

Message from Yasuyoshi Komizo, Secretary-General of Mayors for Peace

To the International Affairs Standing Committee on 25th June, 2016

The 84th Annual Meeting of The United States Conference of Mayors 2016 Indianapolis

Dear Friends,

I would like, first of all, to express our heartfelt gratitude to the United States Conference of Mayors for the continued support extended to Mayors for Peace in its resolutions. Thank you!

On 27 May this year President Obama visited Hiroshima and became the first sitting President of the United States to do so. In his moving speech at the Hiroshima Peace Park, he said the following:

My own nation's story began with simple words: All men are created equal and endowed by our creator with certain unalienable rights including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Realizing that ideal has never been easy, even within our own borders, even among our own citizens. But staying true to that story is worth the effort. It is an ideal to be strived for, an ideal that extends across continents and across oceans. The irreducible worth of every person, the insistence that every life is precious, the radical and necessary notion that we are part of a single human family — that is the story that we all must tell. That is why we come to Hiroshima.

These words from the American President resonate deeply with the core message that the atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima have been making for decades—an appeal to remember our common humanity. Through their unbearable sufferings and struggles with their agonizing emotions, atomic bomb survivors have come to their conviction that “no one else shall ever again suffer as we have.” And they have emphasized that every person without distinction has a right to live a good life.

These words have helped for many decades to guide the work of Mayors for Peace, the non-governmental organization that I am representing today. As officials in city governments around the world, our members share a keen sense of responsibility to protect the safety and welfare of their citizens—so it is not at all surprising that these mayors would appreciate the many benefits of peace. It is also not surprising that they would understand and reaffirm the earnest desire of the atomic bomb survivors for achieving the peaceful world free of nuclear weapons. We are a non-partisan group and are united in seeking to achieve that goal. Presided over by the Mayor of Hiroshima, our membership has expanded to 7,063 cities in 161 countries and regions, now representing around 1 billion citizens. And our membership continues to grow.

More and more mayors now are deeply concerned that, even a quarter century after the Cold War ended, over 15,000 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 accidents or miscalculations are quite high. We also cannot ignore the danger posed by nuclear terrorism. This dangerous situation is a special concern of ours because if such weapons were used—regardless of the reason—cities and their innocent people would surely pay the ultimate price. No mayors can allow nuclear weapons to be used in their own cities. We therefore feel our responsibility to speak out.

In pursuit of our goal of achieving a peaceful world without nuclear weapons, we are of the view that the legal prohibition of nuclear weapons is necessary. We also acknowledge various approaches and measures pursued by others for peace and security. Our basic position is to engage as wide as possible in such efforts since they complement each other and, all together, they can provide a broader basis for peace. Inclusiveness, dialogue and complementarity are important features of our campaign. They constitute a surest way towards a lasting solution.

In the organization of Mayors for Peace, we have introduced a system of lead cities. The idea behind it is that while we pursue our common goal of a world without nuclear weapons, each country and region has its own priorities and different agendas. We honor these differences and their autonomy as long as we share the basic common goal. We therefore ask our lead cities of each region to take their innovative approaches to serve their own needs and aspirations in their own countries and regions.

One common challenge we face is that many countries continue to maintain that their national security depends on nuclear deterrence. Yet nuclear deterrence is based on mutual distrust and attempts to maintain peace through the threat of indiscriminate mass killings. Such a system cannot be sustainable. We must also note that nuclear weapons cannot offer any effective solutions to the global security challenges of the 21st century. They also consume budgetary and technological resources needed for economic development, including the welfare of the world's cities.

The development and use of the atomic bomb happened at the time of global armed conflict. A key question, then, is what kind of future we aim for. I hope sincerely that in line with the founding spirit of the United States of America as well as its global leadership in democracy and human rights, the United States can lead the way to put in place a new approach to ensure peace and security in the world that does not depend on nuclear weapons.

As President Obama said in Hiroshima that, as once severely fought enemies, "the United States and Japan have forged not only an alliance but a friendship." I think his words suggest a new possibility of Japan-US cooperation that includes collaboration in building a peaceful world without nuclear weapons.

When people in different backgrounds try to work together, beyond their seeming differences, they will discover far greater commonality as members of same human family. Persistent common efforts by diverse civil society partners will eventually encourage conscientious policymakers to gather courage to take steps to introduce a new peace and security system that rests on strengthened mutual trust as its foundation.

In this sense, I am grateful and honored to be invited in a part of this conference because the most important basis of creating peace starts from joint undertaking among people from different backgrounds to create common values. We, Mayors for Peace look very much forward to working closely with United States Conference of Mayors.

We wish you all the best for your continued success and great health.

Thank you very much.