

Message from Kazumi Matsui, Mayor of Hiroshima
to the 87th Annual Meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors, Honolulu, HI
30 June 2019

First, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the United States Conference of Mayors for its ongoing support of Mayors for Peace, as expressed in its resolutions adopted annually since 2004. It is an honor and a pleasure to have the opportunity to address you today.

As mayor of Hiroshima, I serve as the President of Mayors for Peace, an international non-partisan, non-governmental organization with 7,764 member cities in 163 countries and regions – including 215 U.S. cities. I am very pleased that Honolulu, which this year is celebrating 60 years of sister-city relations with my city, has been a member since 1983. Mayors for Peace members are united in working to achieve two key objectives: “Realization of a world without nuclear weapons”; and “Realization of safe and resilient cities”, which, we believe, will lead us to our ultimate goal, lasting world peace. By joining together across national boundaries, we mayors are working to nurture an environment that encourages the policymakers of the world to demonstrate decisive leadership in reaching our goals.

Let me tell you a little bit about my city and its citizens. Almost seventy-four years ago, on August 6, 1945, a single atomic bomb reduced the city to ruins and stole the precious lives of 140,000 citizens by the end of that year. Even today, 74 years after the bombing, those who barely managed to survive are tormented by the long-term effects of radiation and constant anxiety about their health and the health of their children and grandchildren. Despite having experienced such unbearable devastation and sorrow, the A-bomb survivors – known as “hibakusha”, whose average age is over 82, continue to passionately appeal for a world without nuclear weapons based on their conviction that “no one shall ever again suffer as we have”.

I understand that all of you gathered here today are committed to addressing numerous serious challenges, including climate change, migration, poverty, gun violence and terrorism, based on a common sense of responsibility to ensure the safety and peaceful lives of your citizens. As mayors with such a critical mission, how do you feel about the message of the hibakusha?

Looking at recent developments surrounding nuclear weapons on a grassroots level, we have seen awareness of the inhumanity of nuclear weapons steadily increasing, which has added to the growing call for nuclear abolition that led to the adoption in 2017 of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the United Nations. Yet, on the international level, we see a number of disquieting trends, including the announced intention by the U.S. and Russia to terminate the INF Treaty and the uncertain futures of the North Korea nuclear negotiations and the Iran nuclear deal. With the global security environment more precarious than ever, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has set the hands of its “Doomsday Clock” at 2 minutes to midnight, and the Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research has declared that the risk of nuclear weapons being used again is at its highest since World War II.

Thus, on a grassroots level, global trends are moving towards the realization of the hibakusha's wishes, but on the international level, I fear that the world is not making any progress, and is even regressing. As mayors, you are working every day for the wellbeing of your citizens, but all your efforts could be for naught if nuclear weapons are used again. I would also like to point out that, while every one of the nuclear-armed states is spending billions of dollars to modernize and upgrade their arsenals, that money could be much more productively spent to meet the needs of cities and the people who live in them.

My fellow mayors, I am here today to share my sincere wish for all of you to walk with us on the path towards a world without nuclear weapons. In the United States, we are very pleased to have Des Moines, a Vice-President City, leading the efforts of the Mayors for Peace U.S. Chapter to raise public awareness about the growing dangers of nuclear war and the need to actively work for a peaceful world. We sincerely hope that efforts like this by our U.S. members will contribute to building momentum for the movement to realize such a world.

With our aim of reaching 10,000 member cities by 2020, we at Mayors for Peace sincerely hope that the U.S. Chapter of Mayors for Peace will grow to be larger and more active and that we will continue to deepen our collaboration with the United States Conference of Mayors.

Thank you for your kind attention.