Interview with H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations, New York

An interview was conducted with H.E. Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, who came to Hiroshima to attend an international conference which ended on 30 March. Mr. Brahimi spoke about the difficulties involved with the equitable distribution of political power within the transitional regime in Iraq.

Ami Kanou - How do you see the current situation with regard to the formation of a cabinet within the Iraqi transitional regime?

Lakhdar Brahimi – After the establishment of the interim government at the end of 2003, I instigated preparations for elections to a new national assembly which took place this January. However, I am not involved with the reshuffling of the cabinet in the Iraqi transitional regime today.

Ami Kanou – Incorporating the Iraqi Sunni community into the new political process is a key component in the formation of a new cabinet, isn’t it?

Lakhdar Brahimi – Yes, that’s right.

Ami Kanou – How do you intend to get them involved?

Lakhdar Brahimi – There is common understanding within both the Shiite and Kurdish communities of the need to include Sunnis in both the new Iraqi government and the commission charged with drafting the new constitution.
Ami Kanou – Is it true that developments like the resignation of Mr. Yawar as Speaker of the House are causing negotiations over the formation of a new cabinet to become bogged down?

Lakhdar Brahimi – I haven’t received any new information recently, but it seems that there have been difficulties relating to the number of seats allocated to Sunnis and Shiites in the new cabinet.

Ami Kanou – What do you believe to be the key to solving the political instability?

Lakhdar Brahimi – It is difficult for me to say anything definitive now, so soon after the election. At present there are a large number of factions, political parties and ethnic groups within the Iraqi political spectrum. Satisfying all of these groups through an equitable distribution of political power represents an extremely difficult task. And it is the first time that this task has been attempted in Iraq.

Ami Kanou – In May of this year the provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will be reviewed at a major international conference held at the UN’s headquarters in New York. What is your opinion of the current developments relating to international nuclear disarmament?

Lakhdar Brahimi – While some countries continue to hold on to their nuclear weapons I imagine that it will be very difficult to generate consensus over the issue of preventing other countries from acquiring them; this situation will surely cause disagreements. In my opinion, the causes of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament should be pursued simultaneously.

Ami Kanou – What is your opinion of the drive to have Japan admitted as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council?

Lakhdar Brahimi – I think that everyone can appreciate Japan’s motivation for wishing to become a permanent member of the Security Council. However, as it is not the prerogative of UN staff to make a decision on this issue, I cannot comment on this.