Volume 1 | Issue 8 | Article ID 1583 | Aug 09, 2003

Nagasaki Peace Declaration, 2003

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by Itoh Iccho

Today, the modern buildings and houses of Nagasaki's verdant cityscape make it difficult to imagine what happened here at the end of the Second World War on August 9 at 11:02 AM, fifty-eight years ago. An American aircraft dropped a single atomic bomb that was detonated at an altitude of about 500 meters over the district known as Matsuyama-machi. In an instant, the resulting heat rays, blast wind, and radiation descended upon Nagasaki and transformed the city into a hell on Earth. Some 74,000 people were killed, and 75,000 injured. Many of those who were spared from death were afflicted with incurable physical and mental wounds, and many continue today to suffer from the after-effects of the atomic bombing, and from health problems induced by the stress of their experience. We have ceaselessly called for the eradication of nuclear weapons and the establishment of world peace, so that such a tragedy is never repeated.

Nevertheless, in March of this year, the US and the UK launched a preemptive attack on Iraq, whom they accused of possessing weapons of mass destruction. In the ensuing war, waged in the absence of a United Nations resolution, the lives of many civilians were sacrificed in addition to those of soldiers. We deeply regret that this conflict could not be averted, despite our appeals for a peaceful resolution based on international cooperation, and a rising worldwide anti-war movement.

In January of last year, the United States government conducted a nuclear posture review, recommending the development of mini-nuclear weapons and the resumption of nuclear explosions for test purposes, and openly proposing the use of nuclear weapons under certain circumstances. At the same time, following nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, the disclosure by North Korea that it too possesses nuclear weapons has served to heighten the tension of international society. International agreements supporting nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and the prohibition of all nuclear weapons testing now appear to be on the verge of collapse.

Mother Theresa, when she visited Nagasaki, commented as she viewed a picture of a boy whose body had been burnt black in the atomic bombing, "The leaders of all the nuclear states should come to Nagasaki to see this photograph." We do indeed invite the leaders of the US and the other nuclear weapons states to visit the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, so that they may witness with their own eyes the tragic outcome of these instruments of destruction.

We also urge the government of Japan, the only country to have sustained a nuclear attack, to stand at the forefront of efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons. In response to concerns voiced both domestically and internationally over the possibility of Japan's remilitarization and nuclear armament, the government must uphold the principle of an exclusively defensive posture, and the Three Non-Nuclear Principles (stating that Japan will not possess, manufacture or allow nuclear weapons into the country) must be passed into law, thus demonstrating the sincerity of Japan's intentions. The Korean Peninsula Non-Nuclear Joint Statement must be realized in cooperation with other nations, and, based on the spirit of the Pyongyang Declaration, work must begin on the establishment of a Northeast Asia nuclear-weapon-free zone.

It is our hope that younger generations may continue to work for the advancement of science and technology in pursuit of human happiness. May they also consider what has been wrought upon humanity when these have been misused, and learn from the events of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. May they turn their eyes to the wider world around them, consider what must be done to bring about peace, and join hands in concerted action.

Here in Nagasaki, the hibakusha atomic bomb survivors, growing increasingly older, are continuing to earnestly retell their experiences of the atomic bombing, and large numbers of young people are actively engaged in peace promotion and volunteer activities. Nagasaki City will persevere in providing opportunities for learning and reflection, that the experiences of the atomic bombing may not become lost and forgotten. In November of this year, we will host for the second time the Nagasaki Global Citizens' Assembly for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, an international gathering of peace-supporting NGOs and individuals, held in advance of the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, calling to the peoples of the world for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Today, on the 58th anniversary of the atomic bombing, as we pray for the repose of those who died and recall to mind their suffering, we the citizens of Nagasaki pledge our

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466003031887 Published online by Cambridge University Press

commitment to the realization of true peace in the world, free from nuclear weapons.

August 9, 2003
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https://doi.org/10.1017/S1557466003031887 Published online by Cambridge University Press