

Nagasaki Peace Declaration 2022

The first time that the World Conference against A and H Bombs, which aims for the abolition of nuclear weapons, was held here in Nagasaki, was the year 1956, eleven years after the atomic bomb that caused the death and injury of 150,000 people was dropped on the city.

Once WATANABE Chieko, one of the hibakusha, entered the venue, there was an instant shower of camera flashes.

This was because Ms. Watanabe was being carried in the arms of her mother when she arrived. She was exposed to the atomic bombing at a factory where she had been working as a 16-year-old mobilized student and became paralyzed from the waist down after being crushed under collapsed metal beams. Upon her arrival, voices from those assembled could be heard saying "Stop photographing her!" "She's not some kind of showpiece!" and the venue fell into a state of commotion.

Having reached the speaker's podium, Ms. Watanabe said in a clear voice: "People of the world, please take photographs. And then ensure that nobody like me is ever made again."

Leaders of the nuclear states, can you hear the cry of her soul within these words? A cry demanding with all her heart and soul that "No matter what, nuclear weapons must not be used!"

In January this year the leaders of the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China released a joint statement affirming that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." However, the very next month Russia invaded Ukraine. Threats of using nuclear weapons have been made, sending shivers throughout the globe.

This has shown the world that the use of nuclear weapons is not a "groundless fear" but a "tangible and present crisis."

It has made us confront the reality that, as long as there are nuclear weapons in the world, humankind constantly faces the risk that nuclear weapons might be used due to mistaken human judgments, mechanical malfunctions or in acts of terrorism.

Under the notion of trying to protect nations with nuclear weapons, the number of nations dependent upon them increases and the world becomes a more and more dangerous place. The belief that even though nuclear weapons are possessed they probably will not be used is a fantasy, nothing more than a mere hope. "They exist, so they can be used." We must recognize that ridding ourselves of nuclear weapons is the only realistic way of protecting the Earth and humankind's future at this very moment.

Two important meetings for the abolition of nuclear weapons continue this year.

In June, at the First Meeting of States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) held in Vienna, a frank and sober debate unfolded that included observer nations with a stance of opposing the Treaty, and both the draft declaration adopted at the meeting, which expresses the strong will to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, and a specific Action Plan were adopted. Furthermore, the TPNW and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) were clearly reconfirmed as mutually complementing each other.

Currently, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is taking place at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Over the past 50 or so years the NPT has, as a treaty that prevents the number of nuclear states from increasing and promotes nuclear disarmament, shouldered great expectations and roles. However, the Treaty and the decisions made at meetings have not been put into practice, and trust in the Treaty itself has become tenuous.

The nuclear states hold a particular responsibility due to the NPT. It is required that the polarizing nature of the Ukraine conflict is overcome, the promises made in the NPT are reaffirmed, and a concrete process for nuclear arms reductions is shown.

I hereby appeal to the Government of Japan and members of the National Diet: As a nation with a constitution that renounces war, Japan must exercise leadership in pursuing peace diplomacy within international society, especially during times of peace.

As a nation possessing the Three Non-Nuclear Principles, instead of moving towards “nuclear sharing” or other forms of dependency on nuclear weapons, please lead the way in debate that will achieve progress in the direction of non-nuclear dependency such as promoting discussions on the Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone concept.

Furthermore, as the only nation to have suffered wartime atomic bombings, I request the Government of Japan to sign and ratify the TPNW, and become a propellant force in the achievement of a world free of nuclear weapons.

People of the world, every day we see and hear the reality of war through the television and social media. The daily lives of many people are being devoured by the fires of war. The use of atomic bombs on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki was due to war. War always causes suffering for us, the ordinary people living in civil society. And that is precisely why it is so important that we raise our voices and say “war is no good.”

Our civil society can become either a keystone to peace or a hotbed of war. Instead of a “culture of war” that spreads distrust, fans terror and seeks to resolve matters through violence, let us make untiring efforts to ingrain in civil society a “culture of peace” that spreads trust, respects others and seeks resolutions through dialogue. Let each and every one of us who demands peace adopt the slogan of the Hiroshima Nagasaki Peace Messengers: “Our strength may be modest, but we’re not powerless.”

Nagasaki will, in conjunction with the power of young people, continue to involve itself in activities to foster a “culture of peace.”

The average age of the hibakusha has now reached over 84. I ask that the Government of Japan provide, as a matter of urgency, improved support for the hibakusha and relief measures for those who experienced the atomic bombings but have not yet received official recognition as bombing survivors.

I express my heartfelt condolences to all those who lost their lives in the atomic bombings.

Resolved to make “Nagasaki be the last place to suffer an atomic bombing,” I hereby declare that Nagasaki will continue to do the utmost to realize the abolition of nuclear weapons and everlasting world peace, as we work together with Hiroshima, Okinawa and Fukushima, a victim of radiation contamination, and expand our alliance with people around the world who are trying to help cultivate peace.

TAUE Tomihisa
Mayor of Nagasaki
August 9, 2022