



## Mayors for Peace

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**Written testimony to the New York City Council Governmental Operations JOINT  
Committee Hearing regarding Initiative 1621 and Resolution 976,  
strengthening New York City's status as a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone  
Submitted by Jacqueline Cabasso, North American Coordinator, Mayors for Peace**

I grew up in a suburb of New York City and my weekend trips to Greenwich Village were the highlight of my teenage years. I have always felt a strong connection to the City. After moving to the west coast, as an adult, during the 1980s I was active in the coalition opposing the homeporting of the nuclear-capable Battleship Missouri and its Surface Action Group in San Francisco Bay. During that period, I worked closely with our sister coalition in New York City, working to stop the homeporting of the nuclear-capable Battleship Iowa and its Surface Action Group in New York City's harbor. Both campaigns were successful!

A few years later, I was centrally involved in defending a lawsuit brought by the federal government against Oakland's 1988 voter-enacted "Oakland Nuclear Free Zone Act," ultimately resulting in adoption by the City Council of "An Ordinance Declaring the City of Oakland a Nuclear Free Zone and Regulating Nuclear Weapons Work and City Contracts With and Investment in Nuclear Weapons Makers" in 1992.<sup>1</sup> As a frequent participant in activities at the United Nations, I currently split my time between Oakland, California and Bronx, New York.

I speak today in support of Initiative 1621 and Resolution 976 on behalf of Mayors for Peace. It is my honor to convey warm greetings from Mayor Kazumi Matsui of Hiroshima, the President of Mayors for Peace.

In August 1945, atomic bombs instantaneously reduced the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to rubble, taking hundreds of thousands of precious lives. Nearly 75 years later, thousands of *hibakusha* citizens still suffer the devastating aftereffects of radiation and unfathomable emotional pain. To prevent any repetition of the A-bomb tragedy, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have continuously sought to tell the world about the inhumane cruelty of nuclear weapons and have consistently urged that nuclear weapons be abolished.

On June 12, 1982, as many as one million people gathered in New York City's Central Park during the Second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, to call for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It was the largest political demonstration in U.S. history until that time.<sup>2</sup> On June 24, then-Mayor Takeshi Araki of Hiroshima proposed a new Program to Promote the Solidarity of Cities toward the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons, offering cities a way to transcend national borders and work together to press for nuclear abolition. Subsequently, the

mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki called on mayors around the world to support this program, which ultimately became Mayors for Peace and was registered as an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1991.

As of January 1, 2020, Mayors for Peace has grown to 7,861 member cities in 163 countries, representing a total of more than one billion people. There are 218 U.S. members. The United States Conference of Mayors (USCM), the nonpartisan association of 1,408 American cities with populations over 30,000, has unanimously adopted ever-stronger Mayors for Peace-sponsored nuclear disarmament resolutions for 14 consecutive years. Resolutions adopted at its annual meetings become USCM official policy.

Directly relevant to Resolution 976, is its 2016 resolution, *Calling on the Next U.S. President to Pursue Diplomacy with Other Nuclear-Armed States; Participate in Negotiations for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons; Cut Nuclear Weapons Spending and Redirect Funds to Meet the Needs of Cities*, in which “the USCM commends Mayor Denise Simmons and the Cambridge City Council for demonstrating bold leadership at the municipal level by unanimously deciding on April 2, 2016, to divest their one-billion-dollar city pension fund from all companies involved in production of nuclear weapons systems and in entities investing in such companies.”

Relevant to both Resolution 976 and initiative 1621, in the same resolution, “the USCM reaffirms its support for Mayors for Peace and urges additional U.S. cities to join in its campaign to reach 10,000 member cities by 2020,” and “calls on member cities to take action at the municipal level to raise public awareness of the humanitarian impacts and financial costs of nuclear weapons, the growing dangers of wars among nuclear-armed states, and the urgent need for good faith U.S. participation in negotiating the global elimination of nuclear weapons by, for example, planting seedlings of A-bombed trees, hosting A-bomb poster exhibitions and film screenings, sharing *hibakusha* testimonies via Skype, promoting Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace Study Courses; and having their mayors speak at local Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemorations.”<sup>3</sup> (I note that New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio, though not a member of Mayors for Peace, was a co-sponsor of this resolution.)

Again, directly relevant to Resolution 976, in its 2017 resolution, *Calling on President Trump to Lower Nuclear Tensions, Prioritize Diplomacy, and Redirect Nuclear Weapons Spending to meet Human Needs and Address Environmental Challenges*, “the United States Conference of Mayors welcomes the historic negotiations currently underway in the United Nations, involving most of the world’s countries, on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination; and.... deeply regrets that the United States and the other nuclear-armed states are boycotting these negotiations.” The USCM “calls on the United States to support the ban treaty negotiations as a major step towards negotiation of a comprehensive agreement on the achievement and permanent maintenance of a world free of nuclear arms, and to initiate, in good faith, multilateral negotiations to verifiably eliminate nuclear weapons within a timebound framework.” In the same resolution, “the United States Conference of Mayors calls on the President and Congress to reverse federal spending priorities and to redirect funds currently allocated to nuclear weapons and unwarranted military spending to restore full funding for Community Block Development Grants and the Environmental Protection Agency, to create jobs by rebuilding our nation’s crumbling infrastructure, and to ensure basic human services for all, including education, environmental protection, food assistance, housing and health care.”<sup>4</sup>

In its 2018 resolution, *Calling on the Administration and Congress to Step Back From the Brink*

*and Exercise Global Leadership in Preventing Nuclear War*; “the USCM urges the United States government to reverse its stance and to embrace the TPNW [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons] as a welcome step towards negotiation of a comprehensive agreement on the achievement and permanent maintenance of a world free of nuclear arms.” Endorsing the Back From the Brink Campaign, the USCM also “calls on the United States to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first; ending the sole, unchecked authority of any president to launch a nuclear attack; taking U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; cancelling the plan to replace its entire arsenal with enhanced weapons; and actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear armed states to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.”<sup>5</sup> More than 40 U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, Washington, DC and Philadelphia have adopted their own Back From the Brink resolutions.<sup>6</sup> New York City will certainly not be alone in adopting the two bills before you.

At its 2019 annual meeting, the USCM unanimously adopted a resolution *Calling on All Presidential Candidates to Make Known Their Positions on Nuclear Weapons and to Pledge U.S. Global Leadership in Preventing Nuclear War, Returning to Diplomacy, and Negotiating the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons*. The resolution “encourages all USCM members to call on all Presidential candidates to make known their positions on nuclear weapons and to pledge U.S. global leadership in preventing nuclear war, returning to diplomacy, and negotiating the elimination of nuclear weapons.”<sup>7</sup> Adoption of the two bills before you will help send this timely message to the candidates.

On January 23 of this year, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the hands of its iconic Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds to midnight, the closest it’s ever been since its inception in 1947. A statement issued by the Bulletin declares: “Humanity continues to face two simultaneous existential dangers—nuclear war and climate change—that are compounded by a threat multiplier, cyber-enabled information warfare, that undercuts society’s ability to respond. The international security situation is dire, not just because these threats exist, but because world leaders have allowed the international political infrastructure for managing them to erode.”<sup>8</sup>

When President Trump announced his plans to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accord, over 400 U.S. Climate Mayors responded by announcing their intentions to “adopt, honor, and uphold the commitments to the goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement. We will intensify efforts to meet each of our cities’ current climate goals, push for new action to meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius target, and work together to create a 21st century clean energy economy.”<sup>9</sup> In the same way that cities rose up to take responsibility for addressing the climate crisis, they need to take leadership in responding to the other existential threat— nuclear weapons. Of course, it’s easier for cities to engage in direct action to mitigate climate change, so they must be creative and determined. The two bills before you are a good start.

In remarks to a plenary session of the USCM’s 2019 annual meeting, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui, declared: “As mayors, you are working every day for the wellbeing of your citizens, but all your efforts could be for naught if nuclear weapons are used again. I would also like to point out that, while every one of the nuclear-armed states is spending billions of dollars to modernize and upgrade their arsenals, that money could be much more productively spent to meet the needs of cities and the people who live in them.”

Initiative 161 would establish an Advisory Committee to examine nuclear disarmament and a nuclear weapons-free zone. The commissioner of the mayor's office on international affairs or such commissioner's designee would serve as chair. In addition, three members of the advisory committee would be appointed by the mayor. This makes it all the more natural for Mayor DeBlasio to join Mayors for Peace. He has been personally invited by the mayors of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and I would publicly like to invite him again to join. Hiroshima is prepared to welcome New York City to Mayors for Peace by offering to plant an A-bombed sapling at a mutually agreed location in New York.

Finally, I would like to offer a definition included in the 1992 Oakland Nuclear Free Zone Ordinance that has relevance to both Resolution 976 and Initiative 161, once adopted. "Nuclear Weapons Maker' means any person knowingly engaged in nuclear weapons work; subsidiaries, affiliates and subdivisions under operating control of such person; the parent entities that have operating control over such person, and the subsidiaries, affiliates and divisions under operating control of such parent entity."<sup>10</sup>

In closing, I would like to quote Mayor Frank Cownie of Des Moines, Iowa, the U.S. Vice President of Mayors for Peace: "If you don't think nuclear weapons are a local issue, ask the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.nuclearweaponsmoney.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Oakland-nuclear-weapon-free-ordinance-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.wnyc.org/story/wnyc-covers-great-anti-nuclear-march-and-rally-central-park-june-12-1982/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/resolutions/?category=a0F61000003s4H8EAI&meeting=84th%20Annual%20Meeting>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/resolutions/?category=a0F6100000BLCpXEAX&meeting=85th%20Annual%20Meeting>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/resolutions/?category=c9179&meeting=86th%20Annual%20Meeting>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.preventnuclearwar.org/whos-on-board>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/resolutions/?category=a0D4N00000FDCYRUA5&meeting=87th%20Annual%20Meeting>

<sup>8</sup> <https://thebulletin.org/2020/01/press-release-it-is-now-100-seconds-to-midnight>

<sup>9</sup> <https://medium.com/@ClimateMayors/climate-mayors-commit-to-adopt-honor-and-uphold-paris-climate-agreement-goals-ba566e260097>

<sup>10</sup> *Supra* note 1 at p. 3