

# Remarks on behalf of Mayors for Peace

By

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I am very grateful to the Austrian Government for convening this important international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. Austria has long been a leading voice for the humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament and it is quite fitting that this conference would occur in Vienna.

Participants at this conference are aware of the disappointments and setbacks we have witnessed in the field of nuclear disarmament. The thousands of nuclear weapons that still exist, the long-term well-funded modernization programmes underway, and the persistence and historical spread of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence—all of these testify to the challenges that lie ahead in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

Yet we are convinced that nuclear abolition is not only possible but can be greatly accelerated. One of the most auspicious developments in recent years has been the growing variety of groups in civil society that recognize the importance of eliminating these horribly indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction. And the disarmament process has taken on an increasingly inclusive, democratic character. We are witnessing impressive efforts by women, environmentalists, human rights activists, parliamentarians, doctors, lawyers, retired former officials and military personnel, and religious leaders. At the Governmental level as well, this trend can be seen for example in the affirmative votes on disarmament resolutions in the UN General Assembly and in the number of States participating in this conference.

Today, I would like to add voice from the perspective of Mayors for Peace, consisting over 6400 mayors in 160 countries and regions.

In August 1945, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were reduced to ruins, in both cases by a single atomic bomb, and more than 210,000 people from the two cities lost their precious lives. The suffering of the atomic bomb survivors—known as *hibakusha*—from the blast, heat and radiation continues to this day, 69 years later. Having lived through an experience too cruel to be put into words, the atomic bomb survivors have continued to appeal for nuclear abolition and to extend their desire for peace to the people of the world. Their dedication stems from their deep humanitarian conviction that “no one should ever again suffer as we have.”

Mayors for Peace—with a strong sense of responsibility to guarantee the safety and welfare of citizens everywhere—empathizes profoundly with the spirit of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in striving for nuclear abolition and peace, and is intensifying its activities to promote the abolition of nuclear weapons by 2020.

We are currently expanding our membership and a growing number of devoted mayors in various regions of the world are taking leadership roles in advancing this cause. Strengthened by the voices of the *hibakusha*, we have been cooperating actively with diverse civil society partners to promote public support for a humanitarian approach to disarmament. Our mayors understand that nuclear disarmament is not just a global interest, but very much in the interest of cities—cities that do not want to become future nuclear targets, cities that want to shift budget priorities to meet basic human needs, and cities that are convinced that they really can make a difference in the wider political process of achieving global nuclear disarmament.

Mayors for Peace encourages world leaders to come to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to witness in their own eyes the unimaginable sufferings inflicted upon fellow human beings by a single atomic bomb. They will understand for sure the reason why in the eyes of *hibakusha*, nuclear weapons are the most inhumane weapons and an absolute evil. We sincerely appeal to world leaders, in particular the leaders of nuclear weapons states, to face this reality as human beings and to recall their own civic responsibility to work for the good neighbourliness and to guarantee peace and well-being of their fellow citizens around the globe. While we understand their duty to provide security, we count on them, in particular the leaders of nuclear-weapon States, to take an innovative approach and demonstrate leadership. They can do this by reviewing the international security regime and by developing a credible and more humane security framework that does not depend on nuclear weapons, with their unimaginable cruelty.

From the standpoint of city governments and civic populations, the task ahead must be to prohibit and to eliminate nuclear weapons. We are not seeking simply to cut the number of weapons. We are not working solely to prevent the spread of such weapons to additional countries or to non-State actors.

Instead, city governments and citizens everywhere are increasingly sharing a consensus reached by States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)—namely, that complete disarmament offers the only absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons. Considering the effects caused by the use of even one such weapon, how can the world settle for any less effective solution?

If complete disarmament is the solution, the means to achieve it must surely be grounded in a strong foundation of law, because law stands for permanence and for a much higher form of commitment than can come from political gestures alone. Civil society groups have already drafted a model Nuclear Weapons Convention. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also proposed his own five-point nuclear disarmament proposal, which called for either a nuclear weapon convention or a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments with the same objective. Clearly these initiatives were intended to provoke a responsible debate and discussion over the nature of the legal requirements that would be necessary in the process of fulfilling the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mayors for Peace strongly supports the pursuit of such options, in particular a convention. The very idea of achieving disarmament without law is absurd. Since the NPT—which entered into force 44 years ago—already requires its parties to undertake “negotiations in good faith” on nuclear disarmament, it is quite obvious that these negotiations are long overdue and any further delay would only compromise the integrity of the NPT and the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

This is a time when the world should be embracing the law and working to strengthen it—instead of running away from it or ignoring it outright. Mayors for Peace encourages leaders of nuclear-weapon States to take bold leadership in accelerating the pursuit of a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons. We will do our part with devotion together with a wide spectrum of civil society partners. History is on our side. Let us all work together to finish the job.