



Mayors for Peace

Secretariat

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Open Letter to the United Nations General Assembly

Listen to the voices of the hibakusha

The nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki seventy years ago stole the precious lives of more than 210,000 human beings by the end of 1945. Those who barely managed to survive continued to suffer, losing families and friends, combating the long-term effects of radiation, and plagued with fears for their own and their offspring's health. In their fervent desire to prevent a third use of a nuclear weapon, the *hibakusha*—atomic bomb survivors—have bravely recounted experiences that with each recollection hurt them. They have expressed in every way they could the humanitarian message, "No one shall ever again suffer as we have."

On this 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings, the average age of the aging *hibakusha* has exceeded 80. The tasks of preserving and passing on the memories to coming generations are growing in urgency. We feel a deep responsibility to help people around the world, particularly the young, understand the indescribable inhumanity of nuclear bombing, which we trust will motivate them to work to prevent the catastrophic consequences of another nuclear weapon attack on civilian populations.

Hold as soon as possible a forum to identify and elaborate the most effective measures to realize the full implementation of nuclear obligations.

The three international conferences on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons held recently have increased global awareness of the inhumanity of these weapons. Further, the consensus is growing that the abolition of nuclear weapons will require a legal framework to prohibit them. The 2015 NPT Review Conference in April-May this year failed to produce a final document, much to the disappointment of people around the world who wish to free the world of nuclear weapons. However, we are not overly pessimistic. Participating countries at the conference extensively and squarely discussed the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. The final draft recommended that the United Nations General Assembly establish an open-ended working group to identify and elaborate effective measures including a legally binding instrument for the full implementation of nuclear obligations as stipulated in Article VI of the NPT. This development gives us hope for progress if we work hard on it.

Setting up such a platform would be a critical step forward in creating a roadmap that will lead to a legally binding instrument banning nuclear weapons. We therefore hope that a forum will be established as soon as possible in 2015, which is the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We strongly urge the UN General Assembly First Committee currently in session to decide on the establishment of an OEWG.

The urgent need for such a forum

It is clear that nuclear weapons are the ultimate inhumane weapons, and are an absolute evil. As long as nuclear weapons exist—and nearly 16,000 warheads still exist now—so does the

threat of their use, whether intentional or accidental. We have been kept assured that nuclear weapons would not be used. In truth, according to recently disclosed records, nuclear weapons have carried us to the brink of World War III more than ten times and caused over 1,000 accidents big or small. We mayors of the world refuse to continue to subject our citizens to such risks. We stand with civil society everywhere to call for a concrete roadmap toward a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear weapons.

What we expect from the forum:

1. Involvement of nations with diverse views

We welcome the growing number of countries endorsing the Humanitarian Pledge for banning nuclear weapons presented by Austria, as we believe that this trend will drive international public opinion towards a legal ban on nuclear weapons. However, states under a “nuclear umbrella” such as the NATO countries, Japan and Australia have not made the pledge. In line with the nuclear-weapon states, they oppose any legal prohibition of nuclear weapons and consider step-by-step approach as the only practical roadway to nuclear disarmament. The main problems with the step-by-step approach are that it is too slow to cope with real humanitarian risks posed by such weapons and that it offers no plan or time frame for the actual achievement of nuclear disarmament.

We mayors who seek effective negotiations on nuclear disarmament ask all state parties, including the nuclear-weapon states and nuclear umbrella states, to transcend their differences regarding the implementation of Article VI and start negotiations on a legal ban on nuclear weapons. A framework established under the UN General Assembly is a comprehensive approach, as it would allow non-NPT members to participate.

2. Seek a security system that does not rely on nuclear deterrence

We strongly urge the nuclear-weapon states and their umbrella states to stop relying on unstable security systems based on the threat of nuclear weapons and distrust. Rather, we ask them to pursue a sustainable security system away from the risky nuclear deterrence principle and to build a credible alternative security system that can offer realistic basis for nuclear disarmament. The US and Russia, who together possess more than 95 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons, must lead the way.

3. Recall that nuclear disarmament was achieved amid the peak of international tension

We urge world leaders not to excuse non-action by citing cases of Ukraine and Middle East. Please recall historical facts that past nuclear disarmament measures are taken even at peaks of international tension during darkest years of the Cold War by joint initiatives of US and Russian political leaders. Now is the time to transcend differences and to advance cooperation in nuclear disarmament.

4. Visit the atomic bombed cities to understand the urgency of the abolition issue

It is time for the policymakers of the world, especially those in nuclear-weapon states, to exercise decisive leadership in joint efforts to create a collective international climate for nuclear weapons abolition. To further enhance their commitment, we ask them to visit the atomic bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as soon as possible to confront the reality of the atomic bombings for themselves, and to hear the earnest message of the *hibakusha* for peace.

Civil society must support the development of inter-governmental negotiations towards the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Keenly aware of the responsibility we hold for the security and welfare of our citizens, Mayors for Peace, composed of 6,857 cities from 161 countries and regions, will fully support governments' efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. As well, we will work together with civil society partners around the world to cultivate mutual understanding requisite to an environment conducive to nuclear abolition.

Consolidated efforts by state and city governments, parliamentarians, together with wide spectrum of civil society partners, such as women, youth, scholars, lawyers, religious leaders, doctors, artists, environmentalists, and human rights activists, can change the world. Let us work together to finish this important job.

October 16, 2015

Mayors for Peace

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Vice president	Mayor of Volgograd, Russia
Vice president	Mayor of Malakoff, France
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