

6 August 2013

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić,
President of the 67th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Ceremony**

Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathering today to commemorate the victims of an unparalleled calamity inflicted by the hand of man, and to express our solidarity with its survivors, the hibakusha.

Whomever stands in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome cannot help being overwhelmed by the immensity of the suffering that befell the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—hundreds of thousands of men, women and children who bore the onslaught of the most destructive killing device used in the annals of history.

It began with a blinding burst of light, cutting across the sky. Then, as the mushroom cloud grew high overhead, another one—filled with soot and debris—enveloped the city. Next came the fires, spreading quickly, and producing shots of scalding air and showers of burning cinders.

Human beings knew of no defense against such a force.

The hibakusha's whole lives; what they knew; whom they loved—all of it was gone.

Yet they refused to succumb to abandon, carrying on in the belief that life ultimately prevails, even in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where the deadliest of horrors came to pass.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The resilience and dignity of the hibakusha has served as a source of great inspiration in humanity's ongoing effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

From its founding, the United Nations has stood at the forefront of this endeavor.

The very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly called for the elimination of atomic arms and “all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction.”

In the years that have followed, the nuclear issue has remained high on the agenda, resulting in some notable achievements, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In past decades, we have

also made progress both in reducing the overall number, and preventing the proliferation, of nuclear arms.

Nonetheless, we continue to live under the threatening shadow of annihilation.

I believe we must keep the world's attention focused on this grave threat to peace.

I am privileged to be in charge of organizing the first-ever High-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament. In accordance with resolution 67/39, it will take place this September.

I hope this will be a significant step forward in fulfilling our goal to excise atomic weapons, so that the sufferings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki of sixty-eight years ago may never repeat.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Near my office at United Nations Headquarters in New York lies a rose garden, at the entry of which stands the Japanese Peace Bell. It was cast not far away from here, with coins from sixty different countries—including my own.

The Bell is encased in a structure designed to resemble a traditional Shinto shrine. On its surface is etched a single, solemn inscription: “Long live absolute world peace.”

Every year in September, it is rung as a symbolic reminder of this great human aspiration.

That sort of peace is more than the mere absence of hostilities. It is about preventing the conditions for war from being met ever again.

It is about having the strength to overcome long-held grievances, the will to forsake vengeance, and the resolve to achieve reconciliation.

This is the cause which the hibakusha have so nobly advanced during all these years, bestowing through their endeavors a higher meaning to the deaths of their beloved.

It is also a cause I believe each of us who visit this hallowed ground should take up with a renewed sense of purpose, aware that this great task will likely remain unfinished for many years hence; yet hopeful that the generations to come will nonetheless embrace everything it stands for, and so bring us ever-closer to the day when absolute peace shall reign unopposed across our planet.

Thank you for your attention.