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Mayor of Hiroshima City

On the occasion of the Hiroshima Day Rally of the 2020 World Conference against A and H Bombs, allow me to extend my greetings and heartfelt thanks to you for your daily hard work to achieve nuclear weapons abolition and eternal world peace.

I also express my deep respect to you for sending out your appeals for the creation of a nuclear weapon-free world using the online method, despite the challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. The message is all the more powerful as a result.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing. Back then, it was reported that as a result of the atomic bombing no vegetation would grow in Hiroshima for the next 75 years. Over the years, while suffering serious damage both physically and mentally, the Hibakusha have shared their tragic experiences and called for peace, saying, "Never again should our sufferings be repeated by anyone." Their appeals, deeply rooted in their belief in humanity, moved the world at the U.N. in 2017 to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which, as of today, has been ratified by 40 countries.

However, the situation involving nuclear weapons looks bleak. More than 13,000 nuclear warheads remain in the world. We witness the emergence of a "home country first" principle and heightened tensions caused by exclusionist and confrontational moves among nations. The nuclear weapon states are not fulfilling their obligations under Article VI of the NPT to pursue negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament. Instead they are modernizing their nuclear arsenals. In regard to agreements between the U.S. and Russia, not only did the INF Treaty lapse in August 2019, it is also expected that the new START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) is unlikely to be extended. These developments increase the risk that nuclear weapons will be used.

In this situation, it is especially important that more and more people in civil society empathize with the aspirations of the Hibakusha. It is important to establish a universal awareness that a "world without nuclear weapons" is the first step towards eternal world peace. The City of Hiroshima, too, is doing its utmost, together with other member cities of the Mayors for Peace, to create an environment that will boost actions by government leaders for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

In order to realize a peaceful world without nuclear weapons, it is most important that people in civil society take action together and create major currents for building and spreading international opinion to that end. In this sense, the convening of this 2020

World Conference - Hiroshima Day Rally, where so many peace-loving people are joining and sharing the aspiration of the Hibakusha, is very significant. I hope this conference will be productive in offering many opportunities for people to renew their commitment to peace.

In concluding, I wish you all the best for the great success of this year's World Conference. I wish you good health and more activism in the future.