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**Column 1****How to Lead Nuclear Disarmament: From the G7 Hiroshima Summit**

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**Angela Kane**

The G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament of May 2023 was a welcome positive focus on nuclear disarmament. Prime Minister Kishida took a bold step in bringing the leaders to one of the two only places in the world that suffered an atomic attack. He was clearly sending a strong message about the fateful consequences of raging geopolitical conflict.

The Vision was the first-ever stand-alone joint statement on this issue and reaffirmed the commitment to achieving a world without nuclear weapons. While adopted by the G7 Leaders, it should be noted that eight additional countries were invited to the Summit as well as representatives of seven international organizations. This diverse group of guests enhanced the meeting by offering opportunities for a discussion platform among nuclear-weapon possessors and non-nuclear weapon states. The absence of China and Russia, however, meant that

the liberal G7 democracies, dominated by the United States, are not reflecting the changed geopolitical realities of this world.

The four-page Vision statement recalled the November 2022 Bali declaration<sup>1</sup> of the G20 leaders - including Russia – that “the use of threat of nuclear weapons is inadmissible” and also reminded of the January 2022 Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races<sup>2</sup> which affirmed that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”

These two statements preceding the G7 meeting were important, but the Hiroshima Vision, according to G7 host Prime Minister Kishida made the Summit a meeting of “historical significance.”<sup>3</sup> Yet while reaffirming the commitment to achieving a world without nuclear weapons, this came with some qualifications. The commitment was conditioned with the words “with undiminished security for all, achieved through a realistic, pragmatic and responsible approach.” The Vision further observed that “our security policies are based on the understanding that nuclear weapons, for as long as the exist, should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression

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<sup>1</sup> “G20 Bali Leaders’ Declaration,” Bali, Indonesia, November 16, 2022, [https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/4171/siaran\\_pers/g20-bali-leaders-declaration-bali-indonesia-15-16-november-2022](https://kemlu.go.id/portal/en/read/4171/siaran_pers/g20-bali-leaders-declaration-bali-indonesia-15-16-november-2022).

<sup>2</sup> “Joint Statement of the Leaders of the Five Nuclear-Weapon States on Preventing Nuclear War and Avoiding Arms Races,” January 3, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/01/03/p5-statement-on-preventing-nuclear-war-and-avoiding-arms-races/>.

<sup>3</sup> “Historical Significance of the G7 Hiroshima Summit,” July 14, 2023, [https://www.japan.go.jp/kizuna/2023/07/historical\\_significance\\_of\\_g7.html](https://www.japan.go.jp/kizuna/2023/07/historical_significance_of_g7.html).

and prevent war and coercion.”

What then are the concrete measures that the Vision outlines? Let me list them:

- Enhance transparency with regard to nuclear weapons;
- Engage with non-nuclear-weapon States in a meaningful dialogue on transparency and limiting nuclear competition;
- Pre-notify of relevant strategic activities to reduce risk;
- Call on Russia and China to engage substantively in multilateral and bilateral fora in line with their NPT obligations, including Article VI;
- Immediate commencement of negotiations of a treaty banning the production of fissile material; and
- Bring the CTBT into force.

In addition to these concrete steps, the Vision affirmed the G7’s unwavering commitment to the goal of North Korea’s complete, verifiable, and irreversible abandonment of its nuclear weapons and urged Iran to cease nuclear escalations.

The steps proposed were tangible but not new; these were issues that have been under discussion for many years in international fora without making much progress. Still, it was an unprecedented

public stance for the three G7 nuclear-weapon possessors (France, United Kingdom and United States). Since then, six months have passed, and it is difficult to see any progress in the proposed actions.

When the United States Assistant Secretary, Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, spoke<sup>4</sup> in December about the Hiroshima Vision, his remarks focused nearly exclusively on the threat Russia poses to peace and security and its reckless actions regarding Ukraine’s nuclear facilities. No mention of any steps taken by the United States to implement the measures outlined in the Vision. In fact, the Federation of American Scientists pointed out that the US, while advocating nuclear transparency abroad, stopped disclosure of warhead stockpile and dismantlement numbers. The article was accompanied by a table showing the trend for all nuclear possessors, which for the United States, Russia, China and the United Kingdom was “decreasing.”<sup>5</sup>

The United Kingdom, according to a Joint Statement<sup>6</sup> with Japan of November 7, 2023, was equally non-committal as to implementing concrete actions that would enhance disarmament. The Statement

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<sup>4</sup> Assistant Secretary Eliot Kang’s Keynote Remarks at the Integrated Support Center for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Security International Forum, Tokyo, Japan, 14 December 2023, <https://www.state.gov/assistant-secretary-eliot-kangs-keynote-remarks-at-the-integrated-support-center-for-nuclear-nonproliferation-and-nuclear-security-international-forum/>.

<sup>5</sup> “While Advocating Nuclear Transparency Abroad, Biden Administration Limits It at Home”, Federation of American Scientists, July 31, 2023, <https://fas.org/publication/while-advocating-nuclear-transparency-abroad-biden-administration-limits-it-at-home/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Japan-UK Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting 2023 – Joint Statement,” November 7, 2023, <https://mofa.go.jp/files/100577337.pdf>.

says:

Reaffirming the Vision set out in the Hiroshima Accord, the four Ministers focused on expansion and deepening efforts towards interoperable, resilient and cross-domain defence and security cooperation. This will be realized through more frequent and complex joint exercises and operational cooperation, driving cutting-edge defence equipment and technology cooperation.

It is difficult to find published material on the Hiroshima Vision other than the statement itself; is it because no country wants to admit to the weakness or lack of implementation of the proposals? Civil society organizations, like World Beyond War and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons were dismissive and called the Vision “a gross failure of global leadership.”<sup>7</sup> Clearly, nuclear abolitionists were disappointed and while this may also have been true for the States Parties and supporters of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), they remained apparently silent.

No city has more nuclear symbolism than Hiroshima, but the Summit showed that normative ambitions cannot supersede security interests and geopolitical *realpolitik*. Only when the security interests of major powers are safeguarded, is it possible to take steps to disarm. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Putin’s veiled threats

to use nuclear weapons, together with China’s increase in the nuclear weapons arsenal, have made unilateral disarmament steps highly unlikely. Calling on China and Russia – who were not at the table – to engage substantively in multilateral and bilateral fora in line with their NPT obligations including Article VI, is disingenuous, considering that the P-3 have also shortcomings in this regard, as substantial commitments made at NPT Review Conferences (RevCon) have not been implemented.

For the hibakusha (and many others), the omission of any reference to the humanitarian impact of nuclear bombings must have been devastating. The humanitarian initiative has been a powerful rallying force for those opposing nuclear weapons and led to the negotiation of the TPNW in 2017 (it entered into force in 2021 and currently has 69 states parties and 93 signatories). The TPNW was clearly an expression of frustration, primarily by the Global South, with what they see as the stagnant pace of disarmament efforts overall.

Acknowledging the validity and power of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons would have strengthened the Hiroshima Vision, as would have an agreement to attend the TPNW Meetings of States Parties as observers.<sup>8</sup>

Still, the Hiroshima Vision’s action points,

<sup>7</sup> “G7 Leaders Falter Over Nuclear Disarmament in Hiroshima,” *IDN-InDepthNews*, May 22, 2023, <https://indepthnews.net/g7-leaders-falter-over-nuclear-disarmament-in-hiroshima/>.

<sup>8</sup> In 2022, 34 non-member States observed the first TPNW Meeting of the States Parties, including States under the nuclear umbrella. In 2023, 35 did. Of the G7, only Germany attended as an observer; Japan did not take part, but the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as atomic bomb survivors were in attendance.

particularly on transparency, meaningful dialogue with non-nuclear-weapon States, and pre-notification of strategic activities should be taken up. The G7 should report on the status of implementation and what they intend as the way forward. The Vision should not suffer the fate of the 2010 NPT RevCon outcome and the consensus agreement on the 64-point Action Plan which was adopted without a timeline and remained unimplemented in the disarmament section. It was later dismissed by the nuclear possessors as outdated and unrealistic in view of the changed security situation.

Three important meetings are on the multilateral agenda in 2024. The 50th anniversary of the G7 Summit will take place in Italy in June. It will be followed by the G20 Summit in Brazil in December. The United Nations' Summit for the Future will take place in September 2024. These high-level gatherings – preceded by working-level discussions and negotiations – offer crucial opportunities for making progress on the international agenda. It is my hope that the Hiroshima Vision will be given priority and visibility, and that the stated commitment by the G7 will be followed by concrete implementation. The hibakushas, the peoples of this world who want to see nuclear weapons abolished, deserve no less.

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## Column 2

### How to Advance Nuclear Disarmament from the G7 Hiroshima Summit

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#### Nobushige Takamizawa

The G7 Summit in 2023, hosted by Japan, took place in Hiroshima, the first city to suffer atomic bombing. Many participants, including leaders from G7 and invited countries, and representatives of seven international organizations, offered prayers at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, visited the Peace Memorial Museum, listened to survivors' stories, and deepened their understanding of the realities of the atomic bombing. Awareness of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has continued to grow not only domestically, but also internationally, leading to an increase in visitors to these museums. The significance of the visits facilitated by the summit is widely appreciated.

The “G7 Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament” is seen as the first joint document by the G7 leaders with a specific focus on nuclear disarmament. Its content is diverse and includes comprehensive measures to be implemented, covering not only nuclear disarmament but also nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. It incorporates all five pillars of the “Hiroshima Action Plan” proposed by Prime Minister Kishida during the 10th NPT Review Conference