

Wall Street Journal Asia (online)

[Opinion Asia](#)

Japan's Commitment to a Nuclear-Free World

Saturday's talks at Hiroshima will work toward a multilateral approach to nuclear disarmament.

By Fumio Kishida

April 9, 2014 12:28 p.m. ET



Japan's Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida speaking on March 28, 2014. *yoshikazu tsuno/Agence France-Presse/Getty Images*

Five years have passed since U.S. President [Barack Obama](#) first called for a "nuclear free world" in Prague. This newspaper has since run a series of articles by the "four wise men" of U.S. foreign policy—George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn —stating the need to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. As both the foreign minister to Japan and a native of Hiroshima, I wholeheartedly support that call. I consider nuclear disarmament an integral part of my work.

Tomorrow, I will welcome to Hiroshima foreign ministers of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPTDI). This is a group of 12 non-nuclear-weapon states, which Japan and Australia took the lead to establish in 2010 to lead international efforts in nuclear disarmament. The timing and location of this weekend's meeting is significant. Next year will mark the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In a few weeks, government officials of 190 countries will gather in New York for the final preparatory meeting for the 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which meets once every five years.

The Cold War showed us how mutual distrust and a lack of transparency can result in a destabilizing arms race and a global stockpile of nuclear weapons. At the peak of the Cold War, there were some 70,000 nuclear weapons in the world. However, increased cooperation, transparency, rule of law and other cornerstones of 21st century diplomacy led global stockpiles to fall to around 17,000. While this is a significant decrease, our progress must not stop there.

Japan, as a proactive contributor to peace and a staunch believer in rules-based international cooperation, is pushing firmly along with the international community into areas such as securing freedom of the seas and flight in international airspace, humanitarian relief, disaster relief, as well as nuclear disarmament. In this weekend's NPDI meeting, Japan will place emphasis on a number of practical short- to mid-term measures with a view to achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. These include comprehensive reductions of all types of nuclear weapons, including non-strategic and non-deployed nuclear weapons, rather than only deployed strategic nuclear weapons, which have been dealt with thus far.

We are also seeking greater transparency around nuclear capabilities. This would make nuclear-weapon states more confident in reducing their own nuclear arsenals. The NPDI already provided these states a report form that details each state's efforts to fulfill its disarmament commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Adopting a multilateral approach to nuclear disarmament is important. Issues such as trade, financial regulations and public health are increasingly being addressed using multilateral frameworks. However, the global framework for tackling nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament is, in many respects, mired in a Cold War mindset. Until recently, these efforts had primarily been orchestrated at a bilateral level between Russia and the U.S. For effective progress to be made on this issue, the process of nuclear disarmament needs to eventually be made multilaterally, involving all states holding nuclear weapons.

Declaring a "freeze" on nuclear arsenal is another priority. Pending the commencement and conclusion of such multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, states possessing nuclear weapons not yet engaged in nuclear disarmament efforts but in nuclear build-up must make a political commitment to freeze their nuclear forces at the present levels and start reducing their arsenals.

North Korean nuclear and ballistic missile programs are intolerable. In this context, recent ballistic missile launches by [North Korea](#), which are clear violations of U.N. Security Council resolutions should be condemned. The international community must send a clear message to North Korea to cease these provocative actions. In addition, Japan has been tackling the Iranian nuclear issue in the pursuit for a comprehensive and final resolution of the issue. The international community must continue this endeavor for all the related concerns to be removed.

It is also crucial to strengthen export control of materials and technologies related to nuclear weapons by establishing a region-wide network. Japan will continue to make efforts to improve the capacity of Asian countries in this field and will further enhance coordination and cooperation with them.

The prevention of nuclear terrorism, the central topic of discussion at the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague last month, is another major issue. Japan has many years of experience with the peaceful use of nuclear energy. We will continue to use our highly-advanced technology and accumulated experience to support other countries as they build up their capacities in the field of nuclear security. Also, Japan will continue to share the lessons learned from the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, which are useful not only for nuclear safety but also for security in the context of counter-terrorism.

These efforts toward nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, which are based on the principles of mutual trust, increased transparency and rule of law, will lead to a global framework more suited to the 21st century.

As a foreign minister of Japan, I will work passionately to ensure that positive progress is sustained toward achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Kishida is foreign minister of Japan.

It was published in Wall Street Journal Asia.