



The City of Hiroshima

## PEACE DECLARATION

August 6, 2013

We greet the morning of the 68<sup>th</sup> return of “that day.” At 8:15 a.m., August 6, 1945, a single atomic bomb erased an entire family. “The baby boy was safely born. Just as the family was celebrating, the atomic bomb exploded. Showing no mercy, it took all that joy and hope along with the new life.”

A little boy managed somehow to survive but the atomic bomb took his entire family. This A-bomb orphan lived through hardship, isolation, and illness, but was never able to have a family of his own. Today, he is a lonely old *hibakusha*. “I have never once been glad I survived,” he says, looking back. After all these years of terrible suffering, the deep hurt remains.

A woman who experienced the bombing at the age of eight months suffered discrimination and prejudice. She did manage to marry, but a month later, her mother-in-law, who had been so kind at first, learned about her A-bomb survivor’s handbook. “‘You’re a *hibakusha*,’ she said, ‘We don’t need a bombed bride. Get out now.’ And with that, I was divorced.” At times, the fear of radiation elicited ugliness and cruelty. Groundless rumors caused many survivors to suffer in marriage, employment, childbirth—at every stage of life.

Indiscriminately stealing the lives of innocent people, permanently altering the lives of survivors, and stalking their minds and bodies to the end of their days, the atomic bomb is the ultimate inhumane weapon and an absolute evil. The *hibakusha*, who know the hell of an atomic bombing, have continuously fought that evil.

Under harsh, painful circumstances, the *hibakusha* have struggled with anger, hatred, grief and other agonizing emotions. Suffering with aftereffects, over and over they cried, “I want to be healthy. Can’t I just lead a normal life?” But precisely because they had suffered such tragedy themselves, they came to believe that no one else “should ever have to experience this cruelty.” A man who was 14 at the time of the bombing pleads, “If the people of the world could just share love for the Earth and love for all people, an end to war would be more than a dream.”

Even as their average age surpasses 78, the *hibakusha* continue to communicate their longing for peace. They still hope the people of the world will come to share that longing and choose the right path. In response to this desire of the many *hibakusha* who have transcended such terrible pain and sorrow, the rest of us must become the force that drives the struggle to abolish nuclear weapons.

To that end, the city of Hiroshima and the more than 5,700 cities that comprise Mayors for Peace, in collaboration with the UN and like-minded NGOs, seek to abolish nuclear weapons by 2020 and throw our full weight behind the early achievement of a nuclear weapons convention.

Policymakers of the world, how long will you remain imprisoned by distrust and animosity? Do you honestly believe you can continue to maintain national security by rattling your sabers? Please come to Hiroshima. Encounter the spirit of the *hibakusha*. Look squarely at the future of the human family without being trapped in the past, and make the decision to shift to a system of security based on trust and dialogue. Hiroshima is a place that embodies the grand pacifism of the Japanese constitution. At the same time, it points to the path the human family must walk. Moreover, for the peace and stability of our region, all countries involved must do more to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free North Korea in a Northeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Today, a growing group of countries is focusing on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and calling for abolition. President Obama has demonstrated his commitment to nuclear disarmament by inviting Russia to start negotiating further reductions. In this context, even if the nuclear power agreement the Japanese government is negotiating with India promotes their economic relationship, it is likely to hinder nuclear weapons abolition. Hiroshima calls on the Japanese government to strengthen ties with the governments pursuing abolition. At the ministerial meeting of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative next spring in Hiroshima, we hope Japan will lead the way toward a stronger NPT regime. And, as the *hibakusha* in Japan and overseas advance in age, we reiterate our demand for improved measures appropriate to their needs. As well, we demand measures for those exposed to the black rain and an expansion of the “black rain areas.”

This summer, eastern Japan is still suffering the aftermath of the great earthquake and the nuclear accident. The desperate struggle to recover hometowns continues. The people of Hiroshima know well the ordeal of recovery. We extend our hearts to all those affected and will continue to offer our support. We urge the national government to rapidly develop and implement a responsible energy policy that places top priority on safety and the livelihoods of the people.

Recalling once again the trials of our predecessors through these 68 years, we offer heartfelt consolation to the souls of the atomic bomb victims by pledging to do everything in our power to eliminate the absolute evil of nuclear weapons and achieve a peaceful world.

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