

Peace Message (2020 Hiroshima City Peace Memorial Ceremony)

As we gather here today, on the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, we are witnessing two developments that run counter to predictions and expectations. One is the astounding reconstruction of Hiroshima—once predicted to be uninhabitable even to plants for at least 75 years. The other is the continued elusiveness of the goal of nuclear abolition, which many of us had hoped would be a reality by now.

On this day marking the 75th year, and on behalf of the citizens of Hiroshima Prefecture, I wish to offer my humble and sincere prayers for the souls of those who lost their lives to the atomic bombing, and express my heartfelt sympathy to the *hibakusha* who are still, to this day, enduring long-term health effects. I also extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families, whose wish to achieve nuclear abolition for their lost loved ones remains unfulfilled.

Realizing nuclear abolition, our most ardent desire, is currently proving to be an extremely difficult endeavor. I wish to make a fresh and strong appeal to all nations—especially nuclear-weapon states—to abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; to ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; to uphold frameworks for nuclear arms control and disarmament; to uphold the voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing; to swiftly bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty; and to permanently abandon nuclear weapons.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been desperately longing for nuclear abolition, yet we are disappointed time and time again. Why? Because there are people and countries who believe in and rely on nuclear deterrence. However, the theory that the fear of absolute destruction will deter enemy attack is but an idea—a myth people have decided to share. This “theory” is entirely different in nature from universal truths such as the law of universal gravitation, or the periodic table of elements. Indeed, the efficacy of nuclear deterrence has been negated by many of today’s known facts.

On the other hand, the destructive power of nuclear weapons as expressed in Einstein’s theory remains a firm, universal truth. Nothing can survive their explosive power. The only way for us to stay safe from nuclear weapons is to prevent their detonation by physically eliminating them.

Fortunately however, nuclear deterrence is no more than a manmade myth, which loses its validity once enough of us stop believing in it. In other words, it is something that we are able to change.

Japan was once under feudal rule by the *samurai* caste, which was abolished with the dawn of the Meiji Restoration. Nations that were once bitter enemies are today close allies. Anything can be turned around as long as it is based on ideas held by people. There is therefore no reason why we cannot change international security policy as it stands today.

Indeed, we *must* change our thinking if we are to ensure the long-term survival of the human race, humbling ourselves before the unyielding physical fact of the destructive power of nuclear weapons.

Of course, uprooting our deeply entrenched faith in nuclear deterrence will not be easy. For one thing, it necessitates building of a new security paradigm. As Pope Francis asserted upon visiting here in 2019, breaking free from the yoke of nuclear deterrence will require wisdom from all corners of the world, and the action of all nations and all people.

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We have come 75 years since the atomic bombing of Hiroshima—the exact number of years the incinerated city was predicted to remain barren—with a nuclear-weapons-free world yet to be achieved. For this we must apologize to all atomic bomb victims and *hibakusha*. I wish to take this opportunity to call upon all UN member states to unite in setting the new goal of abolishing nuclear weapons as soon as humanly possible, while the *hibakusha* are still among us.

If we do nothing, history will label us irresponsible. Instead, let us as humanity gather wisdom and take action now.

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Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture