

The 6th General Conference of Mayors for Peace
Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombings

Press Conference

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Ran

International Conference Center Hiroshima

Toshiki Mogami

Chairperson of Plenary Sessions I , II and Appeal Drafting Committee
Professor, International Christian University

Tadatoshi Akiba

President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor, Hiroshima, Japan

Herbert Schmalstieg

Vice President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor, Hannover, Germany

Catherine Margate

Vice President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor, Malakoff, France

Afzal Kahn

Vice President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor, Manchester, U.K

Raul Corro

Councilor, Muntinlupa, Philippines

Evgeny Petrovich Ischenko

Vice President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor, Volgograd, Russia

Gary Moore

Vice President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor, Christchurch, New Zealand

Susanna Agostini

Councilor, Florence, Italy

Beverly O'Neill

President of the US Conference of Mayors
Mayor, Long Beach, U.S.A.

MC, Zenpei Kunimoto, Director, Public Relations Division, Hiroshima, Japan: Ladies and gentlemen of the press, thank you very much for waiting. We would now like to begin the press conference for the 6th General Conference of Mayors for Peace. I'm Kunimoto, Director of Public Relations Division of Hiroshima City. I will serve as your MC. Please have your simultaneous interpretation receivers ready for this press conference.

Here we have the attendance of the general Chairperson of the General Conference, Prof. Mogami of the International Christian University, and the President and Vice-President City mayors of the Mayors for Peace, and the President of the US Conference of Mayors. We were scheduled to hold the press conference for a longer time period, but we would like to end the press conference by 6:00. I would like to solicit your cooperation.

First of all, I would like to ask each of the participants to give us a very short and brief comments, after which we would like to entertain your questions. So first of all, may I invite the President of Mayors for Peace, Mayor Akiba, to speak.

Tadatoshi Akiba, President of Mayors for Peace, Mayor, Hiroshima, Japan : Thank you very much, Mr. Kunimoto. I'm very sorry that we have kept you waiting and also for shortening the press conference.

In this 6th General Conference of Mayors for Peace, we have had very meaningful discussions, and ultimately, we have adopted the Hiroshima Appeal today. And one other important point that I would like to mention is that two years ago we adopted the 2020 Vision, which is the emergency vision to ban nuclear weapons, and this has been revised, which we hope to adopt for this conference. From August 6 to August 9 of next year, we would like to look at this 369 days as the campaign year. So in this year's campaign year, specific actions to be taken in this year we have been able to come up with specific actions to undertake in the following year. The details will be worked out in the subsequent year.

But regarding the operation and management of the Mayors for Peace conferences in the past, compared with those in the past we have a greater membership and we need greater funds to support these activities. And therefore, we have decided to raise funds for our activities, and in this sense this was quite an epic-making General Conference. Based on this, we will be working in the following year to come up with concrete actions.

I am very appreciative of the positive contributions made by each city and the presentations that we had that the speakers shared with us, specific practices that are in place in each of the cities, and we have gained much energy and inspiration from many of our member cities participating in this General Conference. So I'm very thankful for this. Thank you very much.

MC: Then, may I ask Prof. Mogami to say a few words?

Toshiki Mogami, Chairperson of Plenary Sessions I , II and Appeal Drafting Committee, Professor, International Christian University: Good afternoon. I'm not a mayor but I do have some special knowledge regarding this field, and therefore I

have been asked to help and I have served as the general coordinator or Chairperson of this General Conference.

I wanted to help the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as much as I can, that was the original intent, but actually I have learned that many cities who are members of the Mayors for Peace are actively working on peace issues in reality, and so I was very happy to learn of these specific actions that are being undertaken by each individual city. Overall, I have the impression that it was a very good conference. Thank you very much.

MC: Then I would like to call upon the eight cities to speak to you. They are very eloquent people, each individually, but since we are very short of time may I ask you to be eloquent in being brief. So Vice-President City, Dr. Schmalstieg, City of Hannover, please.

Herbert Schmalstieg, Vice President of Mayors for Peace, Mayor, Hannover, Germany: I have the opportunity to visit all the six conferences of Mayors for Peace in Hiroshima and I feel that we have had this year a very good start because we have also a program for the next year. And we all agree that we don't need nuclear weapons in the world, not in Russia, not in the United States, in France, in Israel, in Korea, in North Korea and all the other places. And we need this money with different governments, for armaments and rearmaments, we need this money to combat hunger, poverty and all other things in the world. And we will work and we have the great opportunity and a chance that in 2020, our Vision 2020, no nuclear weapons in our life.

MC: Next, the Mayor Margate, the City of Malakoff, please.

Catherine Margate, Vice President of Mayors for Peace, Mayor, Malakoff, France: Yes, thank you. What I would like to emphasize here, this is the first visit to Hiroshima. I am very much impressed in attending the Peace Memorial Ceremony. I visited the Peace Museum in Hiroshima. I have listened to the testimony by hibakusha. I attended the conference with a high level of interest. Through exchanges of the experiences of the mayors, we discussed thoroughly the path for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

And also the point was raised that an unprecedented defense budget is allocated in some of the countries, and that defense budget should be allocated to other purposes for the prevention of disasters. In that area, there are a lot of roles to be played by mayors.

And what are the roles to be played by mayors? How can we mobilize the citizens of each city? Depending on the situation and conditions of each city, we would like to create specific initiatives. Through the education for children, through the education for youth, we hope that we will be able to contribute to the nuclear abolition.

MC: Thank you very much. Lord Kahn, Mayor of Manchester, please.

Mohammed Afzal Kahn, Vice President of Mayors for Peace, Mayor, Manchester, U.K.: Of course I'm sitting here next to the Lord Mayor from Germany,

who has not missed any of the General Conferences. But this is my first conference that I have attended and also the first time that I have had the opportunity and privilege and to visit Japan.

After going through this whole conference, I think Manchester has a pure record. Back in the 80s, we were the first city to declare ourselves a nuclear-free zone and then since '84 we've been part of this movement. And after all that we have seen in this conference, and particularly this very special day of the 60th anniversary, one thing is very clear to me, that this conference has given us the opportunity to learn, to network, to see what is happening in the world, but ultimately, the goals which we have set, I believe they are realistic and are achievable in this 2020.

And this whole conference has spurred us all on and I hope that we will be moving forward. We have the world opinion with us. What we need to make sure is that all of us take responsibility because all of us have a role to play, and if we can do that there is no reason why we cannot achieve the goals which have been set by 2020. Thank you.

MC: Thank you very much. Corro, Mr. Corro, the Councilor of Muntinlupa, please.

Raul Corro, Councilor, Muntinlupa, Philippines: Muntinlupa is the only Asian country which is a member of Executive Committee, aside from Hiroshima in Japan. And my presence here in the 6th Conference is to me significant because, as you know, the Philippines was once occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army in World War II. We were a victim of war. Yet, despite our experience, we are now advocating reconciliation and not retaliation because we believe that freedom from nuclear weapons can stand our differences in the past.

My father was a soldier, a Filipino soldier, and was a prisoner of the Japanese Imperial Army. However, we would like to look forward and forget what has happened in the past because nuclear weapons have no place in a civilized society. We have to work very hard. That's the reason why, I believe, that when I go back to the Philippines we have to educate our young children, our school children, about the horrors of the atomic bombings. That's the reason why I believe that power is knowledge. We have to inform the public. We have to create awareness about the horrors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings so that this should not be repeated again.

And the Philippines has the policy in our Constitution of freedom from nuclear weapons, and we believe we are one with Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the rest of the members of the Executive Committee and the majority of the people of the world in calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. And I'd like to bring this message home to our people by bringing some materials, informative materials, film showings, especially about the testimony of hibakusha. This has to be shown, this has to be shown to our children because the children are the direct beneficiaries of our actions today.

The abolition of nuclear weapons in this world will benefit future generations. That is the reason why Muntinlupa is fully supportive of this conference. In fact, I was here in 1995 during the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombings and we will continue

to support this Mayors for Peace and the abolition of nuclear weapons. Thank you very much.

MC: Next, Mr. Petrovich, Mayor of Volgograd, please.

Evgeny Petrovich Ischenko, Vice President of Mayors for Peace, Mayor, Volgograd, Russia: I'm sorry I speak Russian because my English is not so good and my assistant, Elena, will translate. This conference provided us with a brilliant opportunity to better understand each other, better learn about each other. And though we had different wording during the Draft Meeting, for example, you had an absolutely similar approach to the problems and similar visions on how to create the nuclear-free zones and how to learn to solve problems without warfare involved. Thank you.

MC: Next is Mr. Moore, Mayor of Christchurch, please.

Gary Moore, Mayor, Vice President of Mayor for Peace, Christchurch, New Zealand: Greetings and welcome from Christchurch, New Zealand. The first thing I'd like to say to the Japanese people is that Mayor Akiba of Hiroshima is acknowledged as a world leader in the cause of peace. And I want to tell you a simple little story about how we have addressed this issue in New Zealand.

We declared our homes nuclear-free. We then declared our streets nuclear-free. We then declared our suburbs nuclear-free. People declared their churches nuclear-free. And then the pressure went on each of the towns and cities of New Zealand, and one by one, led by my city, we all became nuclear-free cities. And in 1984, our government declared the whole country nuclear-free. And what started off as something simple in the minds and the hearts of peoples in their homes, spread throughout the country to where it became national policy. And it isn't easy to keep that policy.

Our government is under constant pressure to actually get away from being a nuclear-free country, but the interesting thing is that we're about to engage in a general election, and the leader of the Opposition toyed with dropping part of the nuclear-free legislation, and he received a very clear message from the people of New Zealand: it was totally unacceptable to move down that path, and he backed away.

So our challenge as mayors of the world is to spread this message, heart by heart, street by street, city by city, so that country by country the politicians feel courageous enough to pick this up and say, our country is nuclear-free. That's what this is about. Thank you. [*applause*]

MC: Thank you very much. The next speaker is Ms. Agostini, Mayor of Florence.

Susanna Agostini, Councilor, Florence, Italy: I'm the Councilor in the Peace and International Solidarity Commission of the City of Florence, and I'm here representing my mayor. It is also for Florence the first time we participate to the MFP, and we definitely have a great experience to report once we go back.

We are very happy with the results. We learnt a lot from this conference, and we are sure that our work will be the base for future steps towards a free nuclear world with the help of all the mayors and the role they play in spreading this word to all their citizen, and spreading new instruments and new commitments by every single one.

The Hiroshima Appeal is going to be the starting point for a new instrument for the education and information about all the consequences of war, in particular, because of the victims of the last Hiroshima-Nagasaki atomic bombs.

We heard the poetry from these young students and we saw the ceremony this morning with all the pain of these people, those who died and the relatives of those who died, and we also saw those wounded bodies of men and women. And so we definitely know that people want peace and we cannot let them down.

For this reason we are all committing to this association. Let's keep on working together, both mayors and organizations from the civil society. Let's try to make it a dream come true and this is to abolish the nuclear weapons and to guarantee the human rights all over the world. Thank you.

MC: Thank you very much. Last but not least I'd like to invite Ms. Beverly O'Neill, Mayor of Long Beach and President of the US Conference of Mayors.

Beverly O'Neill, President of the US Conference of Mayors,

Mayor, Long Beach, U.S.A.: Thank you very much. I am Beverly O'Neill. I am Mayor of the City of Long Beach in Southern California and also the President of the US Conference of Mayors. I am here representing the US Conference of Mayors and I first want to say how much we admire and are appreciative of Mayor Akiba. He actually has been the leader in knowing that if you have the mayors involved, you have the people involved. The mayors I have met at this conference and the people that have been involved in this conference have been committed and have been passionate about the future.

We, as mayors, speak the same language. We understand what our people need. We understand what they need, what they're fearing for the future, and nuclear weapons is certainly the most prominent problem we face.

The US Conference of Mayors meets annually, twice. We have resolutions that are passed by our membership. The resolutions have been on nuclear weapons, the elimination or reduction of, for over 25 years. The Boston meeting that we had two years ago, it was unanimous to begin the discussion in the United States on the elimination or the reduction of nuclear weapons.

So I'm very pleased to be here. I think the conference was very productive, very insightful, very passionate about the future. I think that having the mayors involved with this was very visionary on the part of Mayor Akiba because there are mayors that are joining every day on this future that we need for our world.

MC: Thank you very much. We'd now like to open the floor for questions. If you have a question could you please identify yourself by your affiliation and your name and to whom your question is addressed.

Asahi Newspaper: Ogawa from Asahi Newspaper. I have a question for Mayor Akiba. In the opening remarks you mentioned the NPT Review Conference. Following that, you mentioned that you seemed to see disappointment among the citizens who are calling for nuclear elimination. You mentioned that this conference might have given great hope to people who are depressed because of the failure. Is that what you wanted to say?

Akiba: Yes, that's how you should understand this conference. The problem is, we had repeatedly pointed out in our conference, and also it is mentioned in other conferences, that the Russell-Einstein Manifesto says that - this is I think the truth - unless we renounce nuclear weapons, mankind will be completely destroyed. That sense of crisis is what we feel.

If we feel that sense of crisis, just because you cannot realize what you hope for, you shouldn't just give up on your campaign against nuclear elimination because that leads to total annihilation of mankind and prevention of such an event is what we started with. Of course, you cannot have your way in everything you want. But we have to set up our goal and we have to come up with concrete steps and measures and activities to reach the goal. And here want to reinforce, expand such activities and actions in the campaign with more like-minded people to get together. And we were able to confirm that commitment through this conference. In that sense, we believe that we have received many good ideas and suggestions and proposals. And we were able to come up with good plans and actions.

The pace of our progress may not be as fast as everyone wants to see. But we are making a steady step forward.

MC: Thank you. Question, please.

Chugoku Newspaper: Morita from Chugoku Newspaper. A question to Mayor Akiba. You said that in this 6th General Conference, many concrete measures and proposals I would assume have been made. And I think you have also reached certain decisions in your agenda. What would be the most recent activities that you would initiate in the very near future?

Akiba: Yes, we have Vice-President Cities. The mayors are going to exchange email addresses so that we will be able to read emails without any failure. That would be our first step.

MC: Ms. Morita, is that okay? Anything else? Yes, please.

Asahi Newspaper: Sorry, once again to Mayor Akiba. You mentioned about the proposal to establish a sub-committee at the United Nations General Assembly. Could you be more specific? What steps or what means are you going to employ to realize this initiative?

Akiba: First of all, we need to speak to as many national governments as possible. Already we need to have more concrete measures to speak to some government representatives who would collaborate with us. We have a Mayors for Peace

International Campaign Manager, so if you'd like more specifics, perhaps he can respond to you. Maybe you can speak to him directly after this press conference for the interests of time.

MC: Ms. Morita again?

Chugoku Newspaper: Thank you once again. A question to Mayor Akiba. It seems you had a very heated discussion in the closing ceremony. You had to extend the session and you also had to extend the session in the plenary conferences. And I think there were a shorter number of days held for the conference. Is that one reason why you had extended sessions? Are you going to make some changes for future conferences about the number of days you spend?

So you have the conference once every four years. It used to be that you have a conference both in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but now you only have a conference here in Hiroshima this time.

Akiba: Well, yes. As you said, the nature of the conference where we have so many people and we decide to speak for three days and it's rather difficult to reach any conclusions with this many people. Just because we can extend two days wouldn't make everyone satisfied that they have said everything they wanted. That, I think, is the kind of nature of any international conference.

What we did during the past is, we had so many different programs and actions that we were engaged in. For the past one year we've had many good results and consequences. But the problem was, we didn't have enough system in the Secretariat to take care of these activities in terms of money and people.

We also need more people and more time to prepare reports to each member city. But we haven't been able to do that. We don't have enough human resources and financial resources. And things are changing very rapidly on a daily basis. When changes are made we need to promptly communicate those changes to our member cities, but we don't have enough Secretariat function. And that's one problem we face.

In order to have closer communication amongst our member cities, one challenge and one item that we discussed at the Executive Meeting and at the plenary session is that we are to have an international secretariat office to have better communication. So in the future, we will be able to have more thorough discussion. We will have a better foundation for building consensus in the future. Thank you.

MC: The time has come. Just let me limit the question to one or two more questions.

Chugoku Newspaper: Okada of Chugoku Newspaper. I have a question to Prof. Mogami. In the Appeal, in the final part you talk about poverty and hunger in the middle part of the Appeal.

On the other hand, Ms. Susan Walker mentioned that the activities need to be more focused to be effective. I think it is similar to Pugwash as well.

When you discuss peace and nuclear disarmament, the kind of participants' focus may be diverged in a sense when you do not have the focus, and therefore, in the discussions at your conference, wasn't there a case that participants may have been looking towards different directions? So how do you intend to focus more on nuclear disarmament in the future?

Mogami: Of course, I take note of your question. What Ms. Walker had mentioned I think was very important for our meeting. On the other hand, poverty and hunger needed to be included in this conference as well, and such issues have started to be taken up from the previous conference as well.

Even if we try to coordinate and cooperate among the cities in nuclear disarmament, some cities may focus more importance on poverty and hunger, and yet they were looking for a reason to participate in a conference like ours, and so they would have more exposure to other cities, and therefore we did not want to focus only on nuclear disarmament, and that has increased membership greatly.

But when we actually go to promote a certain movement, sometimes it becomes less effective. And therefore, in terms of promoting a movement, as Ms. Walker has suggested, we may have to focus on a single issue. But having said that, however, I don't think we can say that peace is related only to the arms race or nuclear arms, and therefore we are trying to think together on the mutual cooperation, to think mutually on these important issues that concern specific individual cities.

MC: Just one more question then.

Chugoku Broadcasting: Okamoto of Chugoku Broadcasting. I have a question to the President of the US Conference of Mayors. As you mentioned, the mayors are always working closely with citizens, and although the Mayors for Peace have been appealing for many years, the top leaders of the United States and other countries seem to be relying more and more on nuclear weapons. So trying to hear the voice of the citizens, do you have any particular strategy to appeal to the national government?

O'Neil: Let me just say that the United States Conference of Mayors is a group of mayors from every party. It's mayors that run a partisan, mayors that run without any indication of party, so it represents all the cities of the United States, 30,000 or more. That means that all of the large cities are a part of this organization.

The resolutions that I mentioned earlier are resolutions that go through a process and finally get to the floor of the Conference for Mayors for a business meeting. When the resolutions are passed they become part of our advocacy for the next year. These are the things that we voted on, these are the things that we agreed on, these are the directions we want to take. It could be resolutions on education, it could be resolutions on transportation, it could be resolutions on land use. In this case, the resolutions I was discussing are the resolutions on nuclear disarmament. This gives us a direction for all of our mayors, for all of our members.

We are the local government; we are not the federal government. The recommendations that we make do not become part of the federal government policy just because we say so, but it does give us direction in what we do and how we feel about the policies for mayors.

So when you ask if this is going to be part of the federal policy because of the resolutions on a local level, that's not correct. We will make sure that we let the authorities, the White House, the Congress know, what the US Conference of Mayors feels about the direction in many, many issues. And as I've said earlier, we have been working on, 25 years ago, about the nuclear arms race, to stop that. And it takes a long time before some of our policies really become part of the federal government. But that's the type of system that we live in, and it's a system that gives our local people the feeling that they can be part of the policies that we make sure that the federal government knows is part of the mayors policy.

MC: Thank you very much. In view of the program to follow I would like to end the press conference here. So with this we conclude.

Akiba: Regarding the question posed to President O'Neill, let me add. The question that was posed I think was not only posed to the United States only. I think it also applies to other nuclear weapons States as well, including, we have the French cities, British cities with us as well. And therefore, it concerns all the local governments. There is a case, many cases, where the state policy may differ, the national policy may differ from that of local authorities, but we are asserting ourselves as local governments. I think we can all go back to Greece even, but in the case of the economy, I think it is the cities that have led the development.

And we speak of the 21st century as being the Century of the City, and in terms of environment, for example, the US federal government has not signed the Kyoto Protocol, but each city has set its limits in terms of emissions of the greenhouse gases. If the cities are willing to set the limits individually as to the emissions of greenhouse gases, ultimately, as a nation the United States may be able to meet the requirements under the Kyoto Protocol. I think the cities, therefore, have that power. And so the 21st century can be said to be the Century of the City, and at the Japan-US City Summit held in November of last year in Hiroshima, we made that point very clearly.

So if we are talking about the issues for which we speak for the citizens, we can do our part in trying to take actions on behalf of the will of the citizens. That is basically the intent of holding the Mayors for Peace, and also that is the approach taken by other similar organizations as well. So your question does not only address the United States but other countries as well.

MC: So we have the final version of the Hiroshima Appeal which will be distributed to you. This is the official Hiroshima Appeal, the final version. So with this, ladies and gentlemen, we would like to conclude the press conference. Thank you very much for your cooperation.