

TAKING PRACTICAL STEPS FOR ACHIEVING A WORLD WITHOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS

In early April of 2023, the second meeting of the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP) was held in Tokyo. Amid increasingly severe circumstances for advancing nuclear disarmament, the IGEP aims to facilitate open and candid discussions concerning a concrete path toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons among experts from both nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states, which go beyond their respective countries' positions.

As the global security environment becomes increasingly severe—with the threat of the use of nuclear weapons increasing and the division of the international community deepening further—we are facing the harsh reality of nuclear disarmament. Yet, we must take the path toward a world without nuclear weapons, however difficult it may be. This is the very reason why the Government of Japan established the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP). The IGEP serves as an opportunity for participants from nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon states to exchange ideas and thoughts beyond their respective

national positions and engage in candid discussions concerning a concrete path toward the realization of a world without nuclear weapons. At the first meeting, held in Hiroshima in December 2022, the IGEP members analyzed the current international situation and security environment surrounding nuclear disarmament, while also having candid discussions regarding challenges in promoting nuclear disarmament and priorities on the nuclear disarmament front.

From April 4 to 5, the second meeting of the IGEP was held in Tokyo. At this meeting, frank and in-depth discussions were held on the importance of maintaining



Prime Minister Kishida (second from the right) receives a courtesy call by the International Group of Eminent Persons for a World without Nuclear Weapons (IGEP) on the occasion of the second meeting held in Tokyo in April. As a Prime Minister from Hiroshima, he has been making realistic and practical efforts to foster the momentum of the international community for nuclear disarmament. He attended the 10th NPT Review Conference in August 2022 as the first Japanese Prime Minister to do so.

and strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in light of the current, extremely severe security environment and the situation surrounding the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), with a view to making a positive contribution to the next NPT review process, which will start with the first Preparatory Committee for the 11th NPT Review Conference scheduled at the end of July this year. “The discussion was extremely lively and substantial. We would like to propose as many specific measures as possible,” said SHIRAIISHI Takashi, Chancellor of the Prefectural University of Kumamoto, after the meeting, which he chaired.

The members agreed that it would be meaningful to compile a specific message to provide input to the first Preparatory Committee. Then, on April 21, they released the “IGEP Message,” urging states to prioritize efforts along with the following pillars in the next NPT review cycle: (1) reinforcing and expanding norms, including the commitment to not using or threatening to use nuclear weapons, (2) taking concrete measures, including engagement in dialogue on establishing new arms control arrangements, and (3) revitalizing/strengthening the NPT review process.

During a courtesy call by the IGEP members on the occasion of the second IGEP meeting, Prime Minister Kishida expressed his view that it is important to steadily promote realistic and practical efforts, including those related to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT).



A monument of flowers to welcome the G7 Hiroshima Summit was installed in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, which has facilities and monuments that explain the history of the atomic bombing of 1945. In its message released on April 21, the IGEP urged states to increase awareness of the horrendous consequences of nuclear weapon use, drawing upon the experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ATSUSHI MURAKAWA/AFLO



Group photo from the first meeting of the IGEP, held in Hiroshima in December 2022. The experts—from both nuclear-weapon states such as the United States, Russia, India, and China, and non-nuclear-weapon states such as Argentina and New Zealand—attentively listened to a testimony given by Ms. YAHATA Teruko, who suffered the atomic bombing in Hiroshima at the age of eight. The members also offered flowers to the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims and made a visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. THE MAINICHI NEWSPAPERS/AFLO

He also expressed his intention to make progress in accordance with the “Hiroshima Action Plan,” which he proposed at the 10th NPT Review Conference last August as the first step of a realistic road map for a world without nuclear weapons, as well as other initiatives.

Circumstances for advancing nuclear disarmament are becoming increasingly severe. As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan has the responsibility to take the lead in the efforts by the international community to realize a world without nuclear weapons. At the “Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation” session of the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in April in Karuizawa, Nagano Prefecture, the G7 reaffirmed its commitment to the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons, and Japan’s “Hiroshima Action Plan” was received as a welcome contribution by the G7 members. At the G7 Hiroshima Summit in May, Japan, together with the world’s leaders, will send a strong message from Hiroshima—which, along with Nagasaki, was devastated by the atomic bomb—that the scourge of nuclear weapons must never be allowed to happen again, and will continue to take steps forward to realize a world without nuclear weapons.