

An Open Letter from Mayors for Peace ***Toward a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World: One Billion Citizens' Appeal***

In August 1945, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were reduced to ruins, each by a single atomic bomb, and more than 210,000 people from the two cities lost their precious lives. Those who barely managed to survive had their lives totally changed and their endless suffering has continued to this day, 70 years later. Having lived through an experience too cruel to be put into words, the *hibakusha*—atomic bomb survivors—have continued to appeal for nuclear abolition and to convey their desire for peace to the people of the world. Their dedication stems from their deep humanitarian conviction that “no one else should ever again suffer as we have.”

We, Mayors for Peace, are an international nonpartisan, non-governmental organization with members who profoundly empathize with the spirit of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and strive to establish a world free of nuclear weapons, as well as to realize peace and sustainable development. These aims are based on the mayoral responsibility to protect the safety and welfare of our people. We are writing today on behalf of all members of our organization, which is currently composed of over 6,900 member cities from 161 countries and regions, representing over a billion citizens from around the world. Our members keep growing.

We are deeply concerned that, even a quarter of a century since the Cold War's end, nearly 16,000 nuclear warheads still exist in today's world, which is filled with violence and countless seeds of conflict. Declassified documents have revealed that the risks of inadvertent nuclear weapons use due to accident or miscalculation are quite high. We also cannot ignore the danger posed by nuclear terrorism. Given the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, every State and every citizen has a stake in the total elimination of these repugnant weapons. This is why we must insist that this issue be addressed immediately. We do commend the limited but welcome progress that has been made, such as a reduction in deployments of some strategic nuclear weapons and the continuation of moratoriums on nuclear testing. These are important efforts, but unfortunately, inadequate.

With about 2,000 nuclear weapons on high alert, the threatened use of nuclear weapons that is euphemistically called “deterrence,” and the unspeakable horror it implies, is still the mainstay of the international security regime. This stance itself holds elements of danger, potentially inducing nuclear proliferation, such as problems similar to North Korea's nuclear development. There may be a need to question if nuclear deterrence can offer any effective solutions to the global security challenges we face today. In this context, we believe that the international community needs to join forces and discuss how we can address real issues. It is urgent for nuclear-weapon states and those under the nuclear ‘umbrella’ to conduct earnest dialogues to plan for their security without reliance on the concept of nuclear deterrence. In pursuit of such efforts, we must not forget the important role civil society can perform to overcome mutual distrust and nurture a shared sense of awareness that we belong to the same human family.

On one hand, we understand that many differences exist in the world community over the timing, scope, and modalities for achieving nuclear disarmament. Yet it is clear that we cannot ignore the existing threat of nuclear weapons. That is why we are calling on the world leaders to advance such policy discussions at once. In this regard, we believe that every leader would benefit from visiting Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and listening intently to *hibakusha*.

As a concrete step to spur such discussion, we strongly urge all States—especially those possessing nuclear weapons and their umbrella states—to participate actively in the Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament that the UN General Assembly established last year, and to start engaging in constructive deliberations regardless of their political sensibilities. We do not believe it is necessary to have a global consensus on all matters prior to commencing the activities of this Working Group. In fact, prospects for future progress will only diminish by failing to engage in constructive deliberations on ways to build common ground and overcome differences.

Global nuclear disarmament can only be achieved if it is universal in scope; this will require the participation of all States in the process of achieving that goal. Non-nuclear-weapon states have a stake in nuclear disarmament in the sense that they could be the victims, themselves, of a nuclear weapon attack, even if they are committed to non-proliferation. This Working Group will provide a good opportunity for the nuclear-weapon states and their umbrella states to listen to a wide range of voices from civil society and non-nuclear-weapon states seeking nuclear disarmament

Furthermore, the Working Group will also provide a superb opportunity for the world community to address practical concerns during the disarmament process, including such issues as verification, transparency, and irreversibility. It will also be an appropriate forum to commence a serious discussion of the risks and benefits of realizing a world free of nuclear weapons and the legal framework needed to achieve it. We should take this valuable opportunity to deepen the world's understanding of the challenges ahead in realizing this great and historic goal.

Mayors for Peace appreciates the opportunity to participate in the discussions of this Working Group as a member of civil society seeking a nuclear-weapon-free world. We assert that a legal prohibition of nuclear weapons will mark a significant turning point toward a world without nuclear weapons. At the same time, we are keenly aware of the role and responsibilities of civil society in creating a foundation for sustainable peace. If we can cultivate a sense of global community as one human family and transcend our differences, it will lead to a society where diversity is treasured and disputes are resolved through peaceful means. We will work together with civil society partners around the world to cultivate mutual understanding in the pursuit of this sustainable peace.

In closing, once again we strongly urge all countries to participate actively in this Working Group and start constructive deliberations. We ask the policymakers of the world to work with sincerity and in good faith. As an important part of civil society, we shall spare no effort in working cooperatively with you. Instead of another year of setbacks, deepened rivalries, diminished expectations, and lost opportunities, let us make 2016 a year of significant progress in global nuclear disarmament.

Consolidated efforts by state and city governments, together with diverse civil society partners, such as women, youth, lawyers, religious leaders, medical workers, entrepreneurs, scholars, educators, artists, and athletes, can change the world. It is time for us to transcend our various positions and work together for the common good of international society. Let us work together to finish this important job.

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Mayors for Peace

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Vice president	Mayor of Nagasaki, Japan
Vice president	Lord Mayor of Hannover, Germany
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Vice president	Mayor of Malakoff, France
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