

Nagasaki Peace Declaration

We will never forget. The atomic bomb, which exploded over this area, generated ferocious heat rays and blast and released deadly radiation, instantly killing and injuring defenseless citizens forced into an inhuman life of solitude and anxiety, and they continue to this day to survive were fear of death and the late effects of exposure to radiation. Fifty-one years have passed since the atomic bombing, but no matter how many years pass we must continue to inform the people of the world about what happened that day in Nagasaki.

1. Let us reflect upon the past and convey Nagasaki's aspiration to the world

Looking at history, we see that the wars repeatedly perpetrated by humanity have done nothing to foster happiness or world peace. Nuclear weapons, in particular, threaten the human race with extinction. It is imperative that the people of the world recognize this fact.

We must face up to the reality of Japan's history of invasion and aggression in the Asia-Pacific region during past wars and, with a feeling of reflection and apology, join hands with the people of the world and strive to eliminate all further victims of war and nuclear destruction.

2. Now is the time to ban nuclear tests and to realize a world without nuclear weapons

The negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament are now in their final stage. But although the proposed treaty provides for a ban on tests involving nuclear explosions, it does not prohibit tests by methods such as computer simulation. It thus allows for the continued development of nuclear weapons. We must continue to appeal for a ban on all types of testing that lead to the development of nuclear weapons.

The first resolution of the United Nations, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in 1946, called for the elimination of nuclear weapons from national arsenals, and in 1961 the General Assembly adopted a declaration proclaiming the use of nuclear weapons to be a "crime against mankind and civilization." I ask the United Nations to return to these historic starting points and to exert its leadership in the international community.

I asserted at the International Court of Justice last November that the use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law. While avoiding judgment with regard to self-defense, the court stated in its advisory opinions of July 8, 1996 that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is "contrary to the rules of international law" and that "there exists in the international community an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament." It is imperative that we embrace these statements positively and make strides for the conclusion of a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons.

In April this year, a non-nuclear zone treaty was concluded in Africa following similar treaties in South and Central America, the South Pacific and Southeast Asia. We must learn from this peaceful method by which the international community joins to eliminate nuclear weapons, and we must urgently work to establish a non-nuclear zone in Northeast Asia. I ask the Japanese government to promote the enforcement of a ban on the production of nuclear materials for use in weapons and the establishment of an international system of management to handle the nuclear materials obtained in the dismantling of nuclear weapons, in that way playing a leading role in the organization of an anti-nuclear network among the non-nuclear states.

3. To the guardians of peace in the 21st century

I ask the young generations of Japan to realize that the abundance and peace that we enjoy today are founded on the efforts and sacrifices of many people, to understand the fact that numerous problems are impeding world peace such as starvation, poverty, refugees, repression of human rights and destruction of the global environment, to think about what they can do for peace and to take positive action.

In April this year, Nagasaki City inaugurated the new Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombing. We are now refurbishing the Peace Park area in order to make it a venue for "Nagasaki peace studies," and we are striving to cultivate guardians of peace in the 21st century.

I ask all citizens to inform younger generations about the horror of the atomic bombings, the misery of war, the importance of peace and the sanctity of life.

4. Let us oppose nuclear deterrence and expand the circle of peace

The road ahead of us is obstructed by "nuclear deterrence," that is, the policy of intimidating other countries and protecting only one's own country through the possession of nuclear weapons. But Nagasaki has appealed for over half a century for a world free of nuclear weapons, and our message is showing increasing influence.

Nagasaki City will continue to convey the aspiration for peace by every available means. The time has surely come for us to join hands and to expand the circle of peace from Nagasaki to the world.

It is the responsibility of Japan, as the first country exposed to a nuclear attack, to make efforts for the establishment of world peace. I call on the Japanese government to hold its own atomic bomb exhibitions as a way to communicate the fact that nuclear weapons are incompatible with humanity. It must also take still further measures for the assistance of the atomic bomb survivors, who are now advancing into old age, and fulfill its responsibilities in a similar manner to the non-Japanese atomic bomb survivors.

With the vexation of the victims in my heart on this 51st anniversary of the atomic bombing, I offer prayers for the repose of the souls of the atomic bomb victims and I declare in the name of the citizens of Nagasaki to the people of Japan and the world our renewed determination to strive for the abolition of nuclear weapons and weapons and for the realization of lasting world peace.

Iecho Itoh
Mayor of Nagasaki
August 9, 1996