

Nagasaki Peace Declaration

Having entered a new century, we offer heartfelt prayers for the repose of the souls of those who died in the atomic bombings and for all the victims of war in every country, calling to the world for peace from the atom bombed city of Nagasaki.

We the citizens of Nagasaki have continuously appealed for the realization of the 21st century as an era free from nuclear weapons. Notwithstanding, no fewer than 30,000 nuclear warheads remain in existence on the surface of our planet, and the nuclear threat is now on the verge of expanding into space. Fifty-six years ago, it required only a single and relatively primitive atomic bomb to instantly transform our city into hell on Earth.

The 20th century was an age of great progress for humankind in terms of science and technology, as well as awareness of human rights. At the same time, however, the 20th century gave birth to nuclear weapons, instruments capable of destroying all of humanity. The nuclear weapons states have refused to give up these instruments, even with the passing of the Cold War, and a nuclear superpower is now insinuating that it may renege on international commitments in the area of nuclear disarmament. We are vigorously opposed to these movements, which could negate previous efforts for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The agreement on “an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals...” expressed in May of last year at the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should not be allowed to become an empty promise. We shall continue to raise our voices in unison with the peoples of the world so as to actualize this undertaking.

We urge the Japanese government, representing a nation that has suffered nuclear attack, to play an active and befitting role in the elimination of nuclear weapons, and to call for the convening of an international assembly to enact a treaty for their prohibition. Japan must uphold the peaceful ideals of its constitution, build relations of trust with neighboring countries by squarely facing its history of aggression, and work for the establishment of a Northeast Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone that will enable Japan's withdrawal from the "nuclear umbrella." Accordingly, the three-fold non-nuclear principle must be drafted into law.

We also urge greater levels of care and assistance for all of the atomic bomb survivors, both in Japan and abroad. The passage of 56 years has not at all alleviated the physical and mental anguish of the atomic bomb survivors, who are growing increasingly elderly. In fact, their anxiety and discomfort are mounting year by year. At the same time, the Japanese government must not forget those who suffer similarly, despite residing in districts in and around Nagasaki that have not been officially designated as being affected by the atomic bombing*.

It is heartening that young people in Nagasaki are voluntarily devising peace-related programs, and are engaged in various efforts and activities. For example, a group of high school students is now undertaking a petition drive seeking 10,000 signatures in support of the elimination of nuclear weapons, and we are proud to think that a new generation of youth is rising up to take action and initiative. Also, the City of Nagasaki is creating the Nagasaki Peace Education Program, which encourages young people to discuss and learn about the atomic bombings, peace, and human rights in a cross-generational context. In this way, we are working to develop human resources for the active pursuit of peace.

In November of last year Nagasaki hosted Japan's first-ever event linking local governments and NGOs, the Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. This event confirmed our belief that the united action of ordinary citizens can indeed move the world. Recalling that worldwide grassroots activities brought about a treaty for the international prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, we shall further strengthen our links with NGOs and municipalities around the globe, standing at the forefront of efforts to abolish nuclear weapons.

Nagasaki must forever remain the last place ever to have suffered nuclear attack. We, the citizens of Nagasaki, hereby pledge to exert every possible effort to ensure that the 21st century is an age of peace, free from nuclear weapons, and from war itself.

Iccho Itoh
Mayor of Nagasaki
August 9, 2001

*Such “undesigned areas” refer to locations within a 12 kilometer radius of the hypocenter that are not yet officially recognized as having been subject to the effects of the atomic bombing.