

United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination

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English only

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Open Letter from Mayors for Peace

Submitted by Mayors for Peace

1. We are writing to voice our strong support for this historic initiative to negotiate a multilateral treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons.
2. On behalf of over one billion citizens from over 7,200 member cities in 162 countries and regions in the cities among our membership, we reaffirm our common commitment to pursue the prohibition and total elimination of nuclear weapons.
3. For over seven decades now, the atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, called *hibakusha*, have continued to tell the world their indescribably painful experiences of humanitarian devastation in their earnest desire that “no one shall ever again suffer as we have.” In the eyes of *hibakusha*, nuclear weapons are the most inhumane weapons and an absolute evil.
4. Based on their keen sense of responsibility to protect the safety and welfare of their citizens, an increasing number of mayors have sympathized with the message of the *hibakusha* and joined our efforts toward a world without nuclear weapons. They are deeply concerned that, in a too often violent world seeded with numerous conflicts, already a quarter century after the Cold War has ended, nearly 15,000 nuclear warheads still exist. Declassified documents have revealed that the risks of inadvertent nuclear weapons use due to accident or miscalculation are quite high. We also cannot ignore the danger posed by nuclear terrorism.
5. We also believe that the enormous investments in maintaining and modernizing nuclear weapons are an extraordinary waste of precious resources that should instead be devoted to meeting basic human needs in our cities and among the poor in all nations.
6. This is the situation in which the ban treaty negotiations begin. We wish to commend the vision and leadership of the delegations of all States participating in this great initiative, and in particular, we warmly welcome the fact that it is being pursued within the framework of the United Nations.
7. To the nuclear-armed states and their allies who have not declared their intention to participate in the negotiations, we strongly appeal to them to participate constructively. No leader around the world would deny the ideal of a “world without nuclear weapons.” And their job is to work on improving our existing imperfect world by pursuing a nuclear-weapon-free future.

8. What we should focus on now is how all countries can live without nuclear weapons. Leaders around the world must take the decisive step in seeking a world where no country on the face of the Earth possesses nuclear weapons. A legal prohibition of nuclear weapons is the crucial step and it will mark a significant and essential turning point in achieving this goal.

9. Some states cite the existence of nuclear weapons and the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as essential for their security and therefore claim that it is too early to prohibit them. However, while the theory of deterrence, whose history dates back several thousand years, may function in the short-term, it has been historically proven that it will inevitably end in failure, causing military conflicts in the mid- and long-term.

10. We must keep in mind that not only can nuclear deterrence fail with unacceptable humanitarian consequences, it offers no effective solution to the global security challenges we face. Furthermore, we must face the fact that this concept can also induce dangers of nuclear proliferation, such as problems similar to North Korea's nuclear development. These circumstances have made us realize that we can no longer subject the lives of our citizens to the catastrophic risks of the failure of nuclear deterrence and thus we insist this issue be addressed immediately.

11. The negotiations should therefore be conducted with new thinking and innovative approaches. The international community must join forces and discuss how we can address real issues through building mutual confidence. In pursuit of such efforts, Mayors for Peace reiterates its full confidence in the participants of the negotiations and also its firm support for the process of negotiating a nuclear weapons ban treaty. We strongly recommend that the final outcome of the negotiations will underscore the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and identify effective legal measures to advance to a world free of nuclear weapons. It is also our sincere hope that this important legal instrument will go through an implementation planning process that will allow all States, including those currently possessing nuclear weapons, to eventually join the treaty.

12. In addition to the above points, we would also like to refer to the other responsibilities that world leaders and civil society should bear in nuclear disarmament.

13. The states relying on nuclear weapons stress efforts to reduce the numbers and roles of nuclear weapons. It is clear that these efforts should be parallel to discussions on the legal prohibition of nuclear weapons to improve the imperfect reality. Yet what is most needed now is for world leaders, especially those with nuclear weapons and their allies, to show their decisive leadership in planning for their security without reliance on nuclear weapons. In the past, nuclear disarmament measures were taken at peaks of international tension by joint initiatives of such individual leaders to reach out to each other. It is certainly time to do so once again.

14. The civil society bears an important role and commitment in nurturing better conditions for world leaders to demonstrate such political leadership. We believe those conditions are built on striving to overcome mutual distrust and cultivating a shared awareness of belonging to one human family, regardless of cultural, religious and ethnic differences. We, Mayors for Peace, will continue to make our best efforts to support initiatives to create such an atmosphere.

15. Mayors for Peace, together with a wide range of like-minded civil society partners, will make our best efforts towards the success of the negotiations. We must ensure that the negotiations will bring the effective legal prohibition of nuclear weapons, leading to their total elimination and we will continue to support the initiatives of world leaders on our part as

mayors with primary responsibility over our people's lives. For the sake of our own common future, let us transcend our various positions and dutifully work together to finish this important task.

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