

The 7th General Conference of Mayors for Peace

# Plenary Session I

**CITIES AND CITIZENS CAN MOVE NATIONS**  
**- Toward a worldwide paradigm shift -**

*August 8 (Sat), 2009 16:30 – 18:00*  
*Nagasaki Brick Hall*

**Chairperson:**

**Robert Harvey**

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

**Speakers:**

**Donald L. Plusquellic**

Vice President of Mayors for Peace  
Mayor of Akron; US Conference of Mayors, U.S.A

**Ivan Knez**

Vice President of Mayors for Peace  
Mayor of Biograd na Moru, Croatia

**Stephan Weil**

Vice President of Mayors for Peace  
Lord Mayor of Hannover, Germany

**Michel Cibot**

Representative from Vice President City of Mayors for Peace  
General Manager, City of Malakoff, France  
Association Française des Communes, Départements et  
Régions pour la Paix (AFCDRP)

**Kenji Kitahashi**

Mayor of Kitakyushu, Japan

**Tomoko Nakagawa**

Mayor of Takarazuka, Japan

**Susanna Agostini**

Representative from Vice President City of Mayors for Peace  
Councilor, Florence, Italy

**Khder Kareem**

Vice President of Mayors for Peace  
Mayor of Halabja, Kurdistan, Iraq

**George Regan**

Baillie (Councillor), Dundee City Council  
Chair, the UK and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities

Chairperson: Robert Harvey, Mayor of Waitakere, New Zealand

Good afternoon. *Kia ora tatou!* (Maori: Greetings to all of you)

I am the Mayor of Waitakere City. I am delighted to welcome you here to this first session. I hope that you can all hear me. We have one hour, which seems a bit severe, a chairman's worst nightmare is to say we have one hour, but I think we can come and go, so, everyone who wants to speak can speak.

Quickly to introduce myself: I am the Mayor of Waitakere City. I have been a mayor for 17 years. I have been a peace activist for 50 years with the first anti-nuclear demonstrations in 1950 in Auckland, New Zealand, where I was born. I have been an activist for all my life; my life is still going on, against nuclear war and nuclear weapons. I became the mayor in 1992 and declared Waitakere City, a peace city. I had worked with Prime Minister David Lange declaring New Zealand nuclear free in 1994, which was a milestone. I led a protest to French Polynesia to stop the nuclear testing on the atolls in the Pacific. And so, I have had a long commitment in the Pacific Islands with the campaigns against nuclear weapons.

I would like to tell you that I bring you greetings from the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. John Key, and I handed it to my good friend, Mr. Akiba, a letter from the Minister of Nuclear Disarmament this morning. So, I feel very lucky and greatly privileged to say that the whole country of New Zealand, the nation of New Zealand, is totally committed to being nuclear free. We do not even allow nuclear boats to come into our waters, or to our ports. So, "No, no, no", has been the way that New Zealand has been for the last 30 years. I am very proud of that. There are eight major cities in New Zealand. And every mayor has signed up to this Mayors for Peace.

So I am privileged to welcome you all, with this brief introduction, and I am sure you will be around for the next couple of days. There are around 16 speakers in the next hour. And I would like to welcome first, the Mayor of Akron, Mr. Donald Plusquellic. We are delighted to welcome you, Mayor Donald Plusquellic.

Donald L. Plusquellic, Mayor of Akron; US Conference of Mayors, U.S.A

First of all, good afternoon. I would like to thank Mayor Taue for hosting this event here in this important city. I am honored to have this opportunity to speak to you today, and bring you the greetings from the mayors of the United States. I am speaking on behalf of the United States Conference of Mayors.

I would like to express our appreciation to Mayor Akiba for his efforts for many years, as well as, again, to Mayor Taue. Each of you here today has worked hard to make our cities safer from the destructive forces of nuclear weapons.

For many years, the US Conference of Mayors has worked hard for the same causes that bring us here today, i.e. nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, a nuclear-weapon-free world by the year 2020, as well as, in general, urging the redirecting of limited resources from weapons to peaceful uses, to address issues such as housing, poverty, and other important matters to cities. The US Conference of Mayors is composed of mayors from both major political parties and political independence. When the mayors come together, we try to set our political differences aside and focus on the jobs of delivering services that are important to the people of our cities.

I want to make a personal note here that it has been so much more enjoyable, and I think Mayor Akiba will appreciate this, coming to Japan not as an apologist for our national government, but taking great pride that you use our new president's name as a part of our campaign that is something very worthwhile and useful for the citizens of the world and I thank you for that.

The US Conference of Mayors includes the mayor of cities with populations of more than 30,000 and I have been honored to have served as the president from 2004 to 2005. Let me really talk about what we do. Each year, in our annual meeting in June, we adopt resolutions concerning fundamental policies that we believe in, on a variety of issues. We certainly have a strong record on nuclear disarmament.

I want to cite several examples: Back in 1984, the US Conference of Mayors called for a decrease in threat posed by nuclear weapons. In 1985, on the 40th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we called for reversing the nuclear arms race. In 1987, we called for the suspension of nuclear testing. In 2004, we declared that weapons of mass destruction had no place in the civilized world and called for new negotiations. In 2008, we called for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

And this year we called upon the International Commission for the Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) to adopt 2020 as the target date for

achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. We asked President Obama to announce this call at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in 2010. We were very honored to have Mayor Akiba at our annual meeting this year to witness the US mayors unanimously passing the resolution.

Leading our group year after year for so many years as a person that I would like to recognize, and ask you to thank, that is the Executive and CEO of US Conference of Mayors Tom Cochran who is with us today. He has provided outstanding leadership. And I ask Tom to stand, please, and be recognized for your support for these many years of nuclear disarmament policies.

Let me just finish by making a comment on Mayor Akiba's leadership. Through his writings, speeches and his leadership, Mayor Akiba continues to define the moral imperative of nuclear disarmament and he has motivated many US Mayors to become involved, including myself. He reminds us that we must not allow ourselves to have the message of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fade from our minds. And we cannot allow our hope for the future to fade. The US Conference of Mayors will continue to work with Mayors for Peace to ever strengthen our visions, ideas and our commitment to nuclear free world and we join with all of you to make that goal, that dream, becomes a reality. Thank you very much for the opportunity today.

#### Mayor Harvey

Mayor Plusquellic should say God bless America and keep that Obama very well. Thank you very much for your fine speech. Talking in this session, the subject is "CITIES AND CITIZENS CAN MOVE NATIONS – toward a worldwide paradigm shift–." I would like to welcome the next speaker, who is Mayor Ivan Knez of Biograd na Moru, that is in Croatia. *Dobra večer.* (Croatian: Good afternoon)

#### Ivan Knez, Mayor of Biograd na Moru, Croatia

Ladies and gentlemen, first of all I just would like to say that I am speaking in the name of the Mayor of Biograd na Moru, Mayor Ivan Knez. I would just like to say a few words.

First of all to thank Mayor Taue of Nagasaki for the reception he has prepared for all of us. Now, I have to say that we are very honored being present here for the first time at the General Conference. We have become a member of the Executive Cities and we

have become a member of Mayors for Peace fairly recently in the year 2008. And being honored particularly for being now, officially named as an Executive Vice President City, we have come here to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and here to Japan to learn of the horrors and sufferings caused by the use of nuclear weapons here in Japan. We are here because Biograd also suffered in a recent war, but it cannot be compared with what you have gone through here.

So we are educating our children in Biograd on the theme of disarmament. We started with the children through the making of paper cranes, and as they were taught to make paper cranes, the story of Sadako was told to them. They learned why and how she suffered and died. Through our children we convey the message of peace, and the need for disarmament to keep peace in the world.

By sending the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol to all the cities and municipalities in Croatia, and we have more than 500 of them, we have informed them all of what the organization of Mayors for Peace is doing to have nuclear weapons abolished. Registration forms were also sent to these cities and municipalities, and quite a few signed them and joined the organization. So now Croatia has 28 members. We intend to repeat this action again on September 21, the International Day of Peace this year.

People do not know what nuclear arms are and their consequences. Unfortunately, this is best known by those who have suffered the consequences as you have here in Japan. This issue is something rather distant and abstract for the common citizen in this era of recession. The citizen who is struggling to make ends meet does not have time to think about nuclear disarmament until it becomes a direct threat, and then it is too late. And this is what Mayors for Peace wants to prevent.

We, members of this organization, must make citizens aware that the threat is always present as long as there are nuclear weapons anywhere in the world. As a small local government, we will keep our voice as high as we can on this issue. We will work on increasing the number of Croatian cities and municipalities to join this honorable organization, our Mayors for Peace, and make its message known to everyone.

In the hope of acquiring President Obama's support, as we have mentioned so many times today, I will quote another famous American, Dwight D. Eisenhower, who said:

“Controlled, universal disarmament is the imperative of our time. The demand for it by the hundreds of millions whose chief concern is the long future of themselves and their children will, I hope, become so universal and so insistent that no man, no government anywhere, can withstand it...Disarmament, with mutual honor and confidence, is a continuing imperative.”

Thank you.

### Mayor Harvey

Ivan, would you like to stand, so we can give you a round of applause. I now call on the Lord Mayor of Hannover, Mr. Stephan Weil. Welcome.

### Stephan Weil, Lord Mayor of Hannover, Germany

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to give you some information about the situation of the German section of Mayors for Peace. First of all, I want to thank warmly dear Mayor Taue for the warm reception here and the hospitality of Nagasaki. We are enjoying staying in your town very much.

“Peace is not everything, but without peace everything else is nothing.” Our insight in this is due to Willy Brandt, the former German Chancellor and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize.

When members of the public put forward their opinion regarding this very important and emotional question, and when the cities express themselves as representatives of their citizens, this cannot leave countries and governments unaffected. This has to be regarded especially when it comes to the questions of life and survival in the future, which are fundamental for the dedication towards disarmament and peace.

The increasing attention that Mayors for Peace enjoy as an organization with more than 3,000 members all over the world has without a doubt contributed to the fact that our calls for a total nuclear disarmament targeted for the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons by 2020 are high on the agenda again. More than 350 member cities and communities in Germany among them 10 new members in the recent weeks alone have also contributed to this. They are worried because the nuclear threat is still existent and nuclear disarmament has come to a halt in the past few years.

Especially older people in Germany know from their own experience what war and

destruction mean. To give you an example, the City of Hannover was about 90% destroyed during the Second World War. They do not want their children and grandchildren to relive the same thing. For them, therefore, it is a very personal concern to engage themselves in disarmament and peace.

In these days special memorial ceremonies take place in many German cities to commemorate the victims of the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki on their respective anniversaries. These ceremonies are the result of dedication to Mayors for Peace. Many cities organize special activities on the occasion of September 1, the International Day of Peace this year, as we do in Hannover. Because this day marks the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Second World War, and I must say that it was the darkest period of German history.

These questions occupy people's minds, and therefore, concern cities, too. But we must also understand that completely different challenges actually take precedence for the people in the cities, and therefore occupy the cities, too. The consequences of the global financial and economic crisis do not exclude cities. The economic problems and the worries about employment supersede all other subjects for the moment for many people. Massive tax deficits disrupt the budgets of many cities.

Nevertheless, the question of war and peace must be part of the political agenda. We have to continue our efforts for global disarmament, because economic crises come and go, but nuclear threat is a permanent one all over the world. This will also be one of the subjects that the German member cities will give attention to at the annual conference on November 27 in Hannover.

After our federal election at the end of September and the forming of a new government in Germany, we expect information on how parliament and the government will deal with the issue of disarmament, and what the aims in respect to the NPT Review Conference in May next year will be from the German side. And the German section of the Mayors for Peace will make great efforts. Germany will be a further part of the global peace movement. Thank you very much for your attention.

#### Mayor Harvey

Thank you Lord Mayor. The next speaker will be the General Manager of the City of Malakoff, Mr. Michel Cibot.

Michel Cibot, General Manager, City of Malakoff; Association Française des Communes, Départements et Régions pour la Paix (AFCDRP), France

Malakoff is a very small city but it has participated in all seven of the General Conferences of Mayors for Peace. I would like to tell you about my own personal history, which may be of interest to you.

We know that nuclear weapons are the most dangerous thing created by human beings. This has been said repeatedly in the process of modernization. However, we have confirmed that the nuclear weapons are getting more and more dangerous.

Since 1968, we have had the NPT, which aims to abolish nuclear weapons. The United Nations in 1984 adopted the Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace. It is stipulated in that Declaration that

“ensuring the exercise of the right of peoples to peace demands that the policies of States be directed towards the elimination of the threat of war, particularly nuclear war...”

The abolition of nuclear weapons is already accepted at the international level, but we think that the speed of abolition is too slow. Recently, there was a statement made by President Obama that has opened the door to a new pathway in the international arena. This gave hope to people around the world, especially peace activists. We have to find hope and power to achieve the abolition of nuclear weapons. We have to act together for that and I propose two roadmaps.

First, we are experiencing an economic crisis, but there are also too many nuclear armaments, which are a waste of money and resources. We have to pay attention to such waste in relation to sustainable development. There are various arguments about sustainable development. However, we often forget about the issue of nuclear weapons when we talk about sustainable development.

If you think of sustainable development on this earth, you really have to make it clear that you cannot possess nuclear weapons. We have problems such as climate change, environment, and the depletion of fossil fuels. These issues are concerns for local governments, but we are not very clear about their relationships to nuclear weapons. Cities really have to make the relationships clearer.

That being the case, we who are present at this General Conference of Mayors for Peace have to advise the mayors who are not here today to think about things from an angle where sustainable development and nuclear weapons are not compatible, and cannot be reconciled with each other.

This has to be included in municipal agendas and they have to take appropriate steps for sustainable development and the abolition of nuclear weapons. These should go hand in hand. To prevent the total destruction by nuclear weapons, the people of the world have to take action. Now, the world is changing. We are living increasingly in an urbanized world, so the problem is getting much more important.

Very often, cities are targeted for attacks, and we are asserting that Cities Are Not Targets for any attacks. Cities are full of people whose lives are threatened. Therefore, we have to take action. We have to think what we must do to protect ourselves from possible attacks. We need to consider a simple suggestion to connect the issues of sustainable development and nuclear disarmament.

#### Mayor Harvey

Mayor Kitahashi of the City of Kitakyushu. *Konnichiwa*, Mayor.

#### Kenji Kitahashi, Mayor of Kitakyushu, Japan

I am participating in this General Conference on behalf of the one million people of Kitakyushu. This is the first time in 24 years for the Mayor of Kitakyushu to participate in this meeting.

I would like to express my gratitude to Mayor Akiba and Mayor Taue. I would also like to express my respect to all the mayors and other people who are working hard to realize a peaceful world without nuclear weapons.

Kitakyushu is about 200 kilometers east from Nagasaki and 64 years ago on August 9, the bomber was aiming for Kitakyushu. Kitakyushu was the original target of the atomic bomb, but that day was overcast. So the atomic bomb was not dropped on Kitakyushu, but Nagasaki. We feel deep sorrow and sympathy for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which were completely destroyed by the atomic bombs.

At Kitakyushu, every year on August 9, when the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, we hold a peace memorial ceremony for the victims of the atomic bombing. But with the passing of time, the survivors of the atomic bombs are getting quite old, so we need to raise awareness about the horror of the atomic bombing amongst young people. Therefore, we hold a ceremony to pray for peace co-organized by the Kitakyushu A-bomb survivors' association.

On August 15, the day when the war ended, we hold memorial services for the war dead in five places around Kitakyushu City and we have a permanent exhibition of war related materials, which has been donated by citizens. These are our efforts to pass on the horror of wars to the next generation.

This April, we learned about a movement called "Kayoko Cherry" planting to commemorate a Nagasaki *hibakusha* girl, Kayoko. A tree planting ceremony for "Kayoko Cherry and Mother-Child Cherry" took place in Kitakyushu because we were powerfully affected by this movement. In cooperation with the association in charge of the cherry tree planting, we actually did a cherry tree planting ceremony in Kitakyushu with the participation of our citizens.

It is now 64 years after the end of the war. We have many young people who do not know the horror of war. So, we have to involve young people in our campaign to eliminate nuclear weapons and teach them the importance of peace. This is why I attended this Conference.

Of course it is very important for national governments to make a decision on the elimination of nuclear weapons, but citizens and mayors and local authorities can work together, too. If we have solidarity across national borders, then we can create a new movement. The year 2010 is the target for the campaign of Mayors for Peace to have the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol adopted, and we sincerely support the target.

My mother was a Hiroshima citizen, and I myself am a second generation survivor of the atomic bombs. When she got pregnant, she was wondering whether she should give a birth to me, because she was afraid of the aftereffects. We need to continue this peace movement advocating "No more Hiroshima, no more Nagasaki and no more *hibakusha*."

I thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for giving me this opportunity to speak. Thank you very much.

### Mayor Harvey

Thank you. Next, the first woman speaker is the Mayor of Takarazuka, Ms. Tomoko Nakagawa.

### Tomoko Nakagawa, Mayor of Takarazuka, Japan

I am from Takarazuka City in Hyogo Prefecture. My name is Tomoko Nakagawa. In April of this year I was elected Mayor. I am the first woman elected mayor in my city's 54 years of municipal government. The first task I tackled was to join Mayors for Peace, and today I am very pleased to be able to share my feelings with my colleagues from around the world here in Nagasaki.

Starting in 1996, I was a member of the lower house for 7 years. At that time, I encountered Mayor Akiba of Hiroshima City. He sometimes called me even at midnight. When Pakistan conducted nuclear tests, he called me saying, "Nakagawa-san, we have to go to the Pakistani Embassy to protest." Even at night, we went to the Pakistani Embassy to protest. When there was a nuclear test done by India, Mayor Akiba said, "Let's go to the Indian Embassy to protest", and he was seen there, because he was fighting against nuclear weapons. I was very much inspired and very touched by his guts and efforts in these activities. I deeply admire his endeavors. After I became a mayor, I joined Mayors for Peace to give support and assistance to the earnest feelings of Mayor Akiba.

Today, I would like to let you know about what is happening to the A-bomb survivors overseas. For a long time, the Atomic Bomb Survivors' Support Law was not applicable to *hibakusha* overseas, but there have been court proceedings one after another. Now, finally, they can get some benefits at their residences based on the Atomic Bomb Survivors' Support Law. But their benefits are not equivalent to those of the *hibakusha* in Japan. For example, the medical cost has a ceiling of 150,000 yen per year. Secondly, in order for them to get approved as *hibakusha*, they have to come all the way to Japan from overseas. Most of them are elderly and sick from the aftereffects of radiation. There are so many such *hibakusha* living overseas. I sincerely hope that those *hibakusha* living abroad will be able to get benefits equivalent to those of the *hibakusha* in Japan. This is something I would like you to understand.

I hope that we will be able to lobby the Japanese Government so that these people can be recognized.

A-bombs and weapons of mass destruction kill thousands instantaneously and indiscriminately, regardless of which side they are on. Many Korean people from the Korean Peninsula, which was colonized by Japan, were victimized. The number of Korean *hibakusha* is about 70,000 people, which is more than 10% of all *hibakusha*. After being exposed to the A-bombings, a lot of *hibakusha* moved outside of Japan, to South Korea, DPRK, US, Brazil and so forth, to more than 40 countries in total, and now, there are 5,000 overseas *hibakusha* who are living outside of Japan. We hope to have more information about those people in the Atomic Bomb Museums in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For these overseas *hibakusha*, we need your support so that we will be able to provide them an appropriate level of assistance and convey the facts of the atomic bombings to the next generation.

Through the Peace Declaration by Mayor Akiba, we need to at least execute and perform our responsibilities for the next generation. I do have the confidence in the activities of this Mayors for Peace. Mayors are here to protect citizens. Mayors are here to protect peace. This is the mission and our message to the nation. Thank you very much indeed for giving me an opportunity to speak.

But before I stop, I would like to give you some information on Takarazuka City. Takarazuka is where Dr. Osamu Tezuka, a very famous cartoonist and the author of “*Hinotori* (Phoenix)” lived from 5 to 24 years old. Also famous is the Takarazuka Girls’ Revue. Please find some materials about Takarazuka City in Hyogo Prefecture, outside of this hall.

Let us recruit as many cities as possible for Mayors for Peace. I will work hard in doing the same for my colleagues in Hyogo Prefecture, Japan. Thank you very much.

### Mayor Harvey

That was Mayor Nakagawa. I think one of Mayors for Peace’s great speakers and activists is Ms. Susanna Agostini, who is here to represent Mayor Matteo Renzi. She is a star performer and such a great supporter of the aim of Hiroshima. And we would like to welcome you from Florence, Italy.

Susanna Agostini, Councilor of Florence, Italy

First of all, greetings to the audience, to all the mayors and association, and peace movement people we have in this room. They are fighting for peace for the people in the world. We want to show our gratitude to the City and the Mayor of Nagasaki, Vice President of Mayors for Peace.

In 1987, a Florence artist Jorio Vivarelli came to this city and donated a sculpture, which is now in the Peace Park. You might be able to see that. That is another contribution by the City of Florence. The sculpture is named “Hymn to Life,” and has the purpose of “never forgetting the horror of the A-bomb.”

The reason I am here today is to meet you all and to reconfirm the commitment for world peace of the City of Florence. This commitment is quite old. In fact it already started in the 1950s, when then Mayor Giorgio La Pira proposed his political vision of peace to the mayors of the world, highlighting in particular the roles of mayors as a link among institutions and citizens.

I would like to thank the President of Mayors for Peace, Mayor of Hiroshima, Dr. Tadatashi Akiba, for his constant and amazing work during these years. When we met him in Geneva in 2008 for the second Preparatory Committee meeting for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, Mayor Akiba called Mayor La Pira a “prophet.”

In fact, 54 years earlier, in the same city of Geneva, Mayor La Pira spoke at the International Red Cross Committee, proposing the following concept:

“Cities are living units which play an essential role in contemporary society. National governments don’t have the right to destroy them. Cities have a right to exist because of the political, historical, religious values they represent that must be recognized by nations.”

During the Geneva meeting, it was decided to organize a world meeting of the mayors of capital cities, which actually took place in Florence in October 1955. 10 years after the bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when the world was still divided in two because of the Cold War. The ancient city hall of Florence hosted the meeting of capital cities, with mayors from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South of the world. There were mayors from Washington DC, Moscow, London, Paris, Prague,

Bucharest, Warsaw, Vientiane, Jerusalem, Teheran and Beijing. Cities were transcending national frontiers and even the iron curtain to create ties in the name of humankind.

La Pira opened the meeting with the following words:

“Cities are like books. They tell us about human history and human civilization. They are useful for the spiritual and material education of the future generations. Cities cannot be killed. They are assigned to each generation with the expectation that we will take care of them. They are to be preserved, enriched, and then given to following generations.”

Nowadays, with an increasing number of countries possessing weapons of mass destruction, we need to recreate the ties between institutions and citizens, in the name of the so-called “power of humankind.” It was advocated by Martens in 1907 during the Second Hague Peace Conference. He mentioned the power of pushing the governments towards new policies aimed at the peaceful resolution of conflicts and towards the refusal of the possession of weapons of mass destruction or nuclear weapons.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to increase the awareness of human rights. Nowadays the world is facing a financial crisis, an increase of poverty, massive new migrations as well as terrorism and wars, and all those problems are distracting public opinion from the nuclear threat. That’s why we are here today; we must continue our work keeping the public aware of the danger. We have walked together until now and we must keep on walking united.

The new mayor of Florence has expressed the will to protect his community from this threat, forbidding the installation of nuclear plants in municipal territory. He is also encouraging the promotion of peace culture in schools, giving the next generations information about the risks for the future of humankind.

Since 2005, Florence has been working to achieve these goals. In 2005, Mayor Leonardo Domenici was elected in the Executive Board of Mayors for Peace. Since then, thanks to his dual role of Mayor of Florence and President of the Italian Conference of Mayors (ANCI), he was able to convince a lot of Italian mayors to join Mayors for Peace.

Besides that, enforcing an international mission organized in Iraqi Kurdistan by the International Peace Bureau Association of the Italian section, Mayor Domenici became the point of reference for many mayors of that part of Iraq, suffering from years of war. The Italian delegation in that mission was led by the Mayor of Marzabotto, a member city of Mayors for Peace, which is famous for the atrocities which occurred during the Second World War, and which since 1988 has established a sister city agreement with the Kurd city of Halabja. We were thrilled when we found out that the Mayor of Halabja, Mr. Khder Kareem had entered the Executive Committee of Mayors for Peace. We consider it a real step toward the reconstruction of that area devastated by the use of chemical weapons that produced serious damage, often irreversible, for current and future generations.

The activity of peace promotion of the Municipality of Florence has continued in 2006, when Mrs. Hero Ibrahim Ahmed, the wife of Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, came to Florence to receive the Florence "Seal of Peace" for her work in the field of children's protection, acting through "Save the children," the association she created in Kurdistan with the aim of promoting the remote adoption of abandoned children. These are examples of solidarity and of active cooperation between a city and a country at war. Meanwhile the Municipality of Florence has concretely operated in projects of cooperation and of reconstruction in Iraq. In particular, we have started a project of health assistance in Kurdistan, with the construction of three hospitals equipped with Italian sanitary technology and Italian staff. These hospitals assist both adults and children in their own country avoiding the patients to be transferred abroad to be cured.

Another positive action of the City of Florence promoting the culture of peace was the assignment of honorary citizenship to Dr. El Baradei, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. He is the director of the UN International Atomic Energy Agency against the nuclear proliferation. During his mandate the agency developed and enlarged the knowledge of the risks related to atomic weapons, has enhanced the role of security and has spread the acceptance of nuclear inspections, in order to avoid a new run towards nuclear armaments, especially in third world countries.

In November 2007, like in 1955, Florence became the centre for the promotion of peace in the world, hosting the Executive Conference of Mayors for Peace. At the end of the conference, over 100 Italian mayors plus some international mayors gathered in the City

Hall to move their commitment to the 2020 Vision Campaign and their support to the activities of Mayors for Peace. During the three days of the meeting, mayors from all over the world; Japan, Iraq, America, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy were representing the 1,828 cities in 122 nations that had joined Mayors for Peace at the time. The common target was the elimination of any atomic weapons by 2020, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings.

Another important international appointment was the Geneva meeting in April 2008. On that occasion, during the Preparatory Committee meeting for the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference we had an executive committee meeting and we decided to enlarge the number of city members joining both Mayors for Peace and the 2020 Vision Campaign. According to this decision, the Mayor of Florence personally wrote to 190 Italian mayors officially asking them to join the campaign.

In the world there are some good signs that something positive is happening. US President Barack Obama during his speech in Prague on April 5, 2009, expressed his intention to work for nuclear disarmament, indicating the target of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

On June 5, 2008, the European Parliament expressed the need to create a universal convention banning the nuclear weapons and inviting the countries owning nuclear weapons to propose initiatives of disarmament, creating a nuclear-free zone covering the whole of Europe.

The Italian parliament has approved a law obliging the Italian government to actively promote the above European decisions in the field of the abolition of nuclear weapons during the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference that will take place in 2010. These are the reasons why we need an always bigger number of members to join our association.

The last action of Florence in the field of the promotion of peace and the respect of human rights has been the meeting of Mayor Matteo Renzi, our new Mayor, with Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi. She is a lawyer who has become the symbol of all the Iranian men and women who are fighting for the recognition of their human rights. The new Mayor of Florence, who I am proud of representing here, wants to increase the number of actions in the field of international cooperation, working with our sister cities

in particular, through education for a culture of peace and for the ban of all weapons of mass destruction, working with both Italian and foreign students living in our city.

My duty, both as President of the Peace Commission for the Municipality of Florence and as representative of the Mayor of Florence in this important meeting for the second time, is to keep and strengthen the ties with all of you, working together with the NGOs and peace operators.

Only working together can we stimulate our institutions and national governments to take the right decisions and grant the success of our initiatives to promote a safe, weapons free world to the future generations. Yes, we can.

#### Mayor Harvey

We would like to record our respect, particularly the history that Florence has been so generous for such a long period, particularly a beautiful sculpture “Hymn to Life” that you gave about 40 years ago. Would you take our respect and our support to Mayor Renzi, and that I wish you well and Mr. Damonti, your interpreter.

You mentioned Kurdistan and what Florence has done to them. It is appropriate that the next speaker is indeed a mayor from Kurdistan, Mayor Khder Kareem. He is from the City of Halabja and he is here to speak with us this afternoon. Mayor Kareem, welcome.

#### Khder Kareem, Mayor of Halabja, Kurdistan, Iraq

Ladies and gentlemen. First of all I have warm thanks to you all for arranging this important conference. It is an honor for me to meet you here to prevent what happened in my city of Halabja. I would like to explain some points about the genocide in Iraq using weapons of mass destruction against the Kurdish people.

Since the establishment of the Iraqi state in 1921 until the collapse of Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003, all formal government policies in Iraq sought to erase Kurdish nationality, culture, and language. The Kurdish people continuously came up against such regimes and defended their own lands. When the Ba’ath party in Iraq took up power under the command of Saddam Hussein, the situation for Iraq as a whole, in particular the Kurdish region, deteriorated.

The former Iraqi regime experimented in using weapons of mass destruction against the Kurds. In 1974, the Iraqi army destroyed the cities of Halabja and Qaladzya with Napalm bombs. Also in 1980s, chemical weapons had been used by the same army against more than 200 Kurdish villages.

But the most brutal crime against the Halabja people happened on March 16, 1988, when the city was attacked with different kinds of chemical weapons including mustard gas, cyanide and VX. During the raids, more than 5,000 civilians were killed and more than 10,000 were injured while the rest fled to the borders and to Iran.

Halabja today is still re-building and recuperating from the attacks 21 years ago. But still the aftermath effects of such chemical gas threaten the lives of the people of Halabja. It has been an emotional journey for our city that does not speak about revenge or hatred. The people of Kurdistan and Halabja seek peace as a way of reconciling their past and shaping their future. More importantly, we do not want such an atrocity to happen again anywhere.

We hope in the new Iraq, all religions, nations and ethnics can live peacefully together. Mayors for Peace plays an important role because this organization is like a parliament to bring together all different mayors of different ethnicities in one.

#### Mayor Harvey

Thank you. We thank you for a very moving address. We now move to UK and we want to welcome from Dundee in the United Kingdom, the Chair of UK and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities, Mr. George Regan. Welcome.

#### George Regan, Baillie (Councillor), Dundee City Council; Chair, the UK and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities

Thank you Chairman, Mayor Akiba, Mayor Taue. My thanks and appreciation for having the conference, our visit to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It has been an everlasting experience. I thank you for that.

Mayors, delegates, I am Baillie George Regan and I am Chair of the United Kingdom and Ireland Nuclear Free Local Authorities, which has its base in the Mayors for Peace Executive City of Manchester.

I pass greetings on to all here in Japan from all the citizens and cities involved in our movement. We campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons and the reduction of nuclear power in the British Isles.

Our movement began in 1980 at the height of the “Cold War” between the Soviet Union and the United States. At the time, the UK was a very close ally of the United States and had agreed to the American request to host nuclear weapons at American bases in the UK such as Greenham Common. Local councilors, under pressure from their local communities, and highly concerned about the possibility of having their cities becoming targets for a nuclear attack, believed they had to do something about it.

Thus, on November 5, 1980, Manchester City Council declared itself a “nuclear free zone”. Within months, towns and cities across England, Scotland and Wales had joined the movement, including the likes of London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Leeds and my home city of Dundee. The decision to declare “nuclear free zones” was a highly political and unusual, as on the whole, local councils discuss local issues and rarely venture into international politics. Being “nuclear free” was also a strange concept – how can a city be nuclear free when it may have a nuclear power station in its area, or nuclear materials being transported through it on a regular basis?

However, “nuclear free” was a worthy aspiration to work for, and all the towns and cities that joined up campaigned on that idea. After the Chernobyl disaster of 1986, the government also widened to cover concerns over the safety of nuclear power system. For 30 years, the Nuclear Free Local Authorities, as it became, has been the major local government voice on nuclear issues in the United Kingdom and has a respected record of highlighting concerns over nuclear weapons and nuclear power, and we have been successful. There are no US nuclear weapons at Greenham Common. Instead, there is a country park and a business centre. That was due to the last major nuclear weapons cuts made in the late 1980s by the USA and USSR. I do believe citizen groups, councils and public opinion were a hugely important factor in these decisions. I believe all the campaigning made by cities and citizens were listened to by national governments.

I remember listening to Mayor Akiba and Mayor Ito speaking in Manchester in 2003, saying how they were inspired by the “nuclear free zones” movement in the UK to set

up Mayors for Peace organization and develop Japan's Nuclear Free Local Authorities movement. We are proud to have led the way then and are proud to be a close ally and part of the Mayors for Peace movement now.

As an organization, Nuclear Free Local Authorities has now expanded to include towns and cities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Unlike the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland is, by law, a non-nuclear state and a leading country with an official status of neutrality. That has enhanced our movement and we have developed strong links with the Irish Government.

As local politicians we perhaps have more knowledge of how our local communities work than anyone else. I fundamentally believe that by working together nationally and internationally, we can influence our national governments. Through Mayors for Peace, and by working with citizen groups, we can effectively represent the aspirations of towns and cities to remove nuclear weapons by 2020.

Few years later, few thought that the Soviet Union would be no more and few thought that we would ever see the elimination of nuclear weapons. Well progressive change always happens when people stand up in favour of legitimate aspirations. We have to work with citizens groups as we did in the 1980's to make this final aspiration of nuclear weapons abolition finally take place.

In May I was honoured to speak at the United Nations in the Mayors for Peace session at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Preparatory Conference. I was impressed at how much respect United Nations Ambassadors from around the world gave to the Mayors for Peace delegation. We spoke with Ambassadors from around Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. I was enthused that there is a strong level of support for our aspiration at the conference, and that there may be a major breakthrough, we hope, in 2010.

As Mayor Akiba said, we are the "Obamajority" and just as we never thought there would be a black President of the United States, I am sure one day, quite soon, we will see positive moves for major reductions in nuclear weapons. That is something good to give to my grandchildren. Let's work for it.

I, basically, am a simple man. I represent a working class area in my city. I am

delighted to have been elected to work within the Nuclear Free Local Authorities. I came here 4 years ago to Hiroshima for my very first ever Conference. It had a lasting impact on me. I still have horror inside by what was brought across by the exhibition.

To finish, there is an old saying in the United Kingdom, and that is, “The good men do lives on, and the evil men do lives on, but the good they do is buried with their bones.” I ask you, please, to work as hard, for us all to work as hard to eliminate nuclear weapons by 2020 and let my grave be lonely and just name ourselves not any good work, let the good work stay behind and continue. Thank you.

### Mayor Harvey

George, thank you for those kind words.

We have run out of time. I am sorry, but we are half way there. We have managed to get through passionate and visionary speakers that have told us about their world, mayors and the world that we all exist in. The rest of this list, and there are some very fine speakers will need to move till the second plenary session. So there will be much hope and much information on Monday. So please do come to the second plenary session on Monday to hear the rest of those fine speakers.

I would just like to finish by thanking you all. And I would just like to applaud the two mayors that have made such a wonderful job to bringing us all together, Mayor Akiba and Mayor Taue. Thank you both. That concludes the afternoon session. Best wishes for you all, God bless you and see you at the second plenary session on Monday.