

# Japan signs joint nuclear weapons statement but contradictions remain with security policy

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Japan will soon be party to a renewed joint statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, but contradictions remain between the statement's goal of a world without nuclear weapons and Japan's dependence on U.S. nuclear deterrence.

Japan's decision to sign the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons comes on the heels of domestic and international criticism toward Japan's continued refusal to sign it, despite it being the only country in the world to have experienced nuclear bombings.

Revisions made to the joint statement at Japan's proposal attempts to strike a balance between the zero nuclear weapons goal and Japan's security policy, and some party nations have hailed the decision by Japan — which lies under the American nuclear umbrella — to sign the statement as significant.

At a press conference on Oct. 18, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida expressed gratitude toward the statement's sponsor, New Zealand, for accepting Japan's proposal to change the wording of the statement, saying, « Thanks to the leadership of New Zealand, the content of the statement can be supported from Japan's standpoint. »

A pledge to support « all approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament » was included in the statement at Japan's behest. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which went into effect in 1970, recognizes just five states, including the U.S., Russia and China as nuclear-weapon states, and prohibits the proliferation of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear states. According to a senior Foreign Ministry official, the Japanese government has interpreted the final version of the joint statement as endorsing the NPT framework — which aims for nuclear disarmament through the prevention of nuclear proliferation — and therefore does not impair U.S. nuclear deterrence.

It will be the fourth time that such a joint statement is released from the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. As with the third iteration of the statement, an explicit push to outlaw nuclear weapons has been eliminated in the latest version, which became another contributing factor in Japan's decision to sign it. However, the phrase, « It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances, » which had prevented Japan from becoming party to the statement before, has been included.

The abovementioned Foreign Ministry official pointed out that urging the latter phrase to be eliminated from the statement could have raised misgivings from other countries, while a senior Defense Ministry official said that since the joint statement advocates against the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons, it does not come in conflict with nuclear deterrence.

The government hurried to sign the statement because a Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) foreign ministers' meeting is set to take place in Hiroshima in April 2014.

According to a ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) legislator, concerns were raised that participating in the meeting as the only country to experience nuclear bombings without signing the statement would damage Japan's reputation.

The government's signing of the joint statement, however, does not necessarily mean it has progressed toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. According to the Japanese government's interpretation, the principle of zero nuclear weapons as advocated by the joint statement coexists with the principle of nuclear disarmament as promoted by the NPT framework.

Considering the growing tensions in East Asia, the government has no intention to change its security policy that depends on the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Japan consulted with the U.S. government prior to its decision to sign the statement, since it was « an issue that pertained to the very foundation of the bilateral alliance, » according to a Foreign Ministry insider.

At a lower house plenary session on Oct. 18, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe stressed Japan's commitment to the Japan-U.S. alliance, saying, « We will enhance our defense capabilities, and reinforce our cooperation with the U.S. »

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<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131022p2a00m0na015000c.html>

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## **Japan to sign latest U.N. statement on nuclear weapons abolition**

NEW YORK — A renewed statement from the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly calling for an end to the use of nuclear weapons, which Japan is expected to sign, will include phrases from a previous statement that Japan had objected to on the grounds that it could hinder U.S. nuclear deterrence, a final draft obtained by the Mainichi has shown.

The final draft states, « It is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances. » It also mentions « all approaches and efforts towards nuclear disarmament » — a phrase not included in an earlier statement that Japan had refrained from signing.

The wording of the statement accommodates many countries including Japan, which aims to gradually eliminate nuclear weapons while relying on U.S. nuclear deterrence. It is believed that Japan reversed its policy and decided to sign the statement as changes including alterations to the section mentioning efforts toward nuclear disarmament mean the document does not totally deny nuclear deterrence.

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<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131018p2a00m0na016000c.html>

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