament issues in East Asia: “The Korean Peninsula is currently in a typical security dilemma. The more we focus on building up our ‘deterrence’, the greater the risk of attack or the possibility of an accidental armed conflict”.

This is why, by nature, even this theory only presents deterrence as an abstract idea, not a solid one. Alexander Kmentt solidifies this by saying “The fact that we do not have nuclear war is not conclusive proof that nuclear deterrence works...Instead there have been cases of nuclear deterrence being ignored, or even failing to deter use of non-nuclear weapons.”

The other foundation for these shaky grounds is the current governing policy on nuclear weapons, the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Through the talks, all speakers stressed the importance of clarity, teleology and timeliness in deciding whether the function of nuclear policy aligns with their purpose. The solution for this is the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons: a clear and comprehensive removal of these weapons from security dialogue. However, this proposal is seen by some as divisive. The main resistance to the treaty has been that its focus is too humanitarian, not accounting for international security concerns, and is not compatible with the NPT, which is, according to nuclear weapon states, an essential security guide, the weakening of which would be a step backwards. Thus, speakers discussed the compatibility of the TPNW and NPT, in ways that roadmap a transition of policies towards prohibition rather than a complete overhaul. This was a prominent feature of the outcome documents worked on during the Forum.

Above all, speakers emphasized the importance of unity in pushing a unified front between all non-nuclear states, rallying behind the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. "If all non-nuclear states join the TPNW...when we have a unified front of 182 states challenging

states regarding nuclear disarmament...that would be a success. It is a challenging goal but I don't see any other arguments," said Kryvonos during a United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) public session on nuclear trends. This sentiment of safety in numbers is not necessarily a new one, but one deemed necessary by a drawn history of slow progress.

As time has aptly taught us, the advancement of nuclear weapons has far overtaken the advancement of laws meant to govern them, leaving a vacuum that current rules remain too abstract to contain. This seems to be yet another fissure which suggests that the overwhelming destructive power of nuclear weaponry is simply too large to fit within the current constraints of international regulation. Kmentt says, "How can you look at a measure of proportionality with weapons this big? The way these weapons function are incompatible with international humanitarian law". Caughley also resonates with this, saying "I think we should get away from coupling the word nuclear with the word deterrence". As the sounds of the future ticks closer, tracing its trends in the present will be instrumental in understanding that conversation around nuclear weapons should strive not to mitigate it, but to abolish it.

### **Waiting For...What?/ Till The Milk and Honey Flows**

Do you wait for war to end to remove weapons? Or do you remove weapons to end war? While the consensus surrounding nuclear weapons is an abstract one, its effects are decidedly not. "They not only contribute to widespread destruction of life and humanity, but they also irreparably damage the planet that we call home...creating a widespread ecological catastrophe" says Secretary General of Religions for Peace International, Francis Kuria. "We are the only species on earth that pollutes its own living space...nuclear waste is no exception" says Rauf in agreement. The problem is, due to the hair-pin balance of international security

enforced by the previously explained doctrines of nuclear deterrence, Nuclear weapon states fear dissolving their arsenal would result in a shift in power, thus are unwilling to implement disarmament procedures unless the agreement is mutual. 'If you ask China why they have nuclear weapons they will point to others, if you ask the US, they will point to others' says Kmentt, highlighting the circular nature of the argument. Senior Lecturer from Universitas Gadjah Mada Muhadi Sugiono likens this to a 'bit of a chicken and egg situation'. However, attachment to weapons of mass destruction for these reasons depicts a misattribution of efforts, since, as Kuria highlights: 'genuine security is not about the power to destroy, and to dominate'.

This sentiment of present danger was one comprehensively explored within the Forum. Even outside of the talks themselves, a brief walk around the tightly-knit halls would bear an introduction to a panoply of experiences on the effects of atomic bombs in Japan as well as the rest of the world. Screenings of films such as 'Silent Fallout' portrayed a somber reflection of nuclear fallout, from radiation poisoning to other terrifying symptoms of not just atomic bombs, but even collateral from nuclear weapons testing. Documentaries on nuclear damage in Kazakhstan explored the effects of the latter in great detail, further elaborated by Professor Kawano Noriyuki, Director of the Hiroshima University Peace Center, JASA Founder and CEO Yerdaulet Rakhmatulla and Aigerim Seitenova, Co-Founder of the Qazaq Nuclear Frontline Coalition, as they covered the damages experienced by residents living near the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. A few doors down, UNITAR's *Virtual Reality Experience* in partnership with Park Tour VR brought viewers the opportunity to virtually tour the busy streets and eventual rubble of 1945 Hiroshima, witnessing the aftermath of the atomic bomb in first person. The damages of nuclear fallout are, unfortunately, not a hypothetical.

All these converging narratives compound on themselves to make the declaration that there is no time to wait for a perfect world: the effects of nuclear warfare have scarred our past and

continue to scar our present. Let them not scar our future. "We cannot wait till milk and honey flow," says Alexander Kmentt. "Given the existential threat of nuclear weapons...nuclear disarmament needs to take place in this world, not in a distant future. The challenge, and responsibility is to make progress in *this* security environment, given the existential nuclear threat". While a daunting task, there are few better times than the present to serve as a testament to its necessity. "The greatest strides in peace came in times of great tension such as this" says Daniel Hogsta, a note that spells hopeful forecasts for the discussions to take place at the upcoming Meeting of State Parties.

### The Role of Civil Society

The idea of a unified consensus is one that permeated the Forum in multiple ways. Much like non-nuclear states needing to be unanimous against nuclear weapons on a horizontal front, one other important step towards beating the clock on a nuclear sunset is the vertical front, with a more robust network of communication between civil society and government institutions. "Without the influence of civil society, it is difficult to get governments to review their position in the TPNW" says former UNRCPD director Kryvonos, responding to a question during UNITAR's public discussion session.

One potentially overlooked aspect of wielding weapons larger than life is that life tends to ignore it too, until it no longer can. Which is why, for a civil society not directly affected by nuclear fallout, it can very much feel sometimes like the problem is out of their paygrade, and even more so, not their responsibility. Why waste time on a hypothetical? "The problem is that in many countries, both nuclear weapon states and states that enjoy the positive security assurances provided by nuclear weapon states...ordinary people do not understand...how close the threat of

nuclear war is," continues Kryvonos. This aspect makes it much more difficult to impose regulations on the nuclear weapons market, since (outside of people directly connected to it) no one else is really asking for it - even the experts in some cases. "There has been an unshakeable taboo in South Korea. Very few scholars talk about nuclear weapons" says Vice Chair of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network (APLN) Moon Chung-In, regarding the severe lack of dialogue on nuclear disarmament within East Asia. This fact is also leveraged by the weapons industry: "companies that supply nuclear weapons lean heavily on the marketing of nuclear deterrence...they try to ignore the realities that the public wouldn't want to see," says Daniel Hogsta. Which is why this Forum focused a lot on questions of 'what can the public do?', strongly encouraging the principle of not being intimidated by discussions on nuclear weapons, and instead engage with them as much as possible. Tearing down this long-enjoyed invisibility on the conversation of nuclear weapons is thus a powerful way to draw attention and force a heavier hand against the nuclear weapons industry towards abolition, before the invisible becomes all you can see. After all, no one looks at the sky and asks why it's there, unless of course that sky were to come crashing down. However, in this case, nuclear weapons are not a cosmic truth. "It is not a god given thing - it is a political choice," says Kmentt. It is possible to change the advent of their destruction. It is possible for every person to play a part in locking them behind closed doors.

So what CAN the public do? Outside of simply keeping the topic alive in conversation, there are two things: One: ask for it! As Kmentt continues, "It's easy to feel like 'I don't understand'. But it's important to have agency. It is absolutely not naive to ask for change." Showing public displeasure, or even some sort of stake in the use of nuclear weapons, is paramount in forcing a government's hand. Question procedure. Critique flaws. Make it known that people care. And policymakers will be forced to listen. "I would like people to use [the power of citizens] to pose questions to policy makers and others. It is the job of lawmakers to answer them," says RECNA



Director Kawai, on a question regarding civil voices . Even if it feels like direct conversation is a daunting approach, it is not the only one. It is important to remember that no one is an island in standing for this. There are entire grassroots organizations - including Peace Boat - dedicated to lobbying for the abolition of nuclear weapons and providing alternative policies, so supporting them in any way makes a big difference. "We need to...activate the grassroots networks. To stigmatize the possession and threat of nuclear weapons," insisted Kuria. Aside from Peace Boat, other reputed organizations part of the Japan Network for Nuclear Weapons Abolition served as key organizers for this event, coordinating civil society engagement with government actors, and bringing the voices of the people to the rooms where decisions are made.

"We...need to study a wide range of security options, ones that do not rely on nuclear options, more so now than ever before to conclusively show that nuclear weapons are an absolute evil, and therefore must be abolished" says Hatakeyama Sumiko, Executive Committee Member of Peace Boat. This is why making voices heard is important, and if those voices are antagonistic towards nuclear weapons, policies regarding them will reflect it accordingly.

Which is what leads to Two: change the conversation. Public perception defines right and wrong in many ways, and planting nuclear weapons firmly in the latter would strongly discourage their use, if not outlaw them altogether both socially and legally. "We have to delegitimize nuclear weapons, make it harder to use them," says Hogsta on the matter. This makes shifting the narrative a viable strategy. Stigmatize the use of nuclear weapons. Paint them as taboo. Talk about them in the same breadth as war crimes, and they eventually become a part of that category. As time has repeatedly taught us about the unmitigated destruction of nuclear weaponry, it is paramount to, as Kuria says, remind the world that those in support of its use "are standing on the wrong side of history."

This is the impact of the will of many, against the power of a few. "The existence of nuclear

weapons is a contradiction to our common thread of humanity," continues Kuria. Thus if the majority of humanity stands in solidarity against nuclear threat, then it is clear which side comes out on top. Which is why it is so important that action is mobilized immediately, to wrench back those precious seconds on the Doomsday Clock. "Please make your decision to choose the right [kind of] government. It is important for civil society to not only engage with policy, but actively participate in building their country...It is not easy, but it pays," pleads Sugiono towards the end of his lecture. As mentioned throughout this article, much can be accomplished with a united front, both horizontally and vertically. "Civil society, political society and parliament," Moon muses. "That way we can turn imagination into creation."

## Victim Assistance and Global Hibakusha

One of the most important takeaways of the Forum was around the need to expand the conversation. The disastrous consequences of atomic weapons are a story most commonly associated with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but they are certainly not the only stories. The word Hibakusha means 'atomic bomb survivor', and while the term is Japanese in origin, its significance is not exclusive to Japan. This is the entry into conversation on the Global Hibakusha, shedding light on the network of victims of nuclear fallout, many of whose stories have yet to be heard. Many talks in this Forum, along with its auxiliary content, aimed to address this issue, asking: how can we bring these stories of nuclear victims to the limelight? Furthermore, how can we assist them?

A discussion that prominently focused on this was the aptly titled 'Global Hibakusha and Victim Assistance: Learning Nuclear Legacies in the Pacific', spearheaded by Senator of the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) David Anitok and Parliament Member of Maohi Nui (French Polynesia) Hinamoeura Cross. This talk delves into experiences of Global Hibakusha, drawing

from their own experiences of Pacific nuclear weapons testing collateral to discuss how to provide assistance to those affected. It further explored the obligations of States Parties under Articles 6 and 7 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to provide assistance to affected communities. Together Cross and Anitok shared voices on the lasting, hidden nuclear legacies prevailing in the Pacific, and ways to support those impacted.

The Pacific sports a perilous and asymmetric history with nuclear weapons. Tinian in the North Mariana Islands was the venue from which the US planes carrying Little Boy and Fat Man were deployed. Stretching further towards the present, US nuclear testing in the Pacific continued with few signs of slowing down, expanding to not just atomic weapons but missiles too, from which nuclear waste is released. This practice has been commonplace enough for this stretch of ocean and habitation to have garnered its colloquial title of the 'nuclear playground'. When zooming out to collect the big picture, it is easy to sometimes overlook the fact that this playground also plays home to living breathing people, and their strongly held roots. People whose resilience through years of atomic testing is as admirable as it is heartbreaking. Cross herself is a survivor of leukemia, a disease which is the direct consequence of nuclear fallout from weapons testing, in her case, by France. 'I felt as though I had poison in my blood', she says. Her opening note is woven with personal strife, as she shares testimonies of both of her own and her community, all touched by various grievances. "All the women in these three photos developed illnesses. Thyroid disorders, thyroid cancer...and also breast cancer," Hinamoeura exclaims, pointing out that these illnesses, and the subsequent discrimination and shame that pair with living a tainted life, are not simply facts to be waved away. They are documented ailments, and sit on the mantles of many families in the Pacific. Yet in the eyes of larger policy decisions, the lives of the people on these islands, especially Indigenous people, in fact seem to be treated as an afterthought. Hinamoeura recalls a statement from a resident of Tureia, an island off the coast of Muroroa, saying: "Do our lives count for less than those of

France, that France has decided to use these experiments 100 kilometers from my island?” Anitok in turn contributes to the depiction of this infringement, visualizing the rampant destruction facilitated by nuclear test programs through its effects on infrastructure and history. “Loss of ancestral lands...as caused by the nuclear test program...two entire islands lost.” He expands on this by highlighting the need for many locals that call the Ailuk Atoll home, needing to evacuate as a result of the prevailing hazardous conditions.

In terms of clarifying the problems to solve, Anitok and Cross touched on a few distinct areas. The first was the issue of raising awareness, and advocating for recognition via education. There has been a severe lack in education on nuclear history, where only the positive aspects of nuclear testing on Tahiti’s development was implemented by French colonizer curricula. “Back then] we were taught that nuclear bombs gave us cars, roads, streets,” says Hinamoeura. She maintained that it is important to implement a more holistic approach, one that tells both sides of the story. It is important that people be required to learn about what happened to their country, and how it happened. Thankfully this change is in place. As Anitok assures, the National Nuclear Commission of the Marshall Islands is working closely with the Department of Education to assure that curricula implement a non-skewed narrative on the whole picture of nuclear bombs and their mark on the Pacific. However, as Hinamoeura points out, sensitivity is also required in how to educate. To make people aware of the consequences and destructive nature of nuclear history, without fostering any anger or hate that dulls the significance of those consequences. “We carry the scars of these bombs, but we also carry the hope for a future where such tragedies will never happen again,” says Hinamoeura, stressing the importance of branding nuclear weapons themselves as an evil, rather than something used as a response to evil.

Next was the urgent need for established local healthcare in French Polynesia. Current healthcare infrastructure does not have the necessary resources and expensive machinery to treat complex problems, especially those related to radiation or other nuclear-related sicknesses. Therefore, without options, patients are required to make the long journey to France for treatments, where resources like transport, translation, and lodging (in case of long term treatment) prove very difficult, and most importantly far too expensive, to consistently organize.

On top of a more robust local healthcare system is the more human-centric approach, reminding civilians of their agency and right to demand fair compensation for the damages caused by nuclear activity. As Anitok brings up, a large factor in these issues being swept under the rug are the nuclear weapon states' reluctance to address the consequences of nuclear testing. Thus, advocating for a framework of accountability is paramount in bridging the gap between the healthcare needs of the people, and the responsibility of their neighbours to provide compensation for it. This is something that, upon analysis of fund allocation, is very doable, says Hinamoeura, who points out that France expended 5.6 billion Euros renewing its nuclear arsenal, a number among many other examples of extravagant expenditure by nuclear weapon states. If even a tenth of this was put into compensating for victims of nuclear fallout, it would go an incredibly long way. Going a step further and redirecting all nuclear funding into social welfare altogether, could rewrite an uncountable number of changes for the future.

While the discussed solutions were done so with the well-being of the Pacific Islands in mind, its case study can serve as a microcosm of all the things requiring fixing on a global scale as well: Awareness, education, accountability and recognition. In many ways it may even help more.

"It's not in my country that I think I will make change. Make friends. I think it's more on the international scene," says Hinamoeura. "Denounce what they don't do. It's the way to make

pressure”. Shedding this previously discussed invisibility to bring the threat of nuclear weapons as not a distant concern, but a terribly present, deeply permeating wound that requires the immediate attention of both civil society and policymakers alike to heal.

As time shows us, the seconds spent by one to press a button on a nuclear warhead, can be a generation’s worth of pain and sickness to someone else. Hence the urgency in not wasting a single second now in removing these problems. “Our fight is not just about the past,” says Hinamoeura. “It is about shaping a safer future for our children, and generations to come.”

### Continuing the Story

As covered in the introduction, the theme of the 2025 International Civil Society Forum to Abolish Nuclear Weapons was: ‘From Japan to the World’. This carries with it the connotation of transition. The spreading of a story, amplifying one that started in Japan, to continue on everywhere else, as one chapter flips to the next. There is a very potent importance in the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Nihon Hidankyo -an organization of atomic bomb survivors- criticizing nuclear weapons in a country that has not yet signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This dissonance is not without tension, and was inlaid well into this year’s Forum, the opening note of which was given by Nihon Hidankyo themselves, who strongly addressed this critique. “I feel frustrated that my country has not signed the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons yet, but we must work hard from now on,” says Tanaka Terumi. This is significant because garnering the Nobel Prize secured a platform for Nihon Hidankyo to broaden their sentiments. An amplifier to the rest of the world to hear their concerns and wishes, where they may unearth narratives on nuclear damages from not just Japan but the Global Hibakusha, and the survival stories less spoken about. However, time

does not wait for anyone. As Tanaka continues, "I have continued to appeal that nuclear weapons should never be used, and that they must be eliminated from the face of the earth as soon as possible. But as I'm getting older, I can no longer continue doing that forever". As time moves forward, the day will come where survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be no more, and that day looms swiftly closer. "First generation Hibakusha who sustained the attacks continue to dwindle" comments Daryl Kimball, in regards to spokespeople for change. This was the inspiration for the 'No More Hibakusha' exhibitions stationed all around the Forum, which allowed attendees to walk through a visual chronicle of the work done by Nihon Hidankyo and the lives of atomic bomb survivors, all the while asking the question: What's next? What have the Hibakusha taught us that we may carry into the future?

While many of the answers to this were diffused in generous quantities through the colourful events, discussions and themes of the Forum, perhaps its most direct answer came in the form of the Hibakusha Dialogue sessions. Here, attendees, students, staff and previously mentioned guest speakers alike would settle into an enraptured audience, listening to the experiences, perspectives and advice of Nihon Hidankyo members, in a small room lined with paintings inspired by firsthand accounts of the 1945 atomic bombings. The sessions brought with them a tone that was deeply personal, akin to sitting around a campfire with humble ears at the feet of elders, as they regale their listeners with stories that are sure to be passed on. From one generation to the next. Similarly, these sessions brimmed with a reassuring warmth despite the heavy topics, as, surrounded by memories of a haunted past, the Hibakusha looked brightly to the future in the eyes of their listeners as they poured themselves out. When asked about concerns on who will carry on the Hibakusha's message, Assistant Secretary General of Nihon Hidankyo Wada Masako reassured that she was not worried. "I feel like all these people here are my grandchildren. And like my mother would tell me accounts, they will carry on these stories." Human life is mortal, but the longevity of narrative, with its many warnings, far

surpasses that, living forever in the words and hearts of many, many more, as long as it continues to be told. It allows for yesterday's mistakes to never be repeated.

One such audience member who took this to heart was Ukrainian Eryna Derhachova, whose own accounts of war lay far closer to the present than many others in the room. Her conversation with Wada left behind a sincere message of hope that no matter how helpless one may feel, or how far away a peaceful future may seem, it is always enough to do what you can, even if it is as simple as re-telling a story. "Back home, people are focused on winning the war at all costs. On fighting back," Derhachova laments. She continues that this is understandable, because people are hurting, they cannot go on with their daily lives, many have lost people. However she doesn't know what to do to calm that anger. Since that anger will only continue spurring a cycle of violence later. However, gaining this perspective is in itself a small victory. "Hearing other people's stories helped open my eyes a little," Derhachova says. "I feel so helpless when I think of what to do to help. But even hearing things like doing what you can is very inspiring." You do what you can. Even if it is just sitting down and listening. This lays the foundation for citizens to reclaim agency in the face of monolithic topics, as even doing something as simple as engaging in conversation helps keep the narrative alive.

Many other events throughout the Forum resonated with the idea of keeping memories alive through engagement, many taking place through art. Kamishibai (picture-story show) performances and ventriloquist acts brought a tactile sense of nostalgia to their stories, paying tribute to the artforms. Continuing on, various exhibitions such as *Pictures of the Atomic Bomb*, the face-shifting *Portraits of Hibakusha: 80 Years of Memories*, Kinoko Kai's photo exhibit on preserving real belongings and testimonies from 80 years ago, and ' "Peaceful Towns": Pictures by Children' presented a kaleidoscope of painted, photographed and other visual representations of the past and future surrounding atomic bombings. Furthermore, youth-led



organizations facilitated roundtable discussions, inviting many students and other young people into conversations with Hibakusha, participating in activities like origami and paper-crane making, a practice with historical significance to the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Musically, the '*Voices Singing to Abolish Nuclear Weapons*' session brought together willing volunteers to practice and perform choral arrangements of songs about Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which eventually became a highlight of the Forum's closing ceremony.

Through all this, audiences were able to guide themselves at their own pace into what it means to be a part of the conversation on abolishing nuclear weapons, understanding their role, their power, and above all the need to spread that role to as many people as they can, in whatever form most resonates. This is what the minute hand teaches us. In that, big or small, boardrooms or ballots, there will always be something useful to fill in the precious seconds we have left to lobby for a safer future. As long as the past stays alive, its darkest moments won't have a chance to be represented in a hopefully brighter future. To echo Wada's hopeful words: "In 10 years, who knows. I may not be here. But [my grandchildren] will be."