

Nagasaki Peace Declaration

Today, fifty-five years after the atomic bombing, we pray for the repose of the souls of those who died.

Near the end of the Second World War, on August 9, 1945 at 11:02 a.m., a single plutonium type atomic bomb was dropped on the City of Nagasaki by a United States military aircraft. When this atomic bomb exploded at an altitude of 500 meters, heat rays with intensity on the ground of several thousand degrees Celsius instantly burned people's bodies, charring them black. The powerful blast wind sent people hurtling through the air, crushing them as they landed, even as it demolished concrete buildings and all other structures in its path. Invisible radiation invaded and destroyed people's cells and tissues, swiftly resulting in yet more death. Most of those who perished were non-combatants including women, children and the elderly, together with many Chinese and Korean citizens and Allied prisoners of war. Large numbers of those who survived the devastation were to suffer illnesses caused by the latent effects of the bomb, constantly stalked by the fear of death. We, the citizens of Nagasaki, who are so intimately familiar with these tragic circumstances, have ceaselessly called upon the world to eliminate nuclear weapons and establish lasting world peace.

Thus far, Nagasaki has remained the last battlefield where nuclear weapons have been used, with the unspeakably tragic experiences of Nagasaki and Hiroshima having served as preventative forces. Nevertheless, there have been numerous victims of nuclear weapons in the intervening fifty-five years, composed of the countless sufferers of radiation released in nuclear tests as well as in accidents occurring in the manufacture of nuclear weapons and associated materials. In the Nevada desert of the United States, at Semipalatinsk in the former Soviet Union, on various islands of the Pacific, and at other locations around the world, over 2,000 nuclear tests have been conducted. These have endangered the health and lives of the people living in and around such areas, and have contaminated the environment of the entire planet.

Nuclear weapons have the horrible potential to annihilate humanity, and the people of the Earth must not forget that there are approximately 30,000 nuclear weapons still in existence. Let us come together in an effort to place the nuclear age firmly in the past. The International Court of Justice ruled in a 1996 advisory opinion that the threat of nuclear weapons or their use is contrary to international law, and the voices of concerned people from around the world were successful in eliciting agreement from the nuclear weapons states at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons for "an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals..." Now, in order to carry out this commitment, it is imperative that the nuclear weapons states immediately begin multilateral negotiations for the early conclusion of Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty.

The government of Japan must resolutely face up to its past aggression and sincerely address the unsolved issues that still exist between Japan and the citizens of the countries that were its victims. In addition, as the first and only country to have suffered attack with nuclear weapons, Japan must take a leading role in efforts for their elimination. Particularly now that dialogue has begun on the Korea peninsula, the drafting into law of the three-fold non-nuclear principle must preface the establishment of a Northeast Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone, and Japan must remove itself from the shadow of the "nuclear umbrella." Greater levels of assistance must also be provided to the atomic bomb survivors, both in Japan and abroad, and the factual health concerns of those survivors exposed in nearby areas not originally designated by the government as being affected must be satisfactorily addressed.

Again, nuclear weapons have the horrible potential to annihilate humanity. The generation of young people ignorant of war must therefore cooperatively transcend the boundaries of time and nationality, studying history to achieve an essential understanding of the uselessness of war and the horror of nuclear weapons. We must join hands and take action together to ensure that the coming 21st century is a century of peace, unmarred by war or the continued existence of nuclear weapons.

The City of Nagasaki, galvanized both by aspirations for peace spanning fifty -five years and by hope for the 21st century, also resolves to take new strides of its own. Now is the time to assemble and harness the capabilities of the world's NGOs to create the road to nuclear abolition, and we look forward to widespread participation in the Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, to be held in November 2000.

We, the citizens of Nagasaki, reiterate our desire that our city should be the last spot on Earth to have been subjected to nuclear warfare, and we proclaim to the world our commitment to move boldly forward in the quest to make the 21st century free from nuclear weapons.

Ichio Itoh
Mayor of Nagasaki
August 9, 2000