I am honoured to send a message to all of the A- and H-bomb survivors gathered at this meeting of the Nihon Hidankyo. The 70th anniversary of those terrible events should be more than an occasion to commemorate a milestone on the calendar; it should be a moment to rally the world to action.

The global advocacy against nuclear weapons has been dramatically advanced thanks to the principled voices of you, the hibakusha, who experienced the devastating effects first-hand and have courageously and steadfastly galvanized international efforts to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The United Nations stands with you in this cause. Since its establishment 70 years ago just after the end of the Second World War, the United Nations has been seeking to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. The United Nations General Assembly’s first resolution, adopted in January 1946, referred to the goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons and other weapons “adaptable to mass destruction”.

Until we realize this goal, I will continue to use every opportunity to raise global awareness about the dangers of nuclear weapons and demand an urgent international response.

Civil society plays a vital role in prompting the public conscience to advance disarmament. Its involvement has been instrumental in efforts to end atmospheric nuclear weapons testing, to ban anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, and to regulate the global arms trade through the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty.

No one has more authority than the hibakusha to denounce the indiscriminate nature of nuclear weapons. You have inspired countless others. I am especially grateful for your efforts to reach young people who will carry the torch in the future.

As we commemorate the 70th anniversary of these tragic events, there is no more meaningful way to honour the hibakusha than to renew our unwavering resolve to realize a world free of nuclear weapons.