

The Mayor of Nagasaki's Statement at the NPT Review Conference

drafted and delivered by Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki, Vice-President of Mayors for Peace

Mr. Chairman, delegates and leaders of citizens' groups: my name is Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki City. As the mayor of an atom-bombed city and the vice president of Mayors for Peace, I come here today to speak on behalf of citizens engaged in peace efforts.

We citizens have just one wish, and that is the realization of a world free of nuclear weapons.

To bring about this goal, atomic bomb survivors have been speaking out about their personal experiences. The survivors want the world to know that nuclear weapons must never be legitimized, for they are inhuman weapons of mass destruction. The four thousand mayors belonging to Mayors for Peace share this common goal. It is our top priority to continue appealing to the international community to eliminate nuclear weapons.

However, in the 65 years since the atomic bombings, nuclear-armed nations have ignored appeals for the abolishment of nuclear weapons. Instead they choose to pursue a security policy that relies on a nuclear deterrent. As a result, there are now enough nuclear weapons in the world to wipe out humanity many times over. Reliance on the power of nuclear weapons as a deterrent has increased the danger of terrorist organizations and unstable governments acquiring nuclear weapons, and has brought the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to the brink of collapse.

The governments of countries that rely on nuclear deterrence must sincerely reflect on this paradox. We must face up to the reality that relying on nuclear deterrence has actually put the entire world at risk from these weapons. We must understand that the only way to free people from this threat and guarantee lasting international security is to realize a world free of nuclear weapons.

This April, the United States and Russia finally signed a nuclear arms control treaty in Prague initiating the process of reducing nuclear arms. We support these efforts, but also hope that the international community takes even greater steps forward under the leadership of the United Nations.

In 2008 U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon proposed starting negotiations for a convention prohibiting nuclear weapons. At the 4th Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons held in February of this year, participating NGOs from around the world expressed great interest in such a convention. In the Nagasaki Appeal 2010 they urged world leaders to support the proposal. It is time for the international community to start making sincere efforts towards a convention prohibiting nuclear weapons.

Arguments about nuclear weapons are usually made in terms of national interest, benefit to military industry or military effectiveness. However the one thing that must never be forgotten is the human point of view. Do the representatives of nuclear-armed nations truly realize the horror of the weapons they possess? Nuclear weapons burn human beings to ashes at temperatures of many thousands of degrees. They generate ferocious blast waves that smash and shatter bone. They release radiation that damages each and every cell in a victim's body. Today, 65 years after the atomic bombings, survivors still suffer from terrible illnesses caused by the aftereffects of the bombs. Can we honestly say we understand their endless suffering?

We must always consider nuclear weapons from this viewpoint. This is not just an issue for us now, but also for future generations. When talking about nuclear weapons, what always brings us back to the human point of view is hearing the voices of the atomic bomb survivors.

We must make the experiences of the atomic bomb survivors our touchstone. Once again, we must listen intently to their words, try to understand the depth of their feelings and realize why they call for “a world free of nuclear weapons.”

I strongly hope that the delegates of each country work tirelessly to ensure the success of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. Efforts must then be focused on the next step forward – a convention prohibiting nuclear weapons.