

Peace Message (2023 Hiroshima City Peace Memorial Ceremony)

On this day, in marking the 78th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, on behalf of all people of Hiroshima Prefecture, I wish to offer my humble and sincere prayers for the souls of those who lost their lives in the atomic bombing. I would also like to extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families and express my heartfelt sympathies to the *hibakusha*, the atomic bomb survivors, who even today suffer from the aftereffects of the bomb.

At present, our nuclear security environment is becoming increasingly severe; Russia continues its unjust invasion of Ukraine and nuclear saber-rattling, North Korea continues to develop nuclear weapons and missiles, and some nuclear-weapon states are radically increasing their nuclear arsenals. In Japan and other countries, people strongly demand reinforcing nuclear forces and their operations.

Amid this environment, this past May, the G7 leaders, including the heads of three nuclear-weapon states, assembled here in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, where they listened to the story of a *hibakusha*, and offered flowers and prayers at the Cenotaph for the Atomic Bomb Victims.

At the museum, the G7 leaders, who learned the tragic realities of the atomic bombing, released the G7 Leaders' Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament, in which they reaffirmed their commitment to achieving a world without nuclear weapons. This means that at a crossroads in human history, they selected a path leading to nuclear disarmament and ultimately to nuclear-weapon abolition, rather than one towards the reinforcement of nuclear forces. And then, these leaders signed the guestbook and wrote in their personal resolution. This resolution made by the G7 leaders and the leaders of guest countries is indeed of historic importance.

In actuality, however, there are still people in the world who strongly support the theory of nuclear deterrence and believe that nuclear weapons are essential for peacekeeping. Despite the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons, upheld by the leaders, these adherents of the theory of nuclear deterrence work to delay the process of nuclear disarmament.

I would like to ask these nuclear deterrentists: "How do you bear responsibility for the lives of innocent Ukrainian citizens who are losing their lives at this very moment? Ukraine is being invaded not because the country abandoned its nuclear arsenal but because Russia's invasion cannot be stopped due to its possession of nuclear weapons. Based on the "stability-instability paradox" of the nuclear deterrence theory, you could have anticipated the current situation, where an invasion of a non-nuclear-weapon state by a nuclear-weapon state cannot be stopped."

I would also like to ask them: "Should the regime of nuclear deterrence break down, how do you take responsibility for the lives of all human beings, and probably all living things on the earth? Should a nuclear war break out, would you simply shrug and say that you never expected it would happen?"

It is undeniable that the very presence of nuclear weapons involves the risk of human annihilation. The only means to thoroughly eliminate the risk is to abolish nuclear weapons.

What the believers in the theory of nuclear deterrence must do now is to face up to this reality, admit that they cannot bear such responsibility, and call for the collective wisdom

and action to search for ways to promote nuclear disarmament and eventually achieve nuclear-weapon abolition, no matter how severe our security environment is.

It is our responsibility to bequeath a truly sustainable future to our children and grandchildren. To this end, we should review the conventional frameworks of security so that all nuclear-weapon states will be able to discard their nuclear weapons. At the same time, from the viewpoint of the sustainability, we should pursue the total elimination of nuclear weapons, upholding it as a common goal of the international community.

Hiroshima Prefecture will continue our commitment to this end in collaboration with the Japanese government, other countries' governments, the United Nations, and civil society.

In concluding my message of peace, I would like to pay my deepest respect to the *hibakusha*, who have been making untiring efforts to achieve a world with no nuclear weapons, and pledge to do my best to realize this goal at the earliest possible occasion.

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Hidehiko Yuzaki
Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture