

Hiroshima Junior International Forum 2017
Hiroshima Declaration

<Preamble>

We, high school students in Hiroshima Prefecture and from 29 countries and regions across the world, and international students studying at universities in Hiroshima Prefecture, gathered here in Hiroshima City as participants in the Hiroshima Junior International Forum to learn together about several of the issues that our world is currently facing, and to engage in discussions with the aim of realizing world peace. We each came with our own diverse experiences and sense of values, and, meeting here in Hiroshima, we learned a great deal from each other, as well as from the wider community in Hiroshima.

This year marks 72 years since the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. In addition, this is also the year that the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted with the support of many countries and people from around the world. This showed us that both ordinary people and leaders feel the same way about the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons. We are certain that the will and enthusiasm of people towards abolishing nuclear weapons is increasing. We, the participants of the Hiroshima Junior International Forum, strongly felt this enthusiasm here in Hiroshima. On the other hand, nuclear weapon states did not participate in the negotiation of the Treaty. We acknowledge that because of this, it will take time for us to see the full and substantial effects of the treaty that can only be brought about by the participation of these states, but we recognize that no matter how large the problems, they have to be overcome.

Gathering in Hiroshima and while holding our discussions, we became strongly aware of Hiroshima as a city that was once laid to waste by an atomic bomb, but also of Hiroshima as a vibrant city that made a full recovery. We saw that many travelers gather in Hiroshima to learn about the city's history and culture. Hiroshima is a city that suffered from the atomic bomb, and then recovered from it.

But, if we look around the world, we can see that not every city has achieved peace and made a recovery like Hiroshima. As ever, we cannot say that we live in a peaceful world. But we, the younger generation, have a responsibility and a right to build a better future. We have learned from each other, we have discussed and considered the following issues and imperatives, and have identified the roles that we, and the global community, can and should play to confront them.

<Abolition of Nuclear Weapons>

First, we considered the issues related to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

1. 72 years after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the reality of nuclear weapons is becoming less and less known, across the world and within Japan. We fear that the horror and tragedy of an atomic bombing is being forgotten.

We believe that countries across the world, especially those countries possessing nuclear weapons, must know the reality of nuclear weapons and the consequences of their usage. The view from above the mushroom cloud is well known; the horror below the mushroom cloud must be more widely understood.

2. It is a common belief among countries that the possession of nuclear weapons, and the deterrent effect of these weapons, provides protection for the countries possessing them, or for countries under the nuclear umbrella of nuclear-weapon-possessing nations. Further, there are nations which are of the belief that possession of nuclear weapons confers an increase in the status of the nation as far as the international community is concerned.

We believe that politicians and governments need before anything to change their mindsets and associated attitudes. Governments of nations possessing nuclear weapons, and those under the nuclear umbrella of such nations, must rescind their reliance on nuclear weapons, either directly or indirectly, as a shield. Meanwhile, some governments of nations without nuclear weapons must come to realize that possessing such weapons will not grant them safety or protection. Further, when promises based on treaty obligations are made by governments, these promises must be kept.

Citizens must put pressure on politicians to change policies which are a threat to peace, for example by collecting signatures, and politicians must respect the wishes of the citizens of their countries. In the same way, citizens should show their support for politicians who are making efforts towards peace.

3. The possession of nuclear weapons by a country serves to spread fear and distrust amongst surrounding countries. There is therefore a situation where these surrounding countries feel compelled to increase the number of nuclear weapons they themselves own. The result of this is not only that nuclear disarmament fails to progress, but that there is a danger of further nuclear proliferation.

We believe that countries must actively engage in confidence-building measures in good faith, as a means to work towards the reduction of nuclear weapons. A commitment must also be made to a deadline for the eventual complete elimination of these weapons.

4. Generally, there is insufficient trust between countries. This is true in the case where two countries both possess nuclear weapons, and in the case where one country possesses nuclear weapons while the other does not. Insufficient communication between countries can also foster this issue.

We believe that countries must sign up to all relevant treaties, such as the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and adhere to the conditions of these treaties. By doing so, they can make their intentions clear, thus increasing transparency and working towards the increase and improvement of trust between nations.

Further, trust is imperative not just between states, but between citizens. Countries must make efforts to promote exchange not just between students and young people, but in fields such as cultural, technological, and economic.

5. The influence of the arms industry related to nuclear weapons provides a strong disincentive to disarmament. Nuclear weapons provide profits for military industries. Governments should be encouraged to reduce military spending, instead of utilizing this money for overseas development, etc.

We believe that industries should be encouraged not to engage in activities related to nuclear weapons, including development and production. Further, these industries should be encouraged to participate in general activities connected to peace, as sponsors.

6. There is the danger that those who do not possess nuclear weapons may be able to obtain them. This applies not only to countries, where there is the possibility that nuclear weapons may be obtained through the black market, but also to terrorists.

We believe that as an immediate step, the relevant authorities in each country must improve and strengthen the security under which nuclear weapons are controlled. However, citizens and governments alike must realize that the most definite and reliable solution to this problem is abolition.

<Reconstruction and Peacebuilding>

Secondly, we considered the issues related to peacebuilding.

A peaceful community is not just a community of people living without the fear of war. It is a community of people living together in harmony, with shared values such as human rights, and with mutual understanding, its members respecting each other and solving conflicts by peaceful means. Moreover, it is a community where everyone has equal rights and opportunities. There are many challenges that impede the realization of such a peaceful community, and these challenges need to be overcome by means of peacebuilding efforts.

1. A lack of awareness of the fact that we all have differences in culture, religion and ways of thinking causes misunderstandings, and creates a sense of discrimination. The stereotypes that people develop are often far away from reality. In both developed and developing countries, xenophobia is just one of the results of misconception.

We must acknowledge our differences, and learn about them through education. We need to make use of all the communication skills we can muster, in order that we can deepen mutual understanding and come to respect the values of others.

2. Governments and political leaders often lack the political will to overcome global issues in the pursuit of peace. They are ready to take the risk of engaging in conflict in the national interest, but they do not think so much of what is best for their citizens. Some politicians seek personal benefits and may become involved in corruption, which again can lead to conflict.

We need to exert pressure on politicians to listen to those people who currently do not have voices. Young people can utilize very powerful tools of communication, such as social networks, in order to advocate the issues which are important to them, and to appeal to governments and political leaders to accommodate their needs. We should ensure that we make the very best possible use of these tools.

3. Poverty is another issue as far as peacebuilding is concerned. Poverty leads to rises in crime rates and child labor in developing countries, and can often result in basic needs, such as food, shelter, and water, being unmet.

Politicians and governments have a duty to satisfy people's basic needs. International aid is important, but fostering the abilities of individuals through education is also indispensable in order to make development sustainable. Civil society also has a role to play, such as in the work done by charities.

4. Terrorism is occurring both in developed and developing countries today. For example, thirteen people became victims of a terrorist attack in Barcelona even while we were discussing this document. These attacks are global in the sense that wherever they may occur, they have their roots in issues common to both developing and developed countries. Furthermore, radicalized people who are ready to commit terrorist attacks may emerge from discrimination and inequality within a society.

In addressing the issue of terrorism, in order to take a stand against the root causes, political leaders, governments and individuals must respect diversity and confront radicalism. For example, school education and diversity in communities can be effective tools against radicalization. We must recognize that the media has a crucial role to play in the fight against terrorism: newspapers and television programs must give accurate information, not news designed to maximize profits and circulation.

<The Role of Hiroshima>

Finally, we considered the ways in which Hiroshima can contribute to the resolution of the issues above.

1. Hiroshima can play a huge role in spreading the truth of the horror of atomic bombs. It is imperative that the city and its citizens are active in passing on the experience of Hiroshima. In particular, as the hibakusha become older and fewer in number with each passing year, ensuring that their messages are passed on across the world, and across the generations, should be the responsibility of all of the citizens of the city. Hiroshima can also play a role as a messenger for peace, by sharing its history and experiences of post-war reconstructions. For those who visit Hiroshima, the Peace Memorial Museum plays a vital role in spreading the message of the horror of the atomic bombing and the importance of peace.
2. In conjunction with this, peace education should be strengthened and extended. We believe that peace education in Hiroshima has had a significant and wide-reaching effect on the young people of Hiroshima, and therefore that it is especially vital that all children in the world in primary education should learn about Hiroshima and the importance of peace. Tax revenue could be used in part to fund these programs.
3. Of course, social media can be used effectively and to great effect to spread information about Hiroshima to the world. Along with this, though, conventional media should also be employed in order to ensure that as many people in as many countries as possible are able to learn about the message of Hiroshima. Further, media such as movies, anime, art and mobile applications are also effective means of spreading information.
4. Hiroshima can also play a role as a leader for peace education across the world in a more general sense, sharing love, peace and forgiveness. Hiroshima should promote and hold peace-related ceremonies and events in other cities, and in other countries.

For example, this Hiroshima Junior International Forum could be held in various locations around the world. Hiroshima should also promote the establishment in other countries of museums related to peace.

5. Further, Hiroshima can become a role model for peacebuilding efforts, an example of hope in post-war reconstruction, and an example of a stable, diverse community. In this sense, Hiroshima is an ideal location to host regional forums, as well to hold peace-related international exchange programs such as festivals, and this Junior International Forum. The Hiroshima Prefectural Government may also be able to support the people of Hiroshima in participating in peacebuilding activities. Hiroshima can also provide support for people with different backgrounds, often from different countries, in order that they can contribute to making the community more diverse and resilient.
6. Finally, we believe that Hiroshima should make use of its moral authority to encourage leaders from across the world to work together with governments, both regional and national, towards a peaceful world, free of nuclear weapons.

<Closing Remarks>

We, the young people who gathered in Hiroshima for this Junior International Forum, as Ambassadors for Peace, hereby pledge our determination to contribute to the achievement of the aims and initiatives set out in this declaration. We will do this as active contributors to the wider society, but also by actions that we can take precisely because of our youth.

We pledge to spread the message of Hiroshima to as many people around us as possible in our daily lives when we return to our home communities. In order to do this, we will make full use of all the tools at our disposal, in order to reach as many groups of people as we can. We will talk not just about the tragedy that occurred in Hiroshima, but about the reconstruction and rebirth of the city.

We pledge to devote ourselves to studying and learning from other countries, other cultures, and other beliefs. By doing so, we aim to become people of impartiality who can bridge the gaps between different groups, aiming to reduce misunderstandings and increase acceptance between us.

Finally, with the message of Hiroshima in our hearts, we pledge to live our lives with love and compassion.