

Greetings from the Mayor of Hiroshima

[Sent in August 2021 before the tree dedication was postponed; read during 2022 tree dedication]

It is an honor and a pleasure to send this message on the occasion of the 76th year Hiroshima Memorial Vigil being held at Southern Oregon University.

On August 6, 1945, a single atomic bomb destroyed our city, claiming countless innocent civilian lives. Having experienced the tragedy of the bombing, Hiroshima continuously appeals for a peaceful world without nuclear weapons based on the ardent will of the *hibakusha*: “No one else should suffer as we have.”

However, looking at the global situation surrounding nuclear weapons, more than 13,000 nuclear warheads still exist today, with nuclear weapons states increasing and modernizing their nuclear arsenal instead of fulfilling their obligations to pursue negotiations in good faith for nuclear disarmament as stipulated in the Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

As humanity continues to face its newest threat, COVID-19, the world has come together to tackle the virus; proof that we are capable of responding to this threat. I believe that the people of the world will be able to overcome the threat posed to humankind by nuclear weapons in much the same way: by working together under common principles and remaining steadfast in our opposition. As the number of people who can speak of the horrors of these weapons from experience declines, it is increasingly important to pass their earnest will for peace on to the next generation, establish, as a shared value in civil society, the idea that nuclear weapons and war should not exist, and make every effort towards realizing lasting world peace.

The NPT, which went into effect in 1970, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force in January 2021, are both critical to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Even though they comprise a framework that we must pass on to future generations, their future is yet opaque. In order for world leaders to strengthen their determination to ensure this framework functions effectively, it is vital that we create an environment that steers them towards transforming policy; we must continue to raise awareness of peace in civil society so that we may generate momentum towards peace and nurture international public opinion for nuclear abolition. It therefore could not be more meaningful that you have organized the Hiroshima Memorial Vigil to call for a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons, and I extend to you my deepest respect.

Together with more than 8,000 Mayors for Peace member cities from 165 counties and regions, the City of Hiroshima intends to create an environment that encourages world leaders to take steps towards nuclear abolition. I would like to ask all of you to act in solidarity with us as we strive to eliminate the absolute evil that is nuclear weapons and realize lasting world peace.

In closing, I extend my sincere appreciation to Dr. Michael Oxendine for his great efforts in planting a second-generation tree of an atomic bomb survivor tree at Southern Oregon University, as well as offer my best wishes for the great success of this event.

August 6, 2021

Kazumi MATSUI
Mayor, The City of Hiroshima