

**Speech by Matsui Kazumi,
President of Mayors for Peace and Mayor of Hiroshima, at Leinster House**
Dublin, Ireland
October 23, 2024

Honourable Members of Seanad Éireann and Dáil Éireann,
Distinguished Guests,
and Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dia daoibh, a chairde.

It is a great honour to address the Oireachtas with its more than 100 years of history since the establishment of the Free State of Ireland. I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Cathaoirleach Senator Jerry Buttimer for giving me this opportunity to speak here in the Chamber of Seanad Éireann, Ceann Comhairle Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil for kindly supporting my visit and enhancing the ties between Ireland and Hiroshima since leading the Oireachtas delegation's visit to Hiroshima in February last year, as well as the members of both Houses for your great support and consideration.

I am delighted to be able to visit Ireland for the first time, a country of art and culture, rich in greenery and nature. It is also a great pleasure to visit Leinster House which has witnessed Ireland's history of hardship and success over many years.

Having experienced hundreds of years of hardship, the people of Ireland can understand the pain of others and have a particularly strong desire for peace. It is well known that your country took the lead in promoting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons through your tremendous efforts on the drafting, adoption and ratification of the treaty, which entered into force in 2021. Your commitment to humanitarian initiatives to protect innocent civilians, which resulted in the adoption in Dublin in 2022 of the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences arising from the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, is also highly regarded internationally. I believe that these initiatives have been driven by the strong will and support of the people of Ireland themselves.

The Nobel Prize Laureate Seamus Heaney, a respected poet in Ireland as well as in Japan, expressed people's rage and grief at violence and conflict and how important hope is in the face of adversity. His following words resonate with people around the world.

Quote:

*History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.

The atomic bombing in 1945 devastated Hiroshima City and claimed the lives of innocent children and civilians. This is not only the reality of history in the past, but also in the present as the *hibakusha* are still suffering from the after effects of the bombing. We, the citizens of Hiroshima, have been striving for a world without nuclear weapons with the conviction of the *hibakusha* that "no one else should suffer as we have". We never give up our hope and we uphold human rights and humanitarian initiatives together with people around the world.

Ms. Teruko Yahata, exposed to the atomic bombing at the age of eight, began taking English lessons at the age of 83 with the determination to speak about the terrible reality and suffering in her own voice and words. Now she tells her story across the world. She says, "If a nuclear bomb was used now, humankind would be wiped out. What I can do is to continue to communicate the reality of the atomic bombing, send out warning bells to the global community, so I live in the present."

In recognition of such tireless work and actions of the *hibakusha*, it was announced that this year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Nihon Hidankyo.

In 1982, Mr. Takeshi Araki, the then Mayor of Hiroshima, called upon the United Nations for solidarity for peace at citizen level around the world, which led to the creation of Mayors for Peace. It has grown into an unprecedented worldwide network with more than 8,400 member cities. From Ireland, Dublin and 12 other cities have joined this network.

Currently, the global security situation is deteriorating, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, nuclear rhetoric, the worsening situation in the Middle East, and increased tension between major powers. Although we have seen some progress, such as the adoption of the TPNW, now the world could be heading back into a nuclear arms race. This must be the time to unite the voices of peace-loving people around the world and strengthen their solidarity for peace.

The vision of Mayors for Peace is to seek the abolition of nuclear weapons and to realise sustainable and resilient cities for lasting world peace. To achieve these goals, we place the highest priority on promoting the culture of peace through engagement in music, art, and sports at citizen level in daily life and by conducting such cultural exchanges across national borders, people can share the essential value of peace.

I believe that the people of Ireland, blessed with a rich culture, can lead the culture of peace in the world. I hope more and more Irish cities will join Mayors for Peace to work with us. I really appreciate the members of the Oireachtas for encouraging many cities to do so.

This September, the Summit of the Future was held at the United Nations in New York. It is vital to work for peace by involving young people, the leaders of tomorrow. I sincerely hope that the people of Ireland, especially young people, will visit Hiroshima to understand the reality of the atomic bombing and engage in exchange with the citizens of Hiroshima in cultural activities for peace. In closing, I hope that the relationship between Ireland and Hiroshima will be developed still further.

Thank you very much.

* Quoted from "The Cure at Troy" by Seamus Heaney, published by Faber and Faber Ltd. All rights reserved.