



Greetings by a Guest

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I would like to express my respects to everyone on the executive committee as well as other concerned persons from Nagasaki Prefecture and Nagasaki City who make efforts to assure that “the 5th Nagasaki Global Citizens’ Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons” would be a big success.

Sixty-eight years ago saw the atomic bomb dropped over the skies of Nagasaki. The joining together of NGOs and the citizens of Nagasaki City and Nagasaki Prefecture at this international assembly aimed at realizing a peaceful world without nuclear weapons is of immense significance.

In December of last year, armed with a strong determination to proactively engage in efforts aimed at realizing “a world without nuclear weapons”, I became the first person from an area to have been atomically bombed to assume the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Then in August of last year, I became the first Minister of Foreign Affairs to attend the Nagasaki Peace Memorial Ceremony, where I strongly felt the acute desire that so many have for a peaceful world without nuclear weapons. At the same time, I once again was made to feel keenly the need for Japan to take a leading role in spearheading more proactive nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation efforts by the international community.

Japan is the only country in the world to be a victim of nuclear bombing during a time of war. With the aim of realizing “a world without nuclear weapons”, Japan has a duty to work tirelessly to help realize this goal, a moral duty born out of the country’s experiences with nuclear catastrophe. To date Japan has promoted nuclear disarmament by steadily engaging in efforts based on such pragmatic and realistic approaches as the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) it launched together with Australia in 2010, as well as through petitions made to the United Nations annually since 1994 and nuclear disarmament resolutions that were adopted after gaining overwhelming approval.

On the other hand, in promoting nuclear disarmament, in addition to efforts at the government level, initiatives involving NGOs and citizen groups are indispensable. For the last 16 years, the city of Nagasaki has been the site of pioneering efforts on the part of young people – so called “Nagasaki Peace Messengers” – to communicate to the world the certain calamity resulting from the usage of nuclear weapons. With the purposes of offering government support for such initiatives, in June of this year we launched “the Youth Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons” program to augment the Special Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons used to date.

This summer, as the first Youth Communicator for a World without Nuclear Weapons, I personally awarded each of the Nagasaki Peace Messengers with a letter of appointment. I can still remember vividly the look in each young person's face as they set out, letter of appointment in hand, on their mission to help free the world of nuclear weapons. The other day, I had the opportunity to hear first-hand from these high school students as they reported on activities consisting of the gathering of more than 1million signatures asking for the elimination of nuclear weapons and delivering these to the UN's European headquarters. This experience left no doubt that, with their near-boundless energy, the young people active in this area are a real asset in these efforts.

In addition to these activities, the Japanese government has put a great deal of effort into nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation education. Since 1983, a total of more than 800 youth diplomats from all across the world have been invited to Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the auspices of the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme. I would like to once again express my gratitude to the good folks of Nagasaki that have offered their cooperation under this scheme.

As you all are well aware, Japan participated in "the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons" issued by New Zealand at the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly held October 22. This statement takes the position that the devastation resulting from the use of nuclear weapons would have profound impacts on the survival of mankind, the environment, social and economic development, the economy and the health of future generations. It also proclaims a firm conviction that awareness of this devastation resulting from the use of nuclear weapons is to be used to support all approaches and efforts aimed at nuclear disarmament. In addition, the statement clearly specifies that "civil society, along with the government, is to play an extremely important role" in attaining a world free of nuclear weapons.

It is my firm conviction that, with this international assembly, all of the concerned individuals and citizens as well as NGOs are to play an extremely useful role to think "the inhumanity of nuclear weapons". What's more, it is my sincere hope that the present assembly will serve to spur lively debate and produce meaningful results.