

Message from Mr Sergio Duarte
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
United Nations

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TO THE MEETINGS ORGANIZED BY THE JAPAN COUNCIL AGAINST ATOMIC AND
HYDROGEN BOMBS, LAUNCHING A NEW SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN CALLING FOR THE
START OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR A CONVENTION BANNING NUCLEAR WEAPONS
Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Tokyo, 15 February 2011

The Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs has a long and distinguished record of initiatives to advance global nuclear disarmament.

These initiatives have rested on an understanding that the firm will of the people offers the strongest possible foundation for achieving this great goal.

I am therefore both pleased and honoured to send this message to commend your new signature campaign to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention.

Your petition serves two very important purposes. First, it gives the general public—each individual citizen—an opportunity to participate personally in a wider process that is underway worldwide to eliminate the most dangerous weapons ever invented. Second, it focuses attention where it is most needed: on the need to bring the “rule of law” to disarmament, as proposed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

On an issue as important as nuclear disarmament, it is inconceivable that this will ever be achieved without binding legal commitments, whether in the form of a nuclear weapons convention or a framework of mutually-reinforcing instruments to achieve the same result.

The world must start thinking very seriously about what kinds of commitments and controls would have to be included in such a convention. Such work is not premature. Quite the opposite: it is long overdue.

This petition campaign is contributing to an outpouring of initiatives from civil society groups around the world, from both individual countries and through networks across national borders. With the energy of the “great wave” of Hokusai, these initiatives have the potential to create a *tsunami* of popular support for disarmament.

Leaders everywhere have recently witnessed how the will of the people can quite literally change history. A nuclear-weapon-free world would be the best possible gift we could pass along to future generations. It is not sufficient just to pass them the responsibility of achieving this goal. It is a cause worthy of our best efforts right now.

Please accept my very best wishes for a successful campaign.