

## **Speech by the Mayor of Hiroshima at the NPT Review Conference**

drafted and delivered by Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima, President of Mayors for Peace

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is my honor and privilege to say a few words, representing the citizens of Hiroshima, our *hibakusha* in particular, and the nearly 4,000 city mayors from round the world who belong to Mayors for Peace.

Two weeks ago, the InterAction Council held its 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Plenary Meeting in Hiroshima, where 15 former heads of state and government, as well as 19 experts and special guests, participated and discussed how humanity should realize a nuclear free world.

In the Final Communiqué, they recommended with a keen sense of urgency that world leaders, especially from nuclear-armed States, should visit Hiroshima to understand the suffering and destruction caused by nuclear weapons and help to inform the public about the dangers of nuclear weapons.

Nearly 4,000 mayors around the world agree. Cities and mayors do understand the importance of remembering the past because most of us have experienced, at one time or other, the agonies, sufferings and pains caused by war or other kinds of tragedies. And one solemn fact is that all of us, mayors and citizens, have come to the unanimous conclusion, “Never again!”

In the *hibakusha*'s words, “No one else should ever suffer as we did.” Please note that the expression “no one” literally means everyone, including those whom we normally label as enemies. It is the spirit of reconciliation and not of retaliation.

Pope John Paul II sanctified this message. In the speech he delivered in 1981 in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, he asserted that “To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future.” But that future will never come unless all of you, who have the power to decide, choose to commence immediately, negotiations leading to a nuclear weapon free world within a finite period of time. Mayors for Peace believe that we can reach that goal by the year 2020.

The year 2020 is essential because it is the natural limit imposed by the average age of the *hibakusha*, which is now over 75. We are duty bound to abolish nuclear weapons while they are still alive. We do owe it to them, who have shown us through their sufferings and sacrifices, that nuclear weapons are absolute evil.

It is my duty to point out that if we should deny this wish of the *hibakusha*, we are also denying their other wish that no one else would suffer as they did as well.

Time is of the essence. As we all know so well, certain matters lose all meaning if you miss the crucial timing: it's too late to feed a starving person after his death. And in our case, what matters is human survival.

Consequently, the abolition of nuclear weapons should be at the top of the agenda of any organization concerned with creating a better future, especially the United Nations.

In addition to the united voices of mayors deeply rooted in their citizens' hearts demanding a nuclear weapon free world, prominent leaders of the world, who share the sense of urgency with the *hibakusha*, are now creating the new tidal wave for disarmament. President Obama has been working tirelessly to accomplish this goal. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is committed to it. NAM partners and many more states have voiced their endorsement already in this Review Conference.

All that is required is the political will to rid the world of nuclear weapons within the lifetime of the *hibakusha*. You have the power to forge that will. Please use that power for the sake of all future generations. We, the citizens of 4,000 cities round the world, especially the *hibakusha* in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, will do everything in our power to work with you to make our wishes a reality. Together we can abolish nuclear weapons. Yes, we can!

Thank you.