

Nagasaki Peace Declaration

Nuclear weapons will bring about the extinction of the human race. Fifty-three years ago, at 11:02 a.m., August 9, 1945, an atomic bomb exploded in the air 500 meters over this city of Nagasaki, killing 74,000 people, injuring another 75,000 and causing devastation that can only be called a hell on earth. Even the people who managed to survive incurred lasting mental injury, and they continue to this day to suffer from the late effects of exposure to the atomic bombings and to live in a state of solitude and anxiety. We will never forget the day August 9.

Our aspiration to “make Nagasaki the last place on earth to suffer a nuclear attack” has moved a great number of people, and the call for the abolition of nuclear weapons has reached to a worldwide level. The International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is generally contrary to the rules of international law. Hopes for nuclear disarmament rose in the international community, and a succession of concrete proposals was made for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In May this year, however, India and Pakistan went ahead with nuclear tests, deepening our mental injuries and our pain. And we could not help but feel intense anger at the attitude of the five nuclear states, which have failed to strive for nuclear disarmament and have tried to justify their exclusive possession of nuclear weapons and maintain the theory of nuclear deterrence.

Nuclear proliferation has become a reality, and the world is now faced with the danger of another nuclear arms race. At this juncture, we vehemently demand the early conclusion of a comprehensive nuclear weapons prohibition treaty. It is imperative that the leaders of the nuclear states and all other countries immediately declare their intention to ban the development, testing, manufacture, deployment and use of nuclear weapons and dismantle and destroy all existing nuclear weapons. They must also begin negotiations for a treaty to that end. This is our wish: that a path to the abolition of nuclear weapons is laid in this century and that the 21st century becomes an era free from nuclear weapons.

I ask the Japanese government to enact the three-fold non-nuclear principle as law, to strive for the establishment of a non-nuclear zone in northeast Asia, and to pursue a true security independent of the “nuclear umbrella.” I ask Japan, as a country subjected to atomic bombings, to convey the facts of the atomic bombings and the threat of nuclear weapons. I ask the Japanese government to bolster its assistance to the atomic bomb survivors, who are advancing into old age. I also ask the government to look squarely at its history of invasion and aggression in the Asia-Pacific region, to hold frank discussions with Asian nations on the perception of this history, and to build new relationships of friendship based upon trust and mutual understanding as soon as possible.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I ask young people to think about the horror of war, the importance of peace and the sanctity of life and to discuss these issues at home and at school. I ask you to consider the problems threatening world peace, such as starvation, poverty, refugees, repression of human rights and environmental degradation, as your own personal problems. And to resolve these problems I ask you recognize differences of culture, differences of values and differences between yourselves and others and then, with courage, to take action in all possible ways.

We will make every effort to ensure that the “U.N. Conference on Disarmament Issues in Nagasaki” this November and the upcoming 4th Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament mark an important step toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

On this 53rd anniversary of the atomic bombing, I offer heartfelt 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 for the realization of lasting world peace.

Iccho Itoh
Mayor of Nagasaki
August 9, 1998