



Mayors for Peace

Secretariat

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New Year's Greeting from the President of Mayors for Peace

Dear Fellow Mayors,

It is a pleasure to send this message at the beginning of the year 2016.

Last year, which marked the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings, was an important year in establishing a starting point for new global action in pursuit of nuclear weapons abolition. I would like to offer our member cities my sincere gratitude for all the efforts they have made. This year in turn will be a critical year in making sure we keep the progress towards nuclear abolition on track based on the foundations we have laid. Being keenly aware of the great role we must play towards this end, I continue in my strong commitment to fulfilling this important role through collaboration with our member cities.

The current situation regarding nuclear weapons in the international community does not allow any optimism. Despite the wishes and activism for peace of Hiroshima and Nagasaki's *hibakusha* as well as civil society, nuclear disarmament – which was expected to make great leaps after the end of the Cold War – has stagnated. In truth, many nuclear powers are making enormous investments in the modernization of their nuclear arsenals. Despite these circumstances, for the past several years a nuclear abolition movement that is spearheaded by members of civil society including Mayors for Peace has developed into a groundswell; in particular, the trend of emphasizing the inhumanity of nuclear weapons has vitalized many UN member states' actions.

It was disappointing that the NPT Review Conference last April failed to produce a final document, but there were some favorable developments, such as extensive and straightforward discussions on the inhumanity of nuclear weapons and the effective measures to implement nuclear disarmament obligations based on Article VI of the NPT. At the subsequent UN General Assembly, 136 nations endorsed the Humanitarian Pledge issued by the Austrian government. Furthermore, after the final draft recommended that the UN General Assembly establish an open-ended working group to identify effective measures for nuclear disarmament, including a legally binding instrument for the full implementation of specific obligations, 138 nations, accounting for two-thirds of UN member states, approved the group's creation. However, neither nuclear-weapon states nor nuclear umbrella states have endorsed this resolution. Unless things change, there are concerns that the nations involved with nuclear deterrence policies might not participate in this much-awaited working group.

This is the situation in which 2016 began.

Mayors for Peace is a nonpartisan organization working to share the wishes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to realize a world without nuclear weapons in collaboration with various levels of civil society, based on the mayoral responsibilities of protecting the safety and peace of our people. Our activities have two definite interdependent directions, the first of which is to develop the social infrastructure needed to achieve a sustainable, peaceful world without nuclear weapons. Specifically, we work to spread deep into the international community, as commonly shared public knowledge, an awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons as well as the fact that the *hibakusha* of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have consistently conveyed a message of peace based on a humanitarian conviction that “No one else should ever again suffer as we have”, instead of a message of revenge. In parallel, we must also nurture keen sense of global awareness that we all belong to the same human family that transcend the differences in nationality, culture, religion, history, and skin color. In these efforts, the *hibakusha*’s persistent humanitarian message for peace that transcends a sense of vengeance continues to serve as a great source of inspiration and a driving force.

The second direction of our activities is to interact and encourage world policymakers, especially those in nuclear-weapon states, to take action for a peaceful world without nuclear weapons. The existence of nearly 16,000 nuclear warheads in a world filled with innumerable seeds of conflicts poses a real threat to peace. Declassified documents have revealed that the risks of inadvertent nuclear weapons use due to accident or miscalculation are quite high. We also cannot ignore the danger posed by nuclear terrorism. In this context, it is urgent for nuclear-weapon states and states under the nuclear umbrella to conduct earnest dialogues to develop an innovative and reliable security system distinct from the defunct concept of nuclear deterrence. As mayors have responsibility for their citizens’ peace and safety, Mayors for Peace must take action to urge world leaders to advance such policy discussions.

For the past two and a half years, Mayors for Peace has developed various measures through strengthened collaboration among lead cities and other member cities, as well as with various partners from civil society. The number of member cities continues to grow at an increasing speed, and now 6,965 cities from 161 countries and regions have joined our network. Last April, we established regional groups to facilitate this global network in its effective function. As a result, independent and proactive measures have been developed under the leadership of the 21 lead cities. I would like to offer my sincere gratitude for the cooperation we received from many cities regarding the membership fee system introduced last year. Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude for the many member cities that carried out various activities in 2015 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings, such as A-bomb poster exhibitions, petition drives, video screenings, and the acceptance of seeds of A-bombed trees. These activities helped spread the message of Hiroshima and Nagasaki within civil society. Moreover, our efforts to encourage world policymakers to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki have taken root and been intensified. As part of these efforts, I attended the NPT Review Conference last April with representatives from Nagasaki, Bangkok, Frgn, Fongo-Tongo, and Mexico City. We also issued an op-ed and open letter, and member cities and regional groups have reinforced their appeals to world policymakers.

Last November, the Executive Conference in Ypres decided that the Hiroshima Secretariat would inherit the 2020 Vision Campaign. In addition, we would like to focus this year on intensifying activities agreed upon at the Executive Conference. As our first priority, through utilizing our member city network, we will work on ensuring that the open-ended working group, which will soon be convened in Geneva, will hold positive discussions of nuclear abolition. Specifically, in order to achieve the full implementation of nuclear disarmament obligations as stipulated in Article VI of the NPT, we will encourage as many nations as possible, including nuclear-weapon states, nuclear umbrella states, and non-nuclear-weapon states, to participate in this working group and have good-faith discussions on a legal framework for the prohibition of nuclear weapons. To that end, we plan to send an open letter to world policymakers and ask that each member city take action by utilizing the letter for their own nuclear disarmament activities. To further spread our organization's message, Mayors for Peace will also participate in the working group as a member of civil society.

Regional activities have become increasingly important in conveying and spreading the realities of the damage caused by nuclear weapons. I hope that member cities will continue to carry out proactive measures as stipulated in the Action Plan as well as intensify the activities agreed upon at the Executive Conference. At the Executive Conference, it was also decided as per Article 3 of the Covenant to work on specific regional problems, such as terror, refugee, conflicts and environmental issues. The Hiroshima Secretariat will continue to support these measures and share information among member cities through concerted efforts.

With our aim of 10,000 organization members by 2020, we, Mayors for Peace, will strengthen our efforts as a nonpartisan global NGO by deepening collaboration and mutual understanding among member cities. I ask for your continued support and cooperation in achieving our common goal of peace.

Handwritten signature in Japanese characters: 松井一貴 (Matsui Kazumi)

January, 2016

MATSUI Kazumi
President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor of Hiroshima