

The 7th General Conference of Mayors for Peace

General Conference

August 8 (Sat), 2009 15:30 – 16:30
Nagasaki Brick Hall

Chairperson: **Tomihisa Taue**
Vice President of Mayors for Peace
Mayor of Nagasaki City

Agenda Explanation: **Steven Leeper**
Chairman
Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation

Chairperson: Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki

Thank you very much. We would like to begin now with this General Conference. I shall be serving as the Master of Ceremony to moderate this session, on behalf of the host city and as a Vice President of Mayors for Peace.

Let me start by introducing the chairpersons:

For Plenary Session I, the chairperson is Mr. Robert Harvey, Mayor of Waitakere, New Zealand. Would you please stand up? Thank you.

For Section Meeting I, the chairperson is Mr. Stephan Weil, Lord Mayor of Hannover. I am sorry. He is not here yet. I will introduce him later.

For Section Meeting II, Mr. Luc Dehaene, Mayor of Ypres, Belgium will serve as the chairperson.

For Plenary Session II, the chairperson is Mr. Donald Plusquellic, Mayor of Akron in the United States.

So, ladies and gentlemen, let's begin with the Agenda Items. The General Conference is basically a place where members of Mayors for Peace discuss the agenda items. We have some non-member cities participating in this conference; they are here as observers. We also have some government representatives, NGOs, and members of the general public also participating as observers. We also have some representatives from cities that are not yet members of Mayors for Peace, and I would like to take this opportunity to ask you to join.

Now the Agenda Item 1, which is: Election of Executive Cities. Secretariat, could you please give us an explanation?

Agenda Explanation from the Secretariat:

Steven Leeper, Chairman of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation

I am chairman of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, the organization that houses the Secretariat of Mayors for Peace.

First, let me confirm that all mayors and all city representatives have the handout that contains the Agenda Item 1 and Agenda Item 2. Everyone has that handout? If not, please raise your hand. Okay, thank you very much.

The first item on the agenda is the election of the vice president cities. Please refer to

Agenda Item 1 in your packet. Since the last General Conference in 2005, we worked hard to get support for our 2020 Vision Campaign. In support of this campaign, we have requested that the mayors of Ypres in Belgium, Biograd na Moru in Croatia, Granollers in Spain, Halabja in Iraq, and Waitakere in New Zealand join Mayors for Peace as executive cities. All readily agreed to accept the positions.

At this conference, we are very happy to have representatives from twelve executive cities. Executive cities unable to attend include Christchurch (New Zealand), Laakdal (Belgium), Muntinlupa (Philippines) and Volgograd (Russia).

At present, we have a total of 16 members in the Executive Committee. Mayors for Peace membership comprises the Hiroshima City Mayor who serves as President, with Nagasaki City Mayor as Vice President, along with the mayors of Hannover, Malakoff, Manchester, Muntinlupa, Volgograd, Akron, Florence, Christchurch, and Laakdal for a total of 10 vice president cities. The executive officials include the mayors of Ypres, Biograd na Moru, Granollers, Halabja, and Waitakere.

Let me briefly explain the selection procedure. Please look at the bottom section of Agenda Item 1. According to Chapter III Article 4 Section 2 of our Covenant, the President and Vice Presidents shall be chosen by the solidarity cities. This refers to all the member cities. Additionally, in accordance with Article 5 of the same chapter, their term of office shall continue until such time as the replacement is selected at the subsequent Mayors for Peace General Conference.

In preparation for this 7th General Conference, Hiroshima Secretariat requested confirmation from previous executive cities, regarding their desire to continue in this position. Nine cities, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Hannover, Malakoff, Manchester, Muntinlupa, Volgograd, Akron and Florence expressed the desire to continue as vice president cities. Ypres, Biograd na Moru, Granollers, Halabja, and Waitakere also expressed willingness to serve as vice presidents.

In addition, last November, Mayor Akiba met with Mayor Thielemans of Brussels and asked him to join the Executive Committee. We did not hear from him for some time, but just on August 5, we did hear that they are willing to become an executive official. Therefore, we would like to now add them as candidate for vice president city, in order to avoid waiting four years before we can vote them in.

The cities of Laakdal and Christchurch have expressed their desire to step down as executive members. Their mayors are not in attendance today.

As the result of all these changes, if Agenda Item 1 is approved, Hiroshima City will continue as President with Nagasaki and 13 other cities serving as Vice Presidents.

Mayor Taue

Thank you very much. The Secretariat explanation was based on this morning's Executive Conference. May I ask you to show your agreement with a round of applause? (Applause) Thank you very much.

Until the 8th General Conference, I would ask all these Executive Cities to take leading roles for Mayors for Peace.

Let us now move on to Agenda Item 2, the future activities of Mayors for Peace. Explanation, please.

Leeper

Agenda Item 2, this is the Action Plan for Mayors for Peace for the next few years: At every General Conference since 1999, we have adopted an action plan. I will explain the Action Plan proposed this time by the Secretariat. After I finish the explanation, we hope you will give us the benefit of your wisdom. If you have any doubts, suggestions or ideas, we hope you will not hesitate to raise them.

I begin with Number 1, our current priority activities. Of these, our first priority is to promote the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol. Although President Obama has helped to create a far more receptive climate, our Protocol is a large step. Even in Japan, where the population overwhelmingly supports the abolition of nuclear weapons, the Japanese government may hesitate to press as hard as the Protocol presses for rapid movement toward disarmament. The goal of all our efforts will be to make the Protocol so popular in Japan and around the world that all governments will feel real pressure from the people. Because Hiroshima and Nagasaki are Japanese cities, Japan will play a critical role in this campaign. However, we intend to wage this campaign intensively and globally.

At the same time, to prepare the rest of the world for a major shift toward nuclear disarmament, it is extremely important to promote the International Decade for Disarmament. The UN General Assembly already designated the 10 years from early 2010 to early 2020 as the International Decade for Disarmament. It instructed the UN Disarmament Commission to prepare a formal declaration, though it will not finish drafting that declaration until early next year. We will be lobbying heavily to make sure it is completed on time. Then we will do our best to make sure that this Decade for Disarmament is perceived as the decade in which the international community must achieve nuclear disarmament. We are very lucky that this Decade perfectly matches our 2020 Vision, and we intend to make the most of it.

Down to Number 3: Our third priority is to recruit new members and work with cities, and municipal associations around the world to promote the idea and a practical reality of city diplomacy. We will be pressing at every opportunity to help cities speak with a louder voice on a global stage.

To explain these priorities further, let me read through the concrete activities we are planning. Please look at page 3, activities beginning in September. In September, Mayor Akiba and Mayors for Peace staff will attend the UN Department of Public Information NGO Conference to be held in Mexico City. This conference is held every year, but this is the first time it will focus on disarmament. Mayor Akiba and Mayor Taue were both invited as special guests. We have reason to believe that this could be the start of our strong disarmament effort at the UN, perhaps led by the Secretary-General himself. We put forward as early as October, an excellent five-point plan for nuclear disarmament that emphasize the need to start negotiating a nuclear weapons convention.

The DPI/NGO Conference in Mexico will be followed almost immediately by the UN International Day of Peace. We know that the Secretary-General is putting a lot of effort into this program this year. He personally proposes its main theme: WMD-We Must Disarm. So we want to support him. We hope to have Mayors for Peace well represented there, including the possibility of a video conference featuring Mayor Akiba.

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) is a major international effort led by Australia and Japan to chart a path from

here to a nuclear-weapon-free world. They have met three times, and Mayor Akiba attended their third meeting in Moscow to explain the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol. The fourth meeting will be held in Hiroshima in mid-October. These meetings are basically closed except to the commissioners and a limited number of invited speakers. However, we will be organizing city-sponsored events, and encouraging grass-root activities designed to encourage the Commission to adopt 2020 as their recommended year for nuclear abolition.

For about two years now, we have been circulating a petition and gathering signatures for the support for our Cities Are Not Targets project and the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol. Just this year, we have obtained the assistance of major labor unions in Japan and the International Trade Union Confederation with its 170 million members. In addition, Abolition 2000 member groups in a number of countries are circulating similar petitions. With all of this help, we will be able to collect 10 million signatures by next May.

Another extremely important activity is our ongoing campaign to recruit new Mayors for Peace. We have been growing very fast since 2003, but this year we intend to more than double our rate of growth. Our goal is 5,000 members and we would like to get there before May.

I am moving now to page 4, and May 2010. Our plans for the 2010 NPT Review Conference are still far from concrete, but we do intend to take a delegation and have a significant presence there. Thanks to Tom Cochran of the US Conference of Mayors and his staff, who are with us here today, and several of our US members, Mayors for Peace has been working closely with the US Conference of Mayors, which has adopted strong resolutions in support of Mayors for Peace and our goals at each of their annual meetings since 2004. Mayor Akiba was invited to speak at their last meeting in June this year, and the USCM unanimously adopted a resolution that:

“...welcomes enthusiastically the new leadership and multilateralism that the United States is demonstrating toward achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world, and calls on President Obama to announce at the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference the initiation of good faith multilateral negotiations on an international agreement to abolish nuclear weapons by the year 2020.”

We have also worked with municipal associations in Belgium, Italy, Germany, the

Netherlands and elsewhere. Furthermore, the idea that Cities Are Not Targets has been endorsed by the world's largest municipal association, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). These organizations have been invaluable in recruiting efforts and they have also helped us lobby more effectively at the national and international levels.

If the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol is to play a meaningful role, it will have to be championed by UN member countries. Finding a group of courageous champions will not be an easy task. Our international campaign manager, Aaron Tovish, was able to arouse considerable interests in the Protocol in the lead-up to 2009 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting but did not get them to take concrete actions. He will be coordinating with other NGO advocates to ensure that concerted action is taken by governments before or during the 2010 NPT Review Conference. We need to support their lobbying by generating a level of public demand that the media and national leaders cannot ignore.

It is possible that in the end we will have to settle for some documents that do not actually name the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol. However, in all our lobbying, we have at least two non-negotiable demands. One is an immediate start to substantive negotiations. The other is a target date for a nuclear weapons convention and the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We have often heard people talk about nuclear abolition as a long and difficult road, but we have yet to hear a good reason for delaying the elimination of nuclear weapons beyond 2020. We will not trade this perfectly feasible target date for some sort of vague open-ended promise. The nuclear-weapon states have been promising to eliminate their nuclear weapons for 40 years. Now, it is time for them to step forward and say by when they will do so.

As I mentioned earlier, we will be in New York in May 2010, lobbying for adoption of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol. We have heard that Abolition 2000 and United for Peace and Justice are planning to hold an international conference on nuclear abolition, peace and disarmament on May 1 and a major rally on May 2. We will do everything we can to support these events. We need thousands of people in the streets on May 2. So I hope you all will encourage your citizens to be there. During the Review Conference, we will address the delegates when the NGOs have their chance to speak at

the NGO session. In addition, Mayors for Peace will hold our own workshop or conference.

After the NPT Review Conference, we will be pushing hard for the 4th UN Special Session on Disarmament, which we hope, will lead directly substantive disarmament negotiations.

Aside from the special session or possibly to help plan for that session, we intend to bring together all the major players in the field of nuclear disarmament for a conference in Hiroshima as soon after the Review Conference as possible, hopefully before August 6 that year. This will include national representatives, cities, NGOs, and possibly even a few heads of states. At this Hiroshima Conference we will discuss the results of the NPT Review, and decide our next step. We cannot say much now about what that step might be, because it does depend heavily on the outcome of the Review Conference. Our purpose will be to make sure all the main players are in agreement and are well prepared to keep pushing, to consolidate our gains or possibly take an entirely new approach.

I am moving now to Number 4 below the table of Activities to “Strengthen collaboration...” From its inception, the 2020 Vision Campaign spearheaded by Mayors for Peace has been a joint activity involving many other NGOs and peace groups. This collaboration is essential. It has been growing and must continue to develop if we are to achieve our goal. I mentioned the grass-roots petition drive earlier. We will only succeed in this if our friends and allies make it as their own. I hope that you all will do whatever you can to gather signatures in your communities.

Please turn to Page 5 of the Action Plan, the Activities table. In addition to our traditional allies, we are planning a deliberate effort to bring together representatives from cities that have experienced major tragedies related to war. We have found this group of cities to have a natural affinity for each other and we believe we can work together smoothly, because we have unusually strong support from our citizens. We can speak with special authority on the subject of Cities Are Not Targets.

The Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons is an umbrella organization for nuclear weapons abolition that has approximately 2,000 member groups in over 90 countries. Its founding statement drafted in 1995 called on all states

to immediately commence negotiations on a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework. This demand has been advanced through our Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign. Working with international lawyers and scientists, the Abolition 2000 groups drafted a model nuclear weapons convention that has been circulated as an official UN document for deliberative purposes. Abolition 2000 has been an important partner to Mayors for Peace and it will continue to be so. We intend to strengthen our relationships with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) and the Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC), so we can get the benefits of their experiences with successful global treaty campaigns. We will also seek to strengthen our existing alliances with the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA). We will build new alliances with environmental networks and coalitions addressing climate change.

The next world conference of UCLG will be in Mexico City in the last quarter of 2010. We intend to have a strong presence there, and to obtain further involvement in our Cities Are Not Targets project. We hope Mayor Akiba will be able to take this up with Mayor Ebrard of Mexico City this September.

I am moving now to Number 5, increasing membership. In its first 20 years, Mayors for Peace grew to 500 members. In the six years since the launch of 2020 Vision Campaign to this day, we have multiplied that number by six fold to about 3,000 members. This year in eight months between now and May 2010, we intend to grow by another 40 percent, to 5,000. To save time, I will not go through all our methods, but we will only succeed if all of you take this recruiting effort seriously and do everything you can to help. The purpose of demonstrating this spectacular growth is to show that the world truly wants to be liberated from nuclear threats. Our growth has always been our greatest strength, and we need to be stronger than ever this year.

Now on to Number 6: "Expansion of the Executive Committee." In the past four years, we have expanded our Executive Committee by four cities. Now, given our rapid growth, we are seeking your permission to further expand. In expanding this Committee, we will be guided by the following principles;

- i. We will seek geographical balance among continents and countries.
- ii. We will give priority to cities and countries with high numbers of members, but even in countries with lower numbers, cities that demonstrated high

effectiveness or special strategic importance will be considered.

- iii. Finally, we will not expand the Executive Committee beyond 1% of total membership.

Now I am turning to Page 6 of the Action Plan to Number 7. In the past few years, our growth has outpaced our capacity for communicating and managing our campaign. Beginning this year, we will be making a stronger effort to organize ourselves into regions or territories. For example, we should be able to communicate with one city in Nicaragua or Ethiopia and know that our message will be translated into the local language and spread effectively to all members and through them to the general public. By your presence here, you have demonstrated a high level of concern. We hope that many of you will volunteer to organize for us in your areas. If you approve this part of the Action Plan, a specific proposal describing our new approach and requesting your assistance will be going out soon.

Here, I must point out that the City of Ypres, which was the first victim of an attack with chemical weapons and was utterly destroyed during World War I, has demonstrated to a remarkable extent the regional leadership we need. In 2006, they donated an office to us. In 2007, they helped Mayors for Peace formally incorporate as a non-profit organization under Belgian Law, called the 2020 Vision Campaign, which is now our international secretariat. This is the office that manages the day to day activities of our global 2020 Vision Campaign. I hope you all will accept this secretariat as a campaigning arm of Mayors for Peace and assist them in every possible way.

Now, I will turn to say a few words about the Obamajority campaign. When Tadatoshi Akiba became Hiroshima's Mayor in 1999, all Mayors for Peace activities were organized by a secretariat housed in one small section of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation that consisted of three or four people who worked on other projects as well. Ever since Mayor Akiba became President of Mayors for Peace, the amount of time and effort poured into Mayors for Peace and the international campaign against nuclear weapons has been growing by leaps and bounds.

In 2007, because of my previous involvement with the campaign, he made me Chairman of the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation. His purpose was to get more of the Foundation's energy focused on the campaign. Now, the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation is not enough. Recently Mayor Akiba has recruited all three of

Hiroshima's deputy mayors and many of the city's top executives to form a campaign headquarters that would literally engage Hiroshima's entire municipal government. This is an unprecedented effort by Hiroshima and as far as I know by any city to liberate the human family from nuclear weapons and we are calling this new effort the Obamajority campaign.

By adopting the term Obamajority, we are recognizing President Obama's undeniable contribution to changing the atmosphere, within which the disarmament debate is taking place at the UN and in Washington DC. In addition, we are deliberately fighting the deeply rooted belief, especially strong here in Japan that only radical anti-American left-wing people care about peace and nuclear abolition. We are making the point that a nuclear-weapon-free world is the will of an overwhelming majority of people and nations on this planet, including the President of the nuclear superpower. We are well aware that the US military industrial complex remains the source of the most powerful opposition to our cause, but that is precisely why we feel it so important to lift up and openly support President Obama. He is the head of the nuclear superpower. We literally cannot succeed in eliminating nuclear weapons without his active and enthusiastic support. Furthermore, at this time in history he is the man of the hour and we need him as our champion. For these reasons, the City of Hiroshima will be implementing the Obamajority campaign described in this Action Plan. We hope Mayors for Peace and all of you will take it up and use it in whatever way you think it will work in your community.

I am moving now to Number 2, our Midterm plans. As I said earlier, the primary focus of our campaign this year will be obtaining a disarmament breakthrough at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. After that Conference we will sit down with the disarmament community and plan our next steps. Whatever we decide will be designed to increase the momentum and pressure toward abolition. We will be promoting the International Decade for Disarmament, pressing hard for a Special Session on Disarmament, expanding our membership and holding our Executive and General Conferences as usual.

Please turn to Page 7 and Number 3. In our long term planning, we are already thinking about the enormous gala celebration we will hold in 2020, when we finally bring an end to the nuclear age. We have several ideas in mind, but we think the most exciting celebration will be to hold the 2020 Olympics in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Even if Tokyo hosts the 2016 Olympics, it will still be quite appropriate. The first Olympics since 1945 in a nuclear-weapon-free world should be viewed completely unrelated to national identity. After all, the first Olympics were held among cities and remarked by Olympic truce. The end of nuclear weapons should be a truly global celebration and it should naturally take place in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Moving on to 4 and 5, all of the plans I have been describing depend on two organizational factors.

First, we need to improve our organization and communication. As I said earlier, if you approve our plan to organize national and regional chapters, you will soon receive a concrete request and we hope you will volunteer to play an active role.

Second, we must have additional funds. This global campaign is far more than Hiroshima and Nagasaki can pay alone. If you approve this Action Plan, you will soon receive an invoice with a suggested donation based on a formula that takes into account both population and national per capita GDP. This is a completely voluntary donation. We know that we are in the midst of serious global economic crisis. We know that each city is struggling with its own special economic situation. Furthermore, it has always been our policy that no city must pay to be a member of Mayors for Peace. We are requesting a voluntary donation only to support the 2020 Vision Campaign. You should feel completely free to decline our request or to give us less than we request.

However, as you consider your response, please remember that this is the global issue of our time. If the international community fails in May 2010 to take a convincing step toward disarmament, we will have lost a critical opportunity to de-legitimize nuclear weapons and halt their further spread. If that happens, our hopes for a new age of peace and prosperity will dim significantly. On the other hand, if we can generate sufficient public demand and persuade our leaders to guide us to a nuclear-weapon-free world, we will have achieved epoch-making breakthrough that could open a door to truly sustainable peace and prosperity for all.

I will end by pointing out that we are not asking for a major investment. We have 3,000 members. If every member in the richer nations were to give us 1,000 euro and every member in the developing nations were to give us 100 euros, we could wage a powerful and successful campaign.

This is the Action Plan we have in mind. We are open to your suggestions.

Mayor Taue

Thank you very much for explaining the priority activities of Mayors for Peace as well as the midterm projects and plans according to the proposed Action Plan. Many of the current priority activities involve campaigning to get the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol be adopted at the NPT Review Conference in May 2010. At the same time, a series of activities will be required to expand our network, to form more alliances and to strengthen our membership. For the latter part of the midterm plan, the overall direction was given but concrete plans are to be decided.

Do you have any questions or any comments or observations from the floor? If you do, please raise your hand. Member cities are requested to offer your comments or questions. Any opinions or comments? If you have no objection to adopting the Action Plan as presented, please give us a round of applause to show your approval. (Applause) Thank you very much. The plan was adopted. Based on this Action Plan, we will strengthen our activities toward the next General Conference. Thank you very much for your cooperation. This concludes the General Conference Agenda Items. Any questions? Please give him the microphone.

Question from the floor: French city representative

Yes indeed, as we have gone through the General Conference, I concur with the direction. However, I have a concern. It seems that there are repetitions of the word "President Obama". Of course President Obama is very much highlighted. He has given us a turnaround for the future, but we are from the cities. We are representatives of cities gathered here in the Conference of Mayors for Peace. Why do we need an opinion leader like him? The opinion leader is supposed to be citizens or inhabitants of cities. It does not have to be the leader of a state to take initiatives. Of course President Obama of the United States is a wonderful person, but still, we are representing our citizens. You keep saying "President Obama" as if selecting him as a king in taking these initiatives. I am very much concerned about emphasizing Mr. Obama.

Mayor Taue

Secretariat, please response.

Leeper

It is going to be conducted in the City of Hiroshima. This is already decided, because it is an extremely useful strategy here in Japan. It is truly a way to get out of the box that we are in. We are in a box where many Japanese people consider it only a far-left wing project to eliminate nuclear weapons. We have to escape that box. We need average housewives. We need average “salary men.” We need everybody thinking that this is their problem. And in Japan, President Obama is very popular, the United States is popular, and this is a very powerful move that has already been very well received and accepted in Japan.

We are presenting it here as this part of the Action Plan for Mayors for Peace, hoping you that Mayors for Peace will adopt it, which I believe by the clapping of our hands, we have done just now. And we also offer or suggest that you use it, or not use it, in your own city or your own country, depending on how you think it will be useful to you, but we are doing it in Hiroshima and Japan for sure, and we are proposing it.

The other thing is that President Obama really is vital, critical, to the success of any effort to eliminate nuclear weapons, and we believe that by expressing our support for him we push him forward. We push him to work with us and to be listening to us. It is much more effective than if we take some kind of “anti” stance.

And finally, just in terms of name recognition, he is probably the best known name on the planet right now. So for these reasons, we have chosen to do this.

Mayor Taue

Thank you. Does that answer your question about President Obama and the invitation to the campaign? It is up to each city and local authority to decide how you are going to use this. In Nagasaki City, we are now making a citizens’ movement to invite President Obama to visit Nagasaki. Having said that, we are not fully dependent on his initiative, but we would like to offer an opportunity for him to look at the A-bomb site with his own eyes in Nagasaki. By looking at these and listening to the voices of the *hibakusha*, we are hoping President Obama will appeal to the world, which will be very influential to the world. I believe this is going to be a joint undertaking and the citizens are now making the movement. We do not intend to make President Obama a king. We are not going to be wholly dependent on President Obama. I believe what

we are doing is correlating and matching with an intent that has been raised.

Now, any other questions? Yes, please.

Question from the floor

I raise a question to the Executive Committee and wonder why all the nuclear nations are not represented on the Executive Committee like Pakistan and India. It seems to me that, if we are going to be effective in all these countries, we need to have a special push in those nuclear nations. Well, I think it is eight right now. People ask whether or not North Korea has nuclear weapons and a lot of us believe they might have them. Pakistan and India—those nations are not represented here. And it seems to me that mayors from nuclear nations should be included to be a part of this. I am asking if we have done that.

Mayor Taue

Thank you very much for your question. Response from the Secretariat, please.

Leeper

Very good point, and that is why we have asked for permission to expand the executives, and we have just received that permission. We have been growing so rapidly since 2003, we are sort of changing the traditions of Mayors for Peace as we go along. What you see before you is a mixture of old and new. I believe that we are going to move toward much more geographical uniformity or a coverage of the whole globe. We are certainly aiming at that.

The other thing is, we expand executives through the relationships we build with cities. As we get to know people, as we get to feel comfortable working with them, and as we feel that we can be a good team with them, we invite them to join the executive committee. That is also a very important consideration. So, we are definitely working in that direction, and I believe that you will see that kind of development in the next few years.

Mayor Taue

Will that answer your question? Any other questions or comments? As we received a round of applause from you, we would like to adopt the Action Plan. Would you please give us another round of applause to show your approval? (Applause) I thank

you very much. I hope that our activities will be strengthened according to this program, and of course we would like to come back to discuss things when necessary. So we would like to conclude the General Conference of Mayors for Peace now.

Now, Lord Mayor of Hannover is with us, the chair person of the Section Meeting I. May I ask you to stand up, Mr. Stephan Weil, Lord Mayor of Hannover?

Thank you very much for attending this General Conference and for your active participation. We are going to have further meetings today, tomorrow and the next day. With this, we would like to conclude this session.