

Call to Action at the Closing Ceremony
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Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba
The City of Hiroshima

Thank you very much for your kind introduction. His Excellency Kiyo Akasaka, His Excellency Roberto Zamora, His Excellency Sergio Duarte, His Excellency Charles Hitchcock, His Excellency Gomez, Excellencies, Fellow peace workers, volunteers, interpreters, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to stand here on behalf of Mayor Tomihisa Taue of Nagasaki and myself representing the City of Hiroshima. I would like to apologize, first, that Mayor Taue is not able to be here because a City Council session in Nagasaki prevented him from coming, but I know that Mayor Taue joins me in thanking Mr. Kiyo Akasaka and the UN Department of Public Information for entrusting us with this great honor and challenge. I would also like to thank the DPI/NGO Conference Planning Committee and its Chairman, Charles Hitchcock, for the fine preparation for this conference. Thanks are also due to the Mexican government and Mexico City as well.

The role that has been given to me is to issue “The Call to Action.” As all of you who have witnessed and have listened to the wonderful speeches at the Opening Ceremony and the other speeches that preceded this one know, I really don’t have any more to add. They were wonderful speeches and already were great calls to action. So what I really should do is acknowledge that fact and step down at this moment.

Unfortunately, as a former mathematics professor, I simply cannot leave a podium without adding two cents’ worth of my hopes. And that is exactly what I would like to do. I am confident that as a result of this conference you will go back to wherever you come from more confident, with more enthusiasm and more knowledge to pursue the goal that we all share, a world without nuclear weapons.

In April of this year, President Obama made it clear that he and the United States will lead the world toward a nuclear weapon free world. Mayors for Peace and the citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, especially the *hibakusha*, a Japanese word for the survivors of the atomic bombings, enthusiastically welcomed his commitment. And we are determined not only to support President Obama but to work even harder than we did before, and even harder than the President himself so that a nuclear-weapon-free world will be realized by 2020.

From this point of view, the President is right in thinking that what we are trying to accomplish is nothing less a revolution. He cited the Czech Velvet Revolution to make the point that those who would perpetuate the nuclear threat are no better than those who perpetuated totalitarianism. He did not mince words, calling them “dangerous” and “cowardly”.

I do not really know what flower, fabric or color we should adopt for our revolution against the nuclear threat. I am open to suggestions about the word or symbol for this revolution, but we do need a revolution and a symbol, so I would like to offer my humble and rather personal idea about how to characterize this revolution.

I would like to call this revolution the “Cosmos” revolution, and let me explain why.

First, cosmos is one of my favorite flowers. To my amazement, I found out it is not common outside Japan, so I will send you some beautiful photographs. It is a beautiful flower. Also, the cosmos is where we live, and that is exactly what we would like to protect from nuclear destruction. Another reason is that Dr. Carl Sagan, I hope you remember him, wrote a book called *Cosmos* in which he pointed out that if a nuclear exchange were to occur, the result would be nuclear winter, famine and other terrible results. That’s why President Obama said that the results of a nuclear exchange would be unimaginable. Finally and most importantly, COSMOS is an acronym for a committee to which I used to belong—the Committee to Send the Meaning of Survival. This was a group of young volunteers in Hiroshima and Boston that translated the 35-year chronicle of the sufferings and triumphs of *hibakusha*. And they sent this finished product to people all over the world as a present. Although the physical manifestation of the gift was a book, what the committee wanted to send was more. This committee sent the message of *hibakusha*, which is the meaning of survival for these people. And that meaning can be paraphrased in this expression. “No one else should ever suffer as we did.” That’s my suggestion for the name of the revolution, and the reason we are here is to really make it happen.

In this light, I am glad to report to you that a revolution is already spreading among the cities of the world. Since the last NPT Review, over 2000 cities have joined Mayors for Peace. Our 3000-plus cities represent over 600 million people. Yesterday, I met Mayor Ebrard, who has signed up Mexico City, adding 18 million more people to our growing total.

But we need more. To effect a series of changes that, in the end, would amount to a revolution, I would like to offer four principles for change that have helped me and Mayors for Peace greatly.

These principles were offered by Professor Cornel West of Princeton University. According to my sources, he has influenced President Obama’s thinking and action. An interesting point you might remember is that Professor West predicted 15 years ago that a president like

Obama would be installed in office sooner or later.

For the sake of brevity I have summarized these four points as follows:

One, the power for change comes from within ourselves, and we should use it in historical context. Principle two is that life—in the sense of life and death and the sense of everyday life—the life of each person is very important, and we should work together for our common good. Start from your family, neighborhood and broaden your sphere of activities to engulf all humanity. The third principle is we do all this for our children. And the fourth principle is that we need leaders who do not recycle the old frameworks and who can bring out the better angels of our nature. And all leaders in every country around disarmament activities really fall in that category.

One way to explain the first point is to look at Hiroshima today. Everybody who visits Hiroshima says it's a beautiful city. But as you know in 1945, it was probably the most destroyed city in the world. There was nothing left. But during these 64 years, its citizens engaged in a great act of will to make it one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Of course, other Japanese helped, and many people from other countries also helped, but it was the power of the citizens that made the reconstruction possible, the power to change really comes from within us, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki are proof of it.

The second point is that the life of each of us is very important, and we have to work together to accomplish our goals. We all understand this very well. And our leaders emphasize this every time they speak. President Obama said this in Prague and elsewhere. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed this point in his opening remarks.

Ms. Jody Williams urged us to write to President Obama and Prime Minister Brown to make a connection and broaden our commitment so that we can work together.

I would like to urge you to write other leaders as well. For example, President Sarkozy, President Medvedev, President Hu Jintao, Prime Minister Singh, President Zadari, Prime Minister Netanyahu, and Chairman Kim. And, of course, many others.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are inviting all these leaders, especially from the nuclear-weapon-states, to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki so they can see first hand what their nuclear weapons will do, while looking at the casualties and the pain that Hiroshima and Nagasaki citizens are still suffering.

I would also like to add mayors to the list of people to get in touch with. Please approach your mayors or any mayors you happen to have contact with. Our goal, which was adopted in August at the General Conference of Mayors for Peace held in Nagasaki, is to recruit approximately 2,000 more mayors so that in total Mayors for Peace will represent one billion

people.

Why is this important? Let me illustrate by telling you what Belgium has done. It is a relatively small country in comparison, for example, with Latin America. Latin America occupies an entire continent. However, with 350 city-members in Belgium, these 350 cities actually represent the majority of Belgian cities. As a result, it is only natural that the Belgian national government begins to pay more attention to the cities' wishes. I hope we can do this in every country, but that is not even necessary. Each city that joins Mayors for Peace sends a clear message to its national government and to the United Nations as well that we are engaged in a serious revolution for nuclear disarmament. We can show them where citizen power really counts.

So please talk to your mayor and urge him or her to join. Please also ask your spouse and friends to come along with you. The more, the better. It's easier to find people and go to City Hall and see the mayor than it is to go to the White House and see the President. And in fact, it will be much better because you can meet more mayors, more people and, in the end, you can have more influence.

At the same time, it would be even more effective if you were to create educational or artistic or other worthwhile projects or events with or for your mayor. And transform those events into portable presentations and bring them to New York next May so that they will be an important part of the peace march and related collection of events.

If you hurry, you and your mayor will be an important part of events that will take place on the International Day of Peace on September 21, when the Secretary-General will start the WMD Campaign: We Must Disarm Campaign. If you are interested, there is a table near the exit where materials that you can take to your mayor are presented. So I hope each one of you will pick up a set and talk to your mayors or any mayors you may have a connection to.

Now, mayors and other politicians are not the only ones that we would like to work with. And there are many effective means by which you can reach a wider range of people, and I will mention some of them if I have time left at the end.

The third point is the children. Perhaps I don't really have to say anything about this topic, but as a point of information I would like to tell you that Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and most cities that belong to Mayors for Peace are especially kind to their children. Let me give you one example. After World War II in Japan, and actually elsewhere in the world, there were many war orphans. In Hiroshima we called them A-bomb orphans. In Tokyo, where the population was approximate three million, the death toll of air raids was approximately 150 thousand, so the death rate in that population was 5%.

In Hiroshima, where the population was approximately 350 thousand, by the end of 1945,

about 140 thousand people died. That was a 40% death rate. Children had been evacuated to the countryside so they would be spared from air raids. But their parents lived in the city, and many of them died. So if you compare 40% versus 5 %, logically, there were more A-bomb orphans in Hiroshima than in Tokyo or any other city in the world, including Dresden. But the people of Hiroshima took care of these orphans, brought them up, helped them become independent, and that effort, which in a sense went on for 40 or 50 years, has been planted the genes of Hiroshima. This is true of many other cities in Mayors for Peace. That is why they say, because of what they suffered as a result of war, “Never again.” We really should not have nuclear weapons.

The United Nations had exactly the same thing in mind when they decided to call the year between 2010 and 2020 the International Disarmament Decade. Actually, this follows the International Decade for Children, so the natural flow of events leading the United Nations encompasses the experiences Hiroshima and Nagasaki and other cities that have suffered from war.

Finally the fourth point is the leaders. We are lucky to have good leaders worldwide. President Obama and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon come to mind immediately. And all the speakers here at each session are great leaders as well. But there is one person to whom I feel quite grateful. He is here and I would like to mention what he has done for me and for Mayors for Peace.

In 2005, when the NPT Review Conference was failing, I was utterly disappointed, so I asked the chairman of the Review Conference Ambassador Duarte for his thoughts. His reply was that the best way to turn the tide around is to create a groundswell of world public opinion, and mayors are in a better position than most to do that. His words were rational, made sense, and I became determined to do that.

Contrary to the impressions many of us somehow form in our minds, I understood by his words that true diplomats make it their mission to make people’s wishes and dreams a reality. They don’t just live in a lofty unapproachable tower talking to each other. They do care about the people’s wishes. High Representative Duarte is living up to his words, and today he is giving advice to people as a leader and functioning as a good and valuable mentor for the younger generations everywhere I encounter him. Thank you again, His Excellency, for your guidance.

Another point I learned is related to the first one. Talking together and walking together with the citizens of one’s own city and representing them everywhere in the world is a mayor’s job. That is the power that comes from within any city. We followed High Representative Duarte’s advice, and as I mentioned earlier, we now have 3,105 member-cities thanks to Mexico City. Before yesterday, we had 3,104 member cities.

Let me digress a little bit and give you a brief history of Mayors for Peace. It was established in 1982, but in 2003, given a terrible world situation, we launched a campaign called the 2020 Vision Campaign, aiming at eliminating all nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

In the course of our Campaign, we decided that Cities Are Not Targets. This project is very important because any opposition to abolishing nuclear weapons usually stems from what is called the deterrence theory and the nuclear umbrella. But from the point of view of the cities, those abstract notions actually refer to taking the cities hostage and utilizing cities and children and every citizen in them as a hostage to deal with international politics. That would be seen as nothing but a cowardly, heinous crime, if you did it. Why can nations get away with it? We should speak up against it. It is inhumane, it is immoral, it is illegal, and it is criminal.

Cities share the tragedies of their citizens. Most of the tragedies in history come with the names of cities. Guernika, Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Nanjing, you name it. They come with the names of cities because cities do suffer with the citizens. And that is why, in conclusion, any city that has suffered comes back saying “Never Again”. So I would like to emphasize that again, but every one of you is a leader and you represent many different fields. Perhaps it is a large cooperation that you are a leader of, or perhaps a small group of activists, or maybe you are a leader in a school. But any organization is very important. And let me remind you of two important points from Professor West. Leaders do not recycle the old frameworks, and leaders are here to draw out of each person the “better angels of our nature.”

Finally, before I end, I would like to share my dream. I firmly believe, I am confident, in fact, I know that we, working together, can abolish nuclear weapon by 2020. It is a gigantic task. It is a once-in-a-century event. Therefore, when it happens in 2020 it will call for a fantastic celebration, and I cannot think of better celebration than hosting the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to celebrate the triumph of the people of the world, to celebrate a nuclear free world, to celebrate the beginning of a new generation of people who will be able to tackle human problems without being worried about being destroyed by nuclear weapons and being reduced to nothing in a day. That celebration will be hopeful, so I will end by hoping to see you at the Olympic Games in 2020 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I thank you again and I would like to end by assuring you again, we do have the power to accomplish it.

We do have the power. We do have the responsibility. Together we can do it. Yes, we can! Thank you very much.