

Opening Address

SPEAKER: Mr. Iccho Itoh

The Mayor of Nagasaki, Japan

Honorable Chairman Abdalah Baali, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honor as a representative of the U.N.-registered NGO "World Conference of Mayors for Peace through Inter-city Solidarity" to have this opportunity to speak on the occasion of the NPT Review Conference.

The World Conference of Mayors for Peace through Inter-city Solidarity is an international network of 487 cities in 102 countries and regions. It was established in 1982 in response to a worldwide call from the atomic-bombed cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the promotion of international opinion in favor of the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In the event of war, and especially nuclear war, the first targets of attack are cities and the first victims of destruction are their residents, particularly noncombatants such as the elderly, women and children. Not only the atomic bombings but also the devastation repeated innumerable times in wars and local conflicts clearly attest to this fact.

As a result of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings, more than 210,000 people were either killed instantly or died of injuries during the ensuing months. The vast majority of these people were not soldiers but non-combatant citizens. Dropped from an altitude of about 9,000 meters, the atomic bombs exploded 500 meters above the ground, causing a heat flash of several thousand degrees Centigrade, showering the cities below with deadly radiation, and crushing and burning everything under the tremendous force of the blast. Even today, 55 years later, about 300,000 atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki continue to live in fear of death and to suffer from late effects.

In November 1995, I spoke to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the Netherlands as mayor of Nagasaki and made the following appeal concerning the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons: "It is my understanding that the free and unlimited selection of weapons is unacceptable in terms of international law concerning warfare, and that 1) attacks on civilian communities, 2) the infliction of unnecessary suffering and 3) the destruction of the natural environment are prohibited, even with regard to weapons that are not expressly banned. The use of nuclear weapons obviously falls under the scope of this prohibition and therefore is a manifest infraction of international law."

In July the following year, as you know, the International Court of Justice stated in its advisory opinions that the "threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law."

This advisory opinion brought a bright ray of encouragement not only to the atomic-bombed cities but to all the individuals and organizations throughout the world struggling to eliminate nuclear weapons. Moreover, as though inspired by the ICJ opinion, world-renowned scientists and politicians as well as former key military personnel came forward with concrete proposals for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The citizens of Nagasaki, worried for so long about the future of nuclear disarmament, felt as though they were seeing a light at the end of a dark tunnel.

In May 1998, however, India and Pakistan conducted successive underground nuclear tests, making our worst fears about the proliferation of nuclear weapons a reality.

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Ladies and gentlemen, both India and Pakistan conducted these nuclear tests on the pretext of protecting their national safety. But are the two countries really safer than they were before? Is it not a fact that the people of both countries are now trembling in fear of a nuclear attack?

In the Nagasaki Peace Declaration, which I deliver every year at the Peace Ceremony on the August 9 anniversary of the atomic bombing, I have repeatedly criticized the nuclear states for clinging to the theory of "nuclear deterrence," that is, reliance on nuclear weapons as a means to maintain peace and security. Nuclear weapons will bring about the annihilation of the human race; there can be no lasting peace for humanity as long as nuclear weapons exist in our midst.

Today, we are questioning the extent to which the nuclear states are fulfilling Article VI of the NPT, namely their duty to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race. . ."

Today, the Russian Federation ratified the second Strategic Arms Treaty (START II), seven years after the signing of this agreement, and is preparing to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) which was passed with the agreement of 158 countries around the world. These actions should be applauded, but it is also a fact that the Russian Federation acknowledged the first use of nuclear weapons in its new military doctrine.

The Senate of the United States of America, meanwhile, rejected a resolution for the ratification of the CTBT, and there is no hope for a ratification during the present administration. In addition, the United States has conducted 11 subcritical nuclear tests on the premise that these tests do not violate the CTBT, and both the United States and the Russian Federation have announced their intention to proceed with further tests. It can only be said that the United States, the world superpower that has steered the course of international politics since World War II and promoted the expansion of nuclear weapons, bears a heavy burden of responsibility.

I was born on August 23, 1945 and so am a member of the first postwar generation. I am well aware of the fact that the United States supported the postwar restoration of Japan and the introduction of a splendid system of democracy. Most Japanese people including myself are deeply grateful for these favors. With regard to the issue of nuclear weapons, however, we feel that the United States should be severely condemned for its present policies.

The human race achieved an unprecedented level of prosperity during the 20th century. At the same time, however, the century was marred by conflict and destruction and rocked by two world wars. Now the 20th century is coming to a close, and we are about to greet the arrival of the 21st century.

The Russell - Einstein Manifesto issued in 1955 delivers the following warning about the threat of nuclear weapons: "It is stated on very good authority that a bomb can now be manufactured which will be 2,500 times as powerful as that which destroyed Hiroshima. . . But the best authorities are unanimous in saying that a war with H-bombs might quite possibly put an end to the human race. It is feared that if many H-bombs are used there will be universal death."

Forty-five years have passed, but we have still not escaped from the danger of human annihilation that Russell and Einstein pointed out in their joint statement. The nuclear states continue to possess nuclear weapons, hailing them as essential to the protection of peace, but, on the contrary, this only perpetuates the danger of global destruction because it casts an unbreakable "nuclear spell."

Ladies and gentlemen, the citizens of Nagasaki and Hiroshima are not appealing for the abolition of nuclear weapons out of hatred or resentment over events of the past. Our only reason is our clear

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knowledge, gained from the miserable experience of the atomic bombings 55 years ago, that nuclear weapons are inhuman tools of indiscriminate, mass destruction that violate all rules of international law.

Now is the time for the nuclear states to announce their political commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons from the Earth and to begin negotiations for the swift conclusion of a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty that will ban the development, manufacture, testing, deployment and use of all nuclear weapons.

I look forward to your intensive and constructive discussions, and I ardently hope that the present NPT Review Conference will blaze a trail straight to the abolition of nuclear weapons and assure that these weapons are not carried into the 21st century.

Nagasaki will continue to join with Hiroshima in deepening solidarity with world cities and in amplifying the cry for the abolition of nuclear weapons. In November this year, we will be inviting NGO from around the world to participate in the Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in Nagasaki.

I believe that the abolition of nuclear weapons can be accomplished by consolidating the efforts of world citizens and NGO and mobilizing the conscience of humanity. Let us focus all our efforts on realizing a 21st century free from nuclear weapons and building a world in which our children can live in peace.

Thank you very much.