

## **Message from Mayor Jan Durnez of Ypres on the occasion of the Planting Ceremony for a Second-Generation A-bombed *Ginkgo* tree**

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I am deeply honored to be present here on the occasion of the planting ceremony for a second-generation A-bombed ginkgo tree at the UN Office at Geneva. As mayor from a small city in Belgium I'm honored to speak on behalf of Mayor Matsui from Hiroshima and the 7146 member cities of our organization Mayors for Peace.

My little city of Ypres in Belgium was in the middle of the Western frontline during the first world war and was totally destroyed during 3 major battles. The Second Battle of Ypres started with the German gas offensive of 22 April 1915. The Germans would use the same weapon five more times in the following battles. This means that Ypres remains linked to the first large-scale deployment of the gas weapon for eternity, although it was two years and two months later that the name of Ypres would also be linked to asphyxiating gas. When the Germans fired grenades filled with mustard gas over the Ypres Salient from July 12<sup>th</sup> 1917 on. The burning and often (temporarily) blinding mustard gas was later called Yperite.

My city has been rebuilt and since 1985 the city adopted the second name: City of Peace.

- The city council of Ypres will from its own past continue to raise its voice in the however still actual debate on war and Peace.
- The city will continue to support persons and organisations who make a special contribution to peace, through its international Peace Prize.
- The city will continue to contribute to initiatives that aim to abolish chemical and other weapons of mass destruction. The city's engagement in the network of Mayors for Peace is a logic consequence.

Let me read the message of the Mayor of Hiroshima and Chairman of Mayors for Peace Mr Kazumi Matsui.

(Mayor Matsui's message)

Thank you, on behalf of Mayor Matsui, for your attention