



## **Mayors for Peace**

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Secretariat

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### Message to the Conference “Nuclear Abolition, Climate Change, and Our Cities’ Future,”

October 23, 2008

Mayor Cownie, fellow Mayors, speakers, activists and community members. I would like to convey my greetings on behalf of the A-bombed city of Hiroshima, and Mayors for Peace. I was delighted to learn that today’s conference is taking place in Des Moines, and I’d like to thank the Office of the Mayor of Des Moines and Drake University for co-convening it. As a young man, I visited nearby Ames, and have always felt a special fondness for Iowa. This conference is the first such U.S. Mayors for Peace regional meeting, and it seeks to break new ground in exploring the linkages between nuclear weapons and climate change, and the role of cities in addressing these twin challenges to our very survival. The United States, of course, has a central role to play, so it is especially gratifying that you are taking the lead today.

Seen from the wasteland of the Moon, the Earth appears as a beautiful blue oasis floating in a pitch-black expanse of space. As we learn more about the other planets circling our Sun, we realize how very special Earth is and its life-bearing capacity. We wonder: how delicate is the balance of nature on Earth?

We also worry: have we conducted a very careless experiment with our thin atmosphere by pumping large quantities of carbon dioxide into it? All the consequences of this thoughtless behavior may not be known for many years, but they will deeply affect all of us and all our children.

We must stop releasing into the atmosphere carbon now safely sequestered by the forces of nature in underground deposits. We must free ourselves of this profligate hydrocarbon dependency.

I’m proud that Mayors around the world have awakened to this challenge and are working with concerned citizens to rethink how cities consume energy and generate wastes. To cite a particularly important example, over 850 mayors have signed the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

Mayors for Peace aims to awaken citizens and governments to another “human” activity with terrible climate-changing potential. Some countries have armed themselves with weapons

that could, within one hour of any given moment, plunge the world into ten years of diminished sunlight, worldwide crop failures, and starvation on a scale never witnessed before. One hundred of these weapons could create one hundred firestorms which would pump such vast quantities of soot into the upper atmosphere that the full warmth of the sun would not be felt again at the surface of the Earth for ten years.

The source of all this soot: cities incinerated by nuclear weapons, just as my city was in 1945. As with global warming, the whole world would suffer terribly from a ten-year “nuclear winter.”

So it is hardly surprising that I and more than 2,400 mayors in 131 countries and regions are taking the lead in sounding the alarm. Here I would like to highlight again the action of U.S. mayors. A resolution unanimously adopted in June of this year by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, representing over one thousand of the largest cities in the United States, calls upon the U.S. government to work for the worldwide elimination of nuclear forces by 2020, though implementation of the “Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol,” a plan put forward by Mayors for Peace.

But how do we address nuclear winter and global warming simultaneously? Won't this just confuse people? Global warming is already underway, while nuclear winter is only a specter. Can't we just hope that it will never happen and stay focused on global warming?

Unfortunately, nearly twenty years after the end of the Cold War, the threat of nuclear war is increasing and demands urgent attention. Indeed, the ill will generated by threats of mutual annihilation greatly hampers cooperation among nations. What chance do we have of effectively combating climate change on a global basis when we persist in pointing nuclear weapons at each other?

The one-time cost of nuclear disarmament would be far less than the cost of perpetually maintaining nuclear forces. The resources wasted on nuclear weapons – both financial and human – are desperately needed by cities and other sectors of society to address global warming. It “just makes sense” to eliminate the threat of nuclear winter and get on with combating global warming with more resources and a better political climate.

That is why Mayors for Peace offers its “2020 Vision.” Experts have advised us that, using existing technologies and facilities, all nuclear weapons and the fissile material that goes into making them could be eliminated or safely sequestered by the year 2020. We have challenged governments not to lose another day in meeting this goal; talks should begin immediately.

Our cause is just and urgent. Of all the serious global problems facing the human family, from climate change to the end of cheap oil, the threat from nuclear weapons is the easiest to solve and a prerequisite to solving the rest. Our assertion that “Cities Are Not Targets!” has

been endorsed by municipal associations around the world representing more than half the world's population. We have broad support in the international community. We have a powerful tool in the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol, and I urge all mayors and other local elected officials to sign the Cities Appeal in support of this common-sense disarmament framework.

I only learned in mid-August about the wonderful resolution passed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors in June, because everyone on my staff was assuming that someone else had informed me! I was especially surprised and delighted to see what a strong and comprehensive resolution it is. It clearly expresses support for the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Protocol, which is vital to this stage of our campaign, but it also addresses all the other key points we want to make. Now, whenever I make a speech, I say, "Don't take it from me. Listen to the U.S. Conference of Mayors."

Once again, congratulations and best wishes for a successful and productive conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tadatoshi Akiba". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tadatoshi Akiba  
Mayor of Hiroshima  
President  
Mayors for Peace