

MESSAGE TO THE 2014 WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST ATOMIC AND HYDROGEN BOMBS

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It is an honor for me to address the World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs. As we pay renewed tribute to the memory of the thousands of women, men and children who fell victim to the nuclear bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we are reminded of the horrific humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation.

The words that come to my mind when I think of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are: "never again". Never again must we allow that human beings be victims of these terrible weapons. Brazil understands that the only way to achieve this goal is to free the world of nuclear arsenals.

Next year, the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will meet for the IX Review Conference of the Treaty. Brazil will demand from NPT states full implementation of the commitments undertaken both under the Treaty itself and in previous Review Conferences, especially as regards nuclear disarmament.

Brazil regrets that, 40 years after the entry into force of the NPT, there still remains a glaring "compliance deficit" with respect to the elimination of nuclear arsenals. More than two decades after the end of the Cold War, there is an estimated 17.300 nuclear warheads (4.300 of them in a deployed status) under the control of states parties and non-parties to the NPT. These states spend over USD 100 billion annually to maintain and modernize their arsenals. It is estimated that half of this value would be sufficient to meet socioeconomic goals of poverty reduction, including the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. This issue becomes even more relevant now as the international community begins the debate on post-2015 development goals.

However, more than being a legal obligation or a measure of economic rationality, nuclear disarmament is a moral imperative.

The destructive capacity of nuclear weapons is indiscriminate and disproportional. As demonstrated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, their use would necessarily entail severe and wide-ranging consequences of humanitarian concern. It would be impossible, for instance, to distinguish between military and civilian targets, or between combatants and non-combatants. The populations of neighbor countries that are not involved in the hypothetical conflict would also suffer from the effect of the radioactive fallout spread by the detonations. The major part of the victims would inevitably be civilians.

For these reasons, the use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with International Humanitarian Law. It is impossible to set up an adequate humanitarian response to a nuclear detonation. The only form of prevention that is fully effective is a complete and irreversible ban on such weapons. This humanitarian aspect has been gaining increasing prominence in the debate on nuclear disarmament, and Brazil firmly supports this trend. In this connection, we support the beginning of negotiations, within the existing multilateral fora and with the participation of states possessing nuclear weapons, of a legally binding instrument aimed at banning such weapons.

We must all be aware that, as long as nuclear arsenals exist, they represent a threat to humanity. As long as a limited number of countries consider themselves entitled to possess nuclear weapons, there will be the risk that States and non-state actors also feel compelled to acquire or develop them.

Today, once again, as we pay tribute to the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Brazilian government and people call upon the nuclear-armed states to show real political resolve and intensify their efforts so that we reach the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

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