

Statement by Mr. Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima
To the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference
Vienna, Austria
3 May 2017

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak on behalf of the City of Hiroshima as well as Mayors for Peace representing more than 7,200 member cities around the world; and to voice our strong support for the NPT, especially its Article VI obligation to negotiate nuclear disarmament in good faith.

“No one else shall ever again suffer as we have.” Based firmly on this conviction, *hibakusha* have continued to appeal for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Mayors for Peace honors and shares this precious message, which reflects our strong sense of responsibility as mayors to protect the safety and welfare of all the citizens. Thus we have appealed to the world that use of nuclear weapons shall never be repeated. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences they cause must never occur again.

While nuclear weapons have not been used in warfare since 1945, nearly 15,000 nuclear weapons still exist, posing risks of use too great to be ignored. Facing this reality, we mayors feel obliged to call on the entire world to join forces and work together to realize a peaceful world without nuclear weapons as soon as possible.

In this time of global tension and uncertainty, we are witnessing a worrying trend of intolerance and rising risks of conflicts turning into violence. The danger of nuclear proliferation remains real, as seen in the case of North Korea. Faced with such challenges, nuclear-weapon states and their allies still argue that nuclear deterrence is vitally needed to address their international security challenges.

Yet there is a fundamental flaw in any security system that is dependent on nuclear weapons of utmost inhumanity. Such a system will offer no real solution to the security challenges the global community is facing today. Even if it appears to present short-term solutions, they would be nothing more than a temporary fix based on the fragile foundation of the threats actually to use this most inhumane of all weapons of mass destruction.

Over time, the international community will increasingly reject these repugnant and inhumane weapons and the doctrine that justifies their possession and use. It is already widely recognized that such weapons could invite more complex dangers of nuclear proliferation. We must also recognize that the very existence of nuclear weapons itself poses risks of use each day, as a result of miscalculation, malfunctions or accidents, if not by intent. Nuclear terrorism is also a real risk we cannot ignore.

In this global situation, I would like to ask world leaders, especially those possessing nuclear weapons: “Take initiative; Start with immediate steps now!” We should all be reminded of the NPT Article VI obligation to pursue good-faith disarmament negotiations, because in my view, today’s global crisis is at least partly attributable to the negligence of this core obligation. Therefore, we strongly appeal to the policymakers of the world, trusting their keen sense of responsibility to provide reliable security to the people. We say, stop relying on nuclear deterrence that is based on mutual distrust and threats. We ask them to seek to create a new security framework that can foster mutual respect and a shared sense of our common humanity.

Such an effort, of course, requires a long-term and global perspective. However, we would like to recommend once again that these leaders take initiative and start with immediate steps now by implementing their nuclear disarmament obligation in good faith. We trust that with such a decisive leadership, we can build together a more reliable and long lasting security system away from nuclear deterrence.

Mayors for Peace supports the commencement of negotiations this year of a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. We do so, most importantly, in solemn recognition of the fact that the *hibakusha* wholeheartedly welcome such negotiations and are placing high expectations upon them. We shall not fail their genuine expectations. Unfortunately, the negotiations have begun without the presence of nuclear-armed states and those under their umbrellas. These nuclear weapons dependent states should, however, understand why civil society and so many non-nuclear-weapons states are supporting negotiations to prohibit nuclear weapons.

As is seen in the recent global discourse on this issue, the great majority of non-nuclear-weapons states that are not dependent upon nuclear deterrence are keenly aware of the risks of nuclear weapons and catastrophic inhumane consequences of their use, whether intentional or not. They are now also squarely facing the reality that anyone could become a victim of nuclear detonations. This is why so many non-nuclear-weapons states are leading the negotiations. They are doing so not only on the basis of the Article VI obligation of the NPT, but also because of their legitimate right to participate in such negotiations as potential victims of such weapons' use.

We sincerely expect that the legal instrument produced through these negotiations will be also open to the participation of states currently dependent on nuclear deterrence. We have also made specific proposals to ensure that the treaty achieves universal membership. We have done this because if the new treaty does not allow future participation of nuclear dependent states, it may not establish effective legal prohibition of nuclear weapons that will lead to their total elimination. We sincerely hope that the treaty will develop into a verifiable and comprehensive legal framework in the future; one that will indiscriminately bind all States, including the nuclear-weapon states.

We strongly recommend that the nuclear-armed states and their allies participate in the next round of negotiations in June and July. Even if they cannot do so now, we ask them at least to make further efforts to take concrete steps to fulfil their nuclear disarmament obligations. Each and all the Parties to the NPT share the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Unfortunately, all the concrete steps for nuclear disarmament have been stagnating for a long time and have failed to yield any significant results—such as bringing the CTBT into force, concluding an FMCT, and substantially reducing the nuclear stockpiles of the US and Russia, which still account for more than 90 percent of the world's stockpile. We therefore call on nuclear-armed states to try harder to achieve substantial progress by introducing new and innovative steps to break this stagnation. And in this context they may find their participation in the negotiation of the legal prohibition of nuclear weapons could well be a viable option. Taking concrete steps to reduce risks and to eliminate nuclear weapons are an integral part of NPT Article VI obligations as have been agreed upon in the past NPT review conferences. Any failure to implement such basic obligations will only cause further destabilization throughout the global community.

In closing, we extend our best wishes to all the delegates for the success of the proceedings and we pledge to continue working together with our diverse civil society partners in our own efforts toward a world free of nuclear weapons. We continue to whole-heartedly support initiatives by world leaders in pursuit of this great cause.