

Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the
2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (NGO Session)
April 29, 2014 (UN Headquarters, New York)

Speech by Representative of Mayors for Peace (Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki)

Chairman Ambassador Enrique Roman-Morey,
Distinguished delegates and leaders of civil groups,

My name is Tomihisa Taue, the Mayor of Nagasaki. It is an honor to address you today as the representative of Nagasaki, a city which was devastated by an atomic bomb, and as the Vice-President of Mayors for Peace.

Sixty-nine years ago, on August 9th (ninth) 1945 (nineteen-forty-five), a single atomic bomb devastated the city of Nagasaki and killed 74,000 (seventy-four thousand) citizens. Even today, those who survived, live in fear of diseases such as leukemia and cancer.

These atomic bomb survivors, hibakusha, have continued to talk about their terrible experiences. They do so in the hope that no one will ever again have to experience such tragedy. In 1982 (nineteen-eighty-two), Senji Yamaguchi, the first atomic bomb survivor to address the UN Special Session on Disarmament, made a heartfelt plea. He implored for “No more Hiroshima, no more Nagasaki, no more war, no more hibakusha.” Sadly, Mr. Yamaguchi passed away last year. Like the late Mr. Yamaguchi, the atomic bomb survivors are aging. There are now fewer and fewer chances to hear from them about their experiences. It is therefore essential that we pass on their experiences to the younger generation.

Here in Nagasaki, our high school students compile a petition which they present every year to the European United Nations headquarters. To this day they have collected over one million signatures calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Furthermore, our university students will take part in this Third Session of the Preparatory Committee, as the ‘Nagasaki Youth Delegation’. As well as NGO side events at the UN Headquarters, they will participate in youth exchange by sharing opinions with high school and university students from each nation. I believe that youth initiatives such as this are indispensable for passing on humanity’s experiences at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Currently, there is renewed momentum for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In 2008 (two-thousand-and-eight), the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, expressed the necessity of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Following this, the Final Document of the 2010 (two-thousand-and-ten) NPT Review Conference mentioned the inhumanity of nuclear weapons for the first time. Then, in October last year, New Zealand delivered a Joint Statement on the

Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. The statement was supported by a record 125 (one-hundred-and-twenty-five) States, including, for the first time, the government of Japan. However, the Statement did not mention International Law. There was no clear declaration of a comprehensive approach to nuclear disarmament, which would be enforced through a Nuclear Weapons Convention. This lack of a clear declaration fails to meet the expectations held by civil society.

I am always disappointed that nuclear weapon States, and States under a nuclear umbrella, advocate a step-by-step approach, and deny a comprehensive one. The objective of the comprehensive approach, which is advocated by non-nuclear States, is the abolition of nuclear weapons by making them illegal in international law. This comprehensive approach does not stand in opposition to a step-by-step approach. Even a comprehensive approach requires its own step-by-step plan of action. What really matters is not which approach, but the creation, and execution, of an action plan which has a clearly defined time frame.

In February of this year, 146 (one-hundred-and-forty-six) States participated in the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, which was held in Mexico. The Chair's Summary called for a legal framework for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and it was decided that the next conference would be held in Austria. The abolition of nuclear weapons is a common objective throughout the world, and it is the non-nuclear States that hold the key to make this objective a reality. If those States that are under nuclear umbrellas reject nuclear deterrence as a policy for national security, we will be brought a step closer to a world without nuclear weapons. Therefore, I would like to ask all States which are under a nuclear umbrella, to participate in the meeting which will be held in Austria. I ask this of you so that we can secure the process towards abolishing nuclear weapons. Let us each take a leading role for this new step towards their abolition. Furthermore, I would also like to extend the invitation to those States that do possess nuclear weapons. I hope that they will participate in the Meeting, and take part in discussions for the creation of an action plan.

I urge each of you here today to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki, witness the reality of exposure to an atomic bomb, and lend your ears to the voices of the aging survivors. I know that the hibakusha will devote all their energy into conveying to you the truth of exposure to an atomic bomb.

In closing, I hope that this Third Session of the Preparatory Committee will sincerely respond to the voices of civil society which demand the abolition of nuclear weapons. I also look forward to our lively debate which will ensure that next year's NPT Review Conference may be brought to a successful conclusion.

Thank you very much.