

Nagasaki Peace Declaration 2013

NAGASAKI, Aug. 9

Sixty-eight years ago today, a United States bomber dropped a single atomic bomb directly over Nagasaki. The bomb's heat rays, blast winds, and radiation were immense, and the fire that followed engulfed the city in flames into the night. The city was instantly reduced to ruins. Of the 240,000 residents in the city, around 150,000 were afflicted and 74,000 of them died within the year. Those who survived have continued to suffer from a higher incidence of contracting leukemia, cancer, and other serious radiation-induced diseases. Even after 68 years, they still live in fear and suffer deep psychological scars.

Humankind invented and produced this cruel weapon. Humankind has even gone so far as using nuclear weapons on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Humankind has repeatedly conducted nuclear tests, contaminating the earth. Humankind has committed a great many mistakes. This is why we must on occasion reaffirm the pledges we have made in the past that must not be forgotten and start anew.

I call on the Japanese government to consider once again that Japan is the only country to have suffered a nuclear bombing. At the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, held in Geneva in April 2013, several countries proposed a Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons to which 80 countries expressed their support. South Africa and other countries that made this proposal asked Japan to support and sign the statement.

However, the Japanese government did not sign it, betraying the expectations of global society. If the Japanese government cannot support the remark that "nuclear weapons [should never be] used again under any circumstances," this implies that the government would approve of their use under some circumstances. This stance contradicts the resolution that Japan would never allow anyone else to become victims of a nuclear bombing.

We are also concerned about the resumption of negotiations concerning the Japan-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement. Cooperating on nuclear power with India, who has not signed the NPT, would render the NPT meaningless, as its main tenet is to stop the increase of the number of nuclear-weapon states. Japan's cooperation with India would also provide North Korea, which withdrew from the NPT and is committed to nuclear development, with an excuse to justify its actions, hindering efforts toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

I call on the Japanese government to consider once again that Japan is the only country to have suffered a nuclear bombing. I call on the Japanese government to enact the Three Non-Nuclear Principles into law and take proactive measures to exert its leadership by creating a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone, thus fulfilling its duty as the only nation to have suffered an atomic bombing.

Under the current NPT, nuclear-weapon states have a duty to make earnest efforts towards nuclear disarmament. This is a promise they've made to the rest of the world. In April of 2009, United States President Barack Obama expressed his desire to seek a nuclear-free world during a speech in Prague. In June this year, President Obama stated in Berlin that he would work towards further reduction of nuclear arsenals, saying, "So long as nuclear weapons exist, we are not truly safe." Nagasaki supports President Obama's approach.

However, there are over 17,000 nuclear warheads still in existence of which at least 90% belong to either the United States or Russia. President Obama, President Putin, please commit your countries to a speedy, drastic reduction of your nuclear arsenal. Rather than envisioning a nuclear-free world as a faraway dream, we must quickly decide to solve this issue by working towards the abolition of these weapons, fulfilling the promise made to global society.

There are things that we citizens can do to help realize a nuclear-free world other than entrusting the work to leaders of nations only. In the preface of the Constitution of Japan, it states that the Japanese people have "resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government." This statement reflects the firm resolution of the Japanese people to work for world peace. In order not to forget this original desire for peace, it is essential to impart the experiences of war and atomic devastation to succeeding generations. We must continue to remember war has taken many lives and caused the physical and mental anguish of a great many more survivors. We must not forget the numerous cruel scenes of the war in order to prevent another one.

People of younger generations, have you ever heard the voices of the hibakusha, survivors of the atomic bombings? Have you heard them crying out, "No more Hiroshimas, no more Nagasakis, no more wars, and no more hibakusha"?

You will be the last generation to hear their voices firsthand. Listen to their voices to learn what happened 68 years ago under the atomic cloud. Listen to their voices to find out why they continue to appeal for nuclear abolition. You will find that, despite much hardship, they continue to fight for nuclear abolition for the sake of future generations. Please consider whether or not you will allow the existence of nuclear weapons in the world today and in the future world of your children. Please talk to your friends about this matter. It is you who will determine the future of this world.

There are many things that we can do as global citizens. Nearly 90% of Japanese municipalities have made nuclear-free declarations to demonstrate their residents' refusal to become victims of a nuclear attack and their resolution to work for world peace. The National Council of Japan Nuclear Free Local Authorities, comprising of these municipalities, celebrates its 30th anniversary this month. If any members of such municipalities plan to take any action in accordance with the declaration they have made, they shall have the support of the National Council, as well as that of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

In Nagasaki, the Fifth Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons will be held this coming November. At this assembly, residents will play the key role in disseminating the message for nuclear abolition to people around the world.

Meanwhile, the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Company, Inc. has yet to be resolved and radioactive contamination continues to spread. In an instant, this accident deprived many residents in Fukushima of their peaceful daily lives. They are still forced to live without a clear vision as to their future. The residents of Nagasaki truly hope for the earliest possible recovery of Fukushima and will continue to support the people of Fukushima.

Last month, Mr. Senji Yamaguchi, a hibakusha who called for nuclear abolition and for better support for hibakusha, passed away. The number of hibakusha continues to decrease with their average age now exceeding seventy-eight. Once again, I call for the Japanese government to provide better support for these aging hibakusha.

We offer our sincere condolences for the lives lost in the atomic bombings, and pledge to continue our efforts towards realizing a nuclear-free world, hand-in-hand with the citizens of Hiroshima.

Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki

Read out at Nagasaki Peace Ceremony, Nagasaki Peace Park, August 9th, 2013