

Hiroshima and Nagasaki Mayors Speak at Overview Session

**Tadatoshi Akiba,
Mayor of Hiroshima
President of
World Conference of
Mayors for Peace
through Inter-city
Solidarity**



It is my honor and privilege that I can speak here today at a conference such as this, dedicated to the abolition of war.

Since I represent the City of Hiroshima, I would like to summarize the human history after Hiroshima as a battle of the human race, against war in general and against the nuclear weapons in particular. Furthermore, I would like to claim that we have won the first several rounds of this battle.

Now let me mention just three of these “rounds” as I have chosen to call them:

(1) Nuclear weapons could not destroy the very essence of what makes us human. They failed to obliterate the spirit and the backbone of human beings.

I do not have to tell you how terrible the A-bombs were. Hibakusha describe the condition after the bombings as hell on earth. Nobody could justifiably blame hibakusha if they had chosen death literally, psychologically or otherwise. However, most hibakusha have chosen to live and to continue to be human.

I consider this fact our victory against nuclear weapons in the first round.

(2) Hibakusha have effectively prevented another use of nuclear weapons.

The Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have kept sending the message of peace to the rest of the world despite their physical and psychological pains and all other odds against them. Their message has been direct and simple: No one else in the world should go through the same agony and tragedy they

had experienced. Their voices became the beacon of conscience which effectively prevented nuclear weapons powers from using their weapons once more. Actually, this is essentially what Mr. John Hersey, author of the book “Hiroshima”, told me in 1985.

In what ways have hibakusha conveyed their message, then? One example is the Peace Declaration which both cities issue every year in August. Hibakusha and citizens also hold conferences. Many of them. They attend conferences. This is one of them. They send missions of peace to the rest of the world. They welcome missions of peace from all over the world. They send doctors to treat those affected by radiation. They accept patients exposed to radiation and provide expert care and healing environment. The list goes on and on.

In sum, I would like consider the content of hibakusha’s message and activities, which prevented another use of nuclear weapons, as our victory in the second round.

(3) The Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been devoted advocates of a new model of relations among nations. Instead of the obsolete model of pitting one nation against others as “adversaries”, they have promoted a cooperative and altruistic model of the world.

This way of thinking started right after the bombings. Hibakusha understood right then that blaming the United States would not solve their problems. Instead of shouting “Remember Hiroshima!”, they cried “No more Hiroshimas!”. Instead of resolving to invent more destructive and more lethal weapons to take revenge on the United States, they focused on abolishing nuclear weapons and creating real peace in the world.

This attitude is beautifully captured in the inscription on the memorial cenotaph in the Peace Park of Hiroshima. It reads, “Please rest peacefully, for we will not repeat the evil.” Yes, we, the human race, will not repeat the evil.

The same philosophy guided Japan when the “peace” constitution was promulgated in 1946. It enunciates the principle that the coming world must be built on peace, trust and justice, renounces war forever and prohibits Japan from possessing any armed forces.

HAGUE APPEAL FOR PEACE 1999

It is true that such thought had existed in human history for centuries. It is also significant that one country in the twentieth century took it seriously enough to make this principle as one of the pillars of its constitution.

This describes the victory in the third round.

I believe that these victories are important. They are important for hibakusha because they gave meaning to their survival. They are important for us because they provide the means for our survival.

I also believe that if the world can really understand the messages hibakusha have been sending, and act on them, it will not take long to eliminate nuclear weapons from the surface of the earth.

However, the fact is that the world as a whole has not appreciated the importance of these messages or victories, nor have they shown enough respect or gratitude towards the hibakusha themselves. In other words, the world has taken hibakusha and their words and commitment for granted.

I am pointing this out in order that we come to grips with certain realities and that by overcoming them we come closer to accomplishing our common goals. With this line of thinking in mind, let me continue.

I am sure that those who are present are exceptions, but the world at large have stood alongside the bombardiers and thus helped justify the logic of nuclear war and undermined the effectiveness of hibakusha messages. What goes on in Kosovo is a good proof of it.

Imagine an even worse case. Suppose the hibakusha had

taken a completely different path in order to come to terms with their experiences. Suppose they had advocated that the only way not to repeat Hiroshima and Nagasaki would be to build even more powerful nuclear and other weapons, that is, to believe in the logic of more elevated form of mutually assured destruction. I am pretty sure that the world would have come to an assured extinction during the past half century because nuclear powers would have interpreted such an attitude on the part of hibakusha as God's permission to use nuclear weapons.

Luckily, there were enough hibakusha who voiced their opinions and feelings, which led to the three rounds of victories I mentioned earlier.

In order to make sure that hibakusha's message would not fade away, I see a need to condense the messages of hibakusha into the highest moral principle. "Thou shalt not kill" is important, but from the standpoint of the human race collectively we might want to give the principle, "Nuclear weapons are an absolute evil", a higher priority.

Of course, we may not be able to achieve this goal entirely within a short span of time. For one thing, we must convert those non-believers such as nuclear weapons powers. Therefore, we need to design a well thought out, realistic strategy to reach this goal.

What I would like to propose as a possible first step is to separate an important component of the "absolute evil" thesis and make it the overwhelming rallying point of the world's public opinion. I am thinking about the principle, "One should not kill non-combatants in war or similar conflicts." Or slightly nar-



Overview Session

HAGUE APPEAL FOR PEACE 1999

rower, "One should not kill children in war or similar conflicts."

One clear advantage of this principle is that a wider range of people accept it: even those who believe nuclear weapons are God-given or necessary evils are compelled to endorse it.

Another advantage is that real grassroots democracy can be involved. Cities all over the world can declare this principle as "sacred" and pass local ordinances to ban the existence of not only nuclear weapons but ordinary weapons within their city limits in order to qualify for the "non-combatant" status. Such an effort is something that the World Conference of Mayors for Peace through Inter-city Solidarity can undertake.

Of course, what I am proposing here is just one possibility among many others. Some of you might have a more focused idea which would be strategically more practical as a rallying point of the public opinion.

I cannot over-emphasize the importance of education from the point of view of hibakusha. Those hibakusha who are active today were themselves children in 1945. They were some of the first initiators of children's movement for peace and won the three victories as I have mentioned. We must make sure that this tradition is passed down to all future generations. Therefore, I would like to continue Hiroshima's effort to provide curricula, educational materials and other resources to schools, colleges and universities so that the younger generation will understand the meaning of survival.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not just cities. When someone mentions "Hiroshima" people do not visualize the local landmarks, or the new shopping mall. Why? Because there is a historical trauma so intense attached to these two cities that people continue to remember.

When one looks into a bright flash of light, it is possible to see the image of the light for some time afterwards, ghostly yet present. We still see the image at this time, fading but real.

We cannot and must not allow ourselves to have the message of Hiroshima and Nagasaki fade completely from our minds, and we cannot allow our vision or ideals to fade, either. For if we do, we have but one course left for us. And that flash of light will not only rob us of our vision, but it will rob us of our lives, our progeny, and our very existence.



**peace is human right
time to abolish war**

**Ichcho Itoh,
Mayor of Nagasaki
Vice President of
World Conference of
Mayors for Peace
through Inter-city
Solidarity**



Honorable chairperson Ms. Cora Weiss, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor as vice-president of the World Conference of Mayors for Peace through Inter-city Solidarity and mayor of Nagasaki to have this opportunity to speak to you today.

It is clear that "disarmament and human security," the theme of today's plenary session, includes a variety of issues such as the reduction of conventional weapons, starvation, poverty, refugees, suppression of human rights and environmental degradation. But as mayor of Nagasaki I would like to call particular attention to the threat and inhumanity of nuclear weapons.

Nagasaki was opened in the year 1570 as a port for trade with Portugal and later flourished as a gateway for exchanges with the Netherlands and China. The mingling of foreign culture with indigenous Japanese culture produced a unique ambience that is still evident today in Nagasaki's cuisine, festivals and local customs.

On August 9, 1945, three days after the explosion of a uranium atomic bomb over Hiroshima, a plutonium atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Although the question of why different bombs were used remains controversial to this day, I would like to comment on this subject.

Nagasaki was reduced instantly to rubble as a result of the explosion, and more than 74,000 people—almost all of them non-combatant citizens—were killed. The death toll also included some 8,500 Japanese Christians. Even the people who managed to survive continue to this day to suffer from the late effects of exposure to radiation and from mental and physical injuries.

Nuclear weapons are tools of mass destruction that bring instantaneous death to huge numbers of people without any discrimination between combatants and noncombatants.

The citizens of Nagasaki and Hiroshima understand from their own personal experience that nuclear weapons are inhuman, that their use can never be justified, and that, if used, they will push humankind to the brink of extinction. On the basis of this experience, we have appealed to the world relentlessly for

HAGUE APPEAL FOR PEACE 1999

the abolition of nuclear weapons. Please let me add that we are making these appeals, not out of hatred or resentment, but out of an ardent aspiration for peace and for the safety of our children and grandchildren in the 21st century.

In 1955, ten years after the atomic bombing, Nagasaki joined in a sister-city affiliation with St. Paul, Minnesota, and for 44 years since then we have participated in various exchanges at the grassroots level. I think you will see from this that our appeals for peace have always been accompanied by the deepening of friendship and mutual understanding with our friends overseas.

In November 1995, three and half years ago, I presented a statement to the International Court of Justice here in Hague about the “illegality of the use of nuclear weapons.”

In this statement I said that: “It is my understanding that the free and unlimited selection of weapons is unacceptable in terms of international law concerning warfare, and that 1) attacks on civilian communities, 2) the infliction of unnecessary suffering and 3) the destruction of the natural environment are prohibited, even with regard to weapons that are not expressly banned. The use of nuclear weapons obviously falls under the scope of this prohibition and therefore is a manifest infraction of international law.”

After this, I was approached by one of the judges, who said: “Thank you for a very moving statement.” For the atomic bomb survivors, this unusual comment was brimming with enough warmth to wash away all the sufferings of half a century.

In July the following year, as you know, the International Court of Justice stated in its advisory opinions that the “threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of International law.”

Subsequently, a large number of prominent politicians, scientists and retired military officers who had been closely involved in nuclear strategy also made concrete proposals for nuclear disarmament.

But last May, in the midst of this situation, India and Pakistan conducted successive underground nuclear tests, making our fears about nuclear proliferation a reality. I immediately sent letters to the United Nations, to the five nuclear states, to India and Pakistan and to disarmament-related NGO calling for the swift conclusion of a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty. In this letter, I asked the leaders of the nuclear states and all countries to declare a ban on the development, testing, manufacture, deployment and use of nuclear weapons, to dismantle and abandon existing nuclear weapons and to start negotiations aimed at the swift conclusion of such a treaty.

On the eve of the 21st century I have raised two important subjects for special effort by Nagasaki as an atomic-bombed city. These are 1) the transmission of the atomic bomb experience, and 2) the enhancement of world opinion in favor of the

abolition of nuclear weapons through cooperation with NGO.

Citizens born after World War II now account for about 70% of the Nagasaki population. I consider it a matter of vital importance to convey the reality of the atomic bomb experience to the young people who will lead the world tomorrow.

Nagasaki City is currently conducting a variety of activities to inform young people about the atomic bombing and war and to cultivate an appreciation for the value of peace. Please let me introduce just one of these activities. This is a photograph of a camphor tree at Sanno Shrine located only 800 meters from the hypocenter of the Nagasaki atomic bomb explosion. Although given up for dead after being ravaged by the heat and blast generated by the explosion, the tree came back to life and in that way greatly encouraged the citizens picking up the pieces of their lives from the rubble. In recent years, however, the tree’s vitality was declining, and concerned local children made efforts to restore the health of the camphor tree with the help of “tree doctors” and other adults. Nagasaki City also helped to fund this project. This photograph shows the fruit of those efforts.

Since then the students of Shikimi Junior High School in the city have even produced seedlings from this camphor tree, and they have launched a project to distribute “second-generation atomic-bombed camphor trees” throughout Japan. Nagasaki City will continue to commit itself to the preservation of atomic-bombed structures and trees.

With regard to cooperation with NGO, the swift conclusion of the recent treaty banning land mines was due in large part to the grassroots efforts of NGO above and beyond national borders. Inspired by the remarkable success of this campaign, we are now searching for a new approach to the movement for the abolition of nuclear weapons. A recent NGO survey shows that, even in the United States and Britain, the vast majority of people think that negotiations for the elimination of nuclear weapons should be started. The same thing can be said for Canada, Australia and the countries of Europe. If the people and NGO of the world gather together, the driving force thus achieved will be powerful enough to influence the trends of international politics. Ladies and gentlemen, I ask for your cooperation. As they advance into old age, the atomic bomb survivors live in increasing anxiety about the failure of humankind to blaze a trail to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

May all the citizens and NGO of the world gather together to ensure the security of our children in the 21st century. I hope that this Hague Appeal for Peace 1999 will provide an opportunity for world citizens and NGO to exchange opinions about the solution of various global problems, to strengthen the bonds of solidarity, and to make new steps in the direction of world peace.

Thank you very much.