

# Hiroshima Junior International Forum Declaration

August 23, 2016

We, junior and senior high school students in Hiroshima Prefecture and from 16 countries and regions, as well as international students, gathered in Hiroshima to participate in the Hiroshima Junior International Forum. The purpose of our visit was to learn from the past, to confront the issues facing the world today, and to discuss what kinds of contribution we can make.

71 years ago, on August 6th, Hiroshima was destroyed by a nuclear weapon. Many lives were lost in Hiroshima, and whole families, as well as regional history, were destroyed. From their testimonies and our visit to the Peace Memorial Museum, we came to understand that the survivors had to face the fear of radiation damage across generations. Those who experienced the destruction caused by nuclear weapons have continued to convey to the world the inhumane nature of such weapons, in the hope that others never have to undergo the same experience.

Hiroshima has recovered over time, and is now a vibrant city. These days, many people from around the world visit the city, and witness the energy of Hiroshima. Hiroshima today is proof that communities damaged by civil war and the chaos resulting from war and unrest, or even completely destroyed, can surely recover.

Having gathered in Hiroshima, we acknowledge anew the twin messages that Hiroshima transmits to the world: the belief in the abolition of nuclear weapons, and the strong belief, based on faith in the future, that restoration is possible.

There still exist over 15000 nuclear weapons in the world. While efforts towards nuclear disarmament stagnate, efforts to improve nuclear weapons continue. Focusing on the inhumane nature of such weapons, we share a strong sense of danger with regard to this fact.

Even now, many innocent people are losing their lives due to civil war and the chaos resulting from war and unrest. We feel sympathy for all the people whose lives are threatened and whose hopes for the future are being cut short.

We face many difficulties and issues. We have confronted and considered these problems in Hiroshima, and we have arrived at the following conclusions after studying and holding discussions over the course of three days.

## ■ Nuclear Weapons Abolition

We have identified the following five challenges as far as the abolition of nuclear weapons is concerned:

- (1) We recognize the lack of trust among states. Mistrust fosters insecurity, and the mindset of states tends to be one of nuclear deterrence.
  - ✓ To change such a mindset, states without nuclear weapons, and society as a whole, should maintain pressure on states with nuclear weapons, while making efforts to ensure that this process is undertaken with good will.
  - ✓ Further, global leaders should work towards the changing of this mindset by emphasizing mutual

understanding, and by putting energy into confidence-building efforts. Mutual trust will be achieved step by step. Through confidence building, the peaceful resolution of conflicts can be achieved. Superpowers have an especial responsibility to take the lead in this process.

- (2) We recognize that one of the reasons why states possessing nuclear weapons maintain their nuclear arsenals is because of the arms industry related to nuclear weapons. The influence of this industry makes it difficult to abandon the mindset based around deterrence, and governments protect such industries by continuing to spend huge amounts on military budgets.
  - ✓ In order to deal with this challenge, society should voice concern about military industries and financial institutions connected to the nuclear weapons industry.
  - ✓ If necessary, sanctions or embargoes are potential options that could be adopted by the international community.
  - ✓ Furthermore, society needs to exert pressure to force government to enforce norms relating to the control of money flow, and to modify the allocation of national budgets.
- (3) We recognize that there is a high risk of the accidental use of a nuclear weapon.
  - ✓ As an immediate step, we need to improve and strengthen the control of nuclear weapons. However, the most definite and reliable solution is abolition. Regarding the process of disarmament, society should exert pressure on government to set a concrete target and time frame.
  - ✓ We should also encourage government to research new ways to resolve conflicts without recourse to nuclear weapons.
- (4) We recognize that insufficient information relating to nuclear weapons is disclosed.
  - ✓ In order to deal with this challenge, society as a whole should put pressure on states possessing nuclear weapons, to obtain greater transparency.
- (5) We recognize that people are disinterested as far as nuclear issues are concerned. Furthermore, we know that the hibakusha (those affected directly by the atomic bombing) are aging, and that the time we have to learn from them directly is limited.
  - ✓ Society as a whole needs to make greater efforts to spread information, by use of a range of methods, for example exhibitions, virtual museums, art campaigns, and social media.
  - ✓ In order to increase awareness, as young people we propose a greater emphasis on the impact and tragedy of nuclear weapons in formal education, especially in elementary education.
  - ✓ As young people, we encourage people to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At the same time, we should never forget all the other people throughout the world affected by nuclear testing.
  - ✓ Believing in the power of empathy and compassion, as young people we will make efforts to raise people's awareness by networking among our peers, by creating petitions, and by keeping in mind that we should love and respect our friends and neighbors, and even our rivals.

We also recognize a further challenge:

- The Non-Proliferation Treaty is not sufficient to advance nuclear disarmament.
  - ✓ To prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons, we propose the signing of a new international treaty involving all states across the world. We feel that this effort will be lent strong support by the solidarity of states not possessing nuclear weapons.

## ■ Reconstruction and peacebuilding

We have identified the following five challenges as far as peace building is concerned

- (1) We recognize that misunderstandings based on culture, religion, historical events, etc., often lead to discrimination, which may lead an individual to commit fundamentalist acts, for example terrorist attacks. In extreme cases, such acts may even lead to armed conflict.
  - ✓ In order to deal with this challenge, we suggest that global leaders should promote peace education in order to create a tolerant and cooperative multicultural society.
  - ✓ As young people, we have a responsibility to be open-minded and tolerant when interacting with people with different values, and a responsibility to pass on these values to the following generation.
- (2) We recognize that inequality is growing in today's world, and that this inequality, and worsening environments, such as a scarcity of water, can become a source of armed conflict.
  - ✓ In order to deal with this challenge, while acknowledging the importance of national ownership, we suggest that global leaders, the private sector, and society as a whole should show continued support for post-conflict countries.
  - ✓ As young people, we can also make a contribution as members of society, for example by making donations, or by making issues more widely known amongst the general public.
- (3) We recognize that some governments are reluctant to listen to the voices of their citizens, and that as a result of this, some governments are guilty of actions such as the continuance of armed conflicts against the will of their people. Such actions often lead to deprivation among the people of such countries.
  - ✓ In order to deal with this challenge, we suggest that global leaders should demonstrate the political will to end armed conflicts and to avoid future conflicts, and should promote governance based on an acknowledgement of the will of the citizens.
- (4) We recognize that gender equality is not a reality in all parts of the world. For example, in some parts of the world, girls are not able to study in a safe environment.
  - ✓ In order to deal with this challenge, we encourage global leaders to confirm or reconfirm that access to education, especially at the primary and secondary level, is not a privilege, but a right to be protected. We encourage all global leaders, in collaboration with the private sector and society as a whole, to respect international laws promoting human rights, including the right to education for all females and children.
- (5) We recognize that indifference and disinterest are the most serious challenges as far as peace building is concerned.
  - ✓ In order to deal with these challenges, we suggest the utilization of media and social networks in order to carry out a campaign aimed at raising awareness among the global community.
  - ✓ As young people, we can deepen our understanding, for example by reading books, so that we can become responsible members of the international community.

## ■ What we expect for Hiroshima

Hiroshima is one of the places most able to use its influence to try to unite the world. Recognizing this fact, we expect Hiroshima to make the utmost efforts to promote world peace.

- (1) We would like to make the following suggestions to the Prefectural government:

- ✓ The Prefectural government should continue its efforts to pass down the experiences of the hibakusha to the younger generation, and should support the peace-related activities of the younger generation, in particular by disseminating the experiences of the hibakusha globally (for example by making use of the internet, by appointing ambassadors who can pass on in English what happened in Hiroshima, etc.).
- ✓ The Prefectural government should promote international exchange by fostering events that provide opportunities for young people to learn about Hiroshima (for example the Hiroshima Junior International Forum), by hosting an international event that attracts people globally (for example, an international peace concert, a peace marathon, an international peace contest, a peace prize, etc.), and by inviting people from abroad to Hiroshima (for example, international students, young people from states possessing nuclear weapons, and people from developing countries).
- ✓ The Prefectural government should improve the curriculum relating to peace education, disarmament, and non-proliferation in formal education.
- ✓ The Prefectural government should invite leaders from other countries to visit Hiroshima, to enable them to gain a message of peace to take back to their own countries and share with their citizens.
- ✓ The Prefectural government should promote greater collaboration with other local governments whose residents have suffered because of nuclear-related incidents.
- ✓ The Prefectural government should financially support peace-related activities, research, and organizations.
- ✓ The Prefectural government should improve public facilities such as airports and railway stations to be more peace-orientated, for example by means of art works, posters, etc.

(2) We would like to make the following suggestions to the people of Hiroshima:

- ✓ The people of Hiroshima should share their experiences of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima worldwide, through citizen- and city-based networks, especially in cooperation with other cities and countries which have experienced the horrors of nuclear weapons.
- ✓ The people of Hiroshima should continue to encourage the participation of young people in peace-related activities.
- ✓ The people of Hiroshima should promote cultural activities related to peace, such as the creation of art works and movies.

Gathered in Hiroshima, we have learned much about the destruction of communities by nuclear weapons, and about the restoration of those communities. In addition, we have met many fellow young people who also wish to build a more peaceful world. We hereby declare that we will use what we learned in Hiroshima, and the bonds that tie us together, as a source of strength to promote a peaceful world in our respective countries.

We also sincerely hope that many other young people can also have the opportunity to understand themselves what we have come to understand during our time in Hiroshima, and the opportunity to meet others who share their beliefs.

Further, we believe that other young people whom we meet from now on will together help us towards the realization of a more peaceful global community.