Hiroshima Peace Declaration

Tadatoshi Akiba

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by Akiba Tadatoshi

This year again, summer's heat reminds us of the blazing hell fire that swept over this very spot fifty-eight years ago. The world without nuclear weapons and beyond war that our hibakusha have sought for so long appears to be slipping deeper into a thick cover of dark clouds that they fear at any minute could become mushroom clouds spilling black rain.

The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the central international agreement guiding the elimination of nuclear weapons, is on the verge of collapse. The chief cause is U.S. nuclear policy that, by openly declaring the possibility of a pre-emptive nuclear first strike and calling for resumed research into mini-nukes and other so-called "useable nuclear weapons,"appears to worship nuclear weapons as God.

However, nuclear weapons are not the only problem. Acting as if the United Nations Charter and the Japanese Constitution don't even exist, the world has suddenly veered sharply away from post-war toward pre-war mentality. As the U.S.-U.K.- led war on Iraq made clear, the assertion that war is peace is being trumpeted as truth. Conducted with disregard for the multitudes around the world demanding a peaceful solution through continued UN inspections, this war slaughtered innocent women, children, and the elderly. It destroyed the environment, most notably through radioactive contamination that will be with us for billions of years. And the weapons of mass destruction that served as the excuse for the war have yet to be found.

However, as President Lincoln once said, "You can't fool all the people all the time." Now is the time for us to focus once again on the truth that "Darkness can never be dispelled by darkness, only by light." The rule of power is darkness. The rule of law is light. In the darkness of retaliation, the proper path for human civilization is illumined by the spirit of reconciliation born of the hibakusha's determination that "no one else should ever suffer as we did."

Lifting up that light, the aging hibakusha are calling for U.S. President George Bush to visit Hiroshima. We all support that call and hereby demand that President Bush, Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea, and the leaders of all nuclear-weapon states come to Hiroshima and confront the reality of nuclear war. We must somehow convey to them that nuclear weapons are utterly evil, inhumane and illegal under international law. In the meanwhile, we expect that the facts about Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be shared throughout the world, and that the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Peace Study Course will be established in ever more colleges and universities.

To strengthen the NPT regime, the city of Hiroshima is calling on all members of the World Conference of Mayors for Peace to take emergency action to promote the abolition of nuclear weapons. Our goal is to gather a strong delegation of mayors representing cities throughout the world to participate in the NPT Review Conference that will take place in New York in 2005, the 60th year after the atomic bombing. In New York, we will lobby national delegates for the start of negotiations at the United Nations on a universal Nuclear Weapons Convention providing for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

At the same time, Hiroshima calls on politicians, religious professionals, academics, writers,

journalists, teachers, artists, athletes and other leaders with influence. We must establish a climate that immediately confronts even casual comments that appear to approve of nuclear weapons or war. To prevent war and to abolish the absolute evil of nuclear weapons, we must pray, speak, and act to that effect in our daily lives.

The Japanese government, which publicly asserts its status as "the only A-bombed nation," must fulfill the responsibilities that accompany that status, both at home and abroad. Specifically, it must adopt as national precepts the three new non-nuclear principles - allow no production, allow no possession, and allow no use of nuclear weapons anywhere in the world - and work conscientiously toward an Asian nuclear-free zone. It must also provide full support to all hibakusha everywhere, including those exposed in "black rain areas" and those who live overseas.

On this 58th August 6, we offer our heartfelt condolences to the souls of all atomic bomb victims, and we renew our pledge to do everything in our power to abolish nuclear weapons and eliminate war altogether by the time we turn this world over to our children.

Akiba Tadatoshi
Mayor
The City of Hiroshima