

THE HIROSHIMA DECLARATION ON THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The undersigned Nobel Peace Laureates and representatives of Nobel Peace Prize organisations, gathered in Hiroshima on November 12-14, 2010, after listening to the testimonies of the Hibakusha, have no doubt that the use of nuclear weapons against any people must be regarded as a crime against humanity and should henceforth be prohibited.

We pay tribute to the courage and suffering of the Hibakusha who survived the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 and honour those that have dedicated their lives to teaching the world about the horrors of nuclear war. Like them, we pledge ourselves to work for a future committed to peace, justice and security without nuclear weapons and war.

“Nuclear weapons are unique in their destructive power, in the unspeakable human suffering they cause, in the impossibility of controlling their effects in space and time, in the risks of escalation they create, and in the threat they pose to the environment, to future generations, and indeed to the survival of humanity.” We strongly endorse this assessment by the International Committee of the Red Cross, three times recognised with the Nobel Peace Prize for its humanitarian work.¹

Twenty-five years ago in Geneva, the leaders of the two largest nuclear powers declared that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought”. There has been some substantive progress since then. The agreements on intermediate range nuclear forces (INF); strategic arms reductions (START); and unilateral and bilateral initiatives on tactical nuclear weapons, have eliminated tens of thousands of nuclear weapons. We welcome the signing by the United States and Russia of the New START treaty and the consensus Nuclear Disarmament Action Plan that was adopted by the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference.

Nevertheless, there are still enough nuclear weapons to destroy life on Earth many times over. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and the possibility of their use for acts of terrorism are additional causes for deep concern. The threats posed by nuclear weapons did not disappear with the ending of the Cold War.

Nuclear weapons cannot be disinvited, but they can and must be outlawed, just as chemical and biological weapons, landmines and cluster munitions have been declared illegal. Nuclear weapons, the most inhumane threat of all, should likewise be outlawed in keeping with the 2010 NPT Review Conference final document, which reaffirmed “the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law”.

Efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons must proceed along with measures to strengthen international law, demilitarize international relations and political thinking and to address human and security needs. Nuclear deterrence, power projection and national prestige as arguments to justify acquiring and retaining nuclear weapons are totally outdated and must be rejected.

We support the UN Secretary General's five point proposal on nuclear disarmament and proposals by others to undertake work on a universal treaty to prohibit the use, development, production, stockpiling or transfer of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon technologies and components and to provide for their complete and verified elimination.

- We call upon heads of government, parliaments, mayors and citizens to join us in affirming that the use of nuclear weapons is immoral and illegal.
- We call for the ratification without delay of the New START agreement by the United States and Russia and for follow-on negotiations for deeper cuts in all types of nuclear weapons.
- We call on all the nuclear weapon possessor states to make deep cuts in their existing arsenals.
- We call on the relevant governments to take urgent steps to implement the proposals agreed on in the 2010 NPT Review Conference final document towards realising the objectives of the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East.
- We call on China, the United States, Egypt, Iran, Israel and Indonesia to ratify, and on India, Pakistan and North Korea to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, that has already been ratified by 153 nations, so that the Treaty can be brought into full legal force.
- We call on nations to negotiate a universal treaty to abolish nuclear weapons, in partnership with civil society.

To ensure that the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki never reoccur and to build a world based on cooperation and peace, we issue this call of conscience. We must all work together to achieve a common good that is practical, moral, legal and necessary – the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Hiroshima, November 14, 2010

¹ Jakob Kellenberger, ICRC President, April 20, 2010