

No more Hiroshimas! No more Nagasaki!

António Guterres

The Secretary-General of the United Nations opened the tenth review conference of the parties to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in New York on 1 August 2022, chaired by Ambassador Zlauvinen of Argentina. Five days later, on 6 August, Mr Guterres spoke in Hiroshima at the commemoration of the atomic bombing of the city in 1945. Later, he was given honorary citizenship of the city.

New York

... This Conference has been long-delayed. But its importance and urgency remain undiminished. It takes place at a critical juncture for our collective peace and security. The climate crisis, stark inequalities, conflicts and human rights violations, and the personal and economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, have put our world under greater stress than it has faced in our lifetimes. And it occurs at a time of nuclear danger not seen since the height of the Cold War. That is the reason that to underscore the importance of this conference, I will be in a few days in Hiroshima at the anniversary of the first nuclear bombardment in human history. And then, I will follow it with two visits to other countries in the region having non-proliferation as a key item in the agenda of the visits.

Now, the initial post-Cold War period ushered in a tentative new hope for peace: a hope found in massive arsenal reductions, in entire regions declaring themselves to be nuclear-weapons-free, and in the entrenchment of norms against the use, proliferation and testing of nuclear weapons. When I was Prime Minister of Portugal, I instructed our mission to the United Nations to vote – for the first time – against the resumption of nuclear testing in the Pacific. Before, the tradition of my country was to abstain, as if this was a matter in which we can abstain. And through a combination of commitment, judgment and luck, the world avoided the suicidal mistake of nuclear conflict. But as the years have passed, these fruits of hope are withering. Humanity is in danger of

forgetting the lessons forged in the terrifying fires of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Geopolitical tensions are reaching new highs. Competition is trumping co-operation and collaboration. Distrust has replaced dialogue and disunity has replaced disarmament. States are seeking false security in stockpiling and spending hundreds of billions of dollars on doomsday weapons that have no place on our planet. Almost 13,000 nuclear weapons are now being held in arsenals around the world. All this at a time when the risks of proliferation are growing and guardrails to prevent escalation are weakening. And when crises – with nuclear undertones – are festering. From the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula; to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and to many other factors around the world.

The clouds that parted following the end of the Cold War are gathering once more. We have been extraordinarily lucky so far. But luck is not a strategy. Nor is it a shield from geopolitical tensions boiling over into nuclear conflict. Today, humanity is just one misunderstanding, one miscalculation away from nuclear annihilation. We need the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as much as ever. That is why this Review Conference is so important. It's an opportunity to hammer out the measures that will help avoid certain disaster; and to put humanity on a new path towards a world free of nuclear weapons. It's also a chance to strengthen this Treaty and make it fit for the worrying world around us.

I suggest five areas for action.

First – we urgently need to reinforce and reaffirm the 77-year-old norm against the use of nuclear weapons. This requires a steadfast commitment from all States Parties. It means finding practical measures that will reduce the risk of nuclear war and put us back on the path to disarmament. We need to strengthen all avenues of dialogue and transparency. Peace cannot take hold in an absence of trust and mutual respect.

Second – reducing the risk of war is not enough. Eliminating nuclear weapons is the only guarantee they will never be used. We must work relentlessly towards this goal. This must start with new commitments to shrink the numbers of all kinds of nuclear weapons so that they no longer hang by a thread over humanity. And it means reinvigorating – and fully resourcing – our multilateral agreements and frameworks around disarmament and non-proliferation, including the important work of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Third – we need to address the simmering tensions in the Middle East and Asia. By adding the threat of nuclear weapons to enduring conflicts, these regions are edging towards catastrophe. We need to redouble our

support for dialogue and negotiation to ease tensions and forge new bonds of trust in regions that have seen too little.

Fourth – we need to promote the peaceful use of nuclear technology as a catalyst to advance the Sustainable Development Goals, including for medical and other uses. When used for peaceful purposes, this technology can be a great benefit to humanity.

And fifth – we need to fulfil all outstanding commitments in the Treaty itself, and keep it fit-for-purpose in these trying times. We are all here today because we believe in the Treaty’s purpose and function. But carrying it into the future requires going beyond the status quo. It requires renewed commitment, and real, good faith negotiations. And it requires all Parties to listen, compromise and keep the lessons of the past – and the fragility of the future – in view at all times.

Future generations are counting on your commitment to step back from the abyss. We have a shared obligation to leave the world a better, safer place than we found it. This is our moment to meet this basic test, and lift the cloud of nuclear annihilation, once and for all.

Hiroshima

... Seventy-seven years ago, tens of thousands of people were killed in this city, in the blink of an eye. Women, children and men were incinerated in a hellish fire. Buildings turned to dust. Survivors were cursed with a radioactive legacy. Polluted by cancer. Stalked by health problems. And marked by telltale scars on their bodies – the stigma of surviving the most destructive attack in human history.

The unflinching testimonies of the *hibakusha* remind us of the fundamental folly of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are nonsense. Three-quarters of a century later, we must ask what we’ve learned from the mushroom cloud that swelled above this city in 1945. Or from the Cold War and the terrifying near-misses that placed humanity within minutes of annihilation. Or from the promising decades of arsenal reductions and widespread acceptance of the principles against the use, proliferation and testing of nuclear weapons.

Because a new arms race is picking up speed. World leaders are enhancing stockpiles at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars. Almost 13,000 nuclear weapons are held in arsenals around the world. And crises with grave nuclear undertones are spreading fast – from the Middle East, to the Korean peninsula, to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. It is totally unacceptable for states in possession of nuclear weapons to admit the possibility of nuclear war. Humanity is playing with a loaded gun.

There are signs of hope. In June, members of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons met for the first time to develop a roadmap towards a world free of these doomsday weapons. And right now, the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is taking place in New York. Today, from this sacred space, I call on this Treaty's members to work urgently to eliminate the stockpiles that threaten our future. To strengthen dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation. And to support my disarmament agenda by eliminating these devices of destruction.

Countries with nuclear weapons must commit to the “no first use” of those weapons. They must also assure States that do not have nuclear weapons that they will not use – or threaten to use – nuclear weapons against them. And they must be transparent throughout.

We must keep the horrors of Hiroshima in view at all times, recognizing there is only one solution to the nuclear threat: not to have nuclear weapons at all. At the height of the Cold War, schoolchildren learned to hide under desks. But leaders cannot hide from their responsibilities. My message to them is simple:

Take the nuclear option off the table – for good.
It's time to proliferate peace.

Heed the message of the *hibakusha*:
'No more Hiroshimas! No more Nagasakis!'

And to the young people here today: finish the work that the *hibakusha* have begun. The world must never forget what happened here. The memory of those who died – and the legacy of those who survived – will never be extinguished.

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From horror to hope

Mayor Matsui, City Council Chairperson Sasaki, Ladies and gentlemen, I am deeply moved by this granting of honorary citizenship of Hiroshima. This beautiful and vibrant city epitomizes the necessity of peace. And how people can work together and move from horror to hope. I accept this great honour on behalf of all the women and men of the United Nations who are working for peace around the world. I accept it on behalf of the diplomats and negotiators who – this very week – are meeting in New York to stop

the spread of nuclear weapons. I accept it on behalf of the activists – young and old – who continue to stand up and speak out on this issue. I accept it on behalf of the inspiring *hibakusha* I met earlier today who have spent their lives reminding the world of the importance of peace.

Above all, I accept it in the memory of those tens of thousands of people who were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 77 years ago. We must never forget what happened here. Nor can we forget all the victims of global conflicts like World War Two, which inflicted incalculable damage to communities, countries and the world. Especially today, when nuclear risk is once again growing around the world. When stockpiles are being upgraded. And when almost 13,000 of these doomsday weapons still exist.

The lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are clear. Nuclear weapons have no place on our planet. It's time to lift the cloud of nuclear annihilation, once and for all. It's time to proliferate peace.

My thanks to the people of Hiroshima for this honour today. And to the government and people of Japan for your warm welcome and steadfast commitment to a more peaceful future.

And allow me two personal notes. One to say that it is true that we see a new arms race. It is true that disarmament treaties, that disarmament agreements that were made in the last century are at risk and some of them have been lost, but the Conference on the Review of the Non-proliferation Treaty is going well and I hope that there will be positive outcomes and the States party to the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons are working to define a roadmap with relation to the progressive implementation of the Treaty. So I see movement in the right direction. I think Hiroshima has a key role to play in helping us to move in the right direction and I was very impressed by the declaration of peace that you, honourable mayor, have made today.

The second note, I came to Hiroshima, I think 39 years ago. I visited the city and I visited the area at the Peace Memorial and I visited the museum – it was a small museum at the time – but it was very impressive and this made a very deep imprint in myself. Then, I became Prime Minister of Portugal and just one month after starting functions, there was a vote in the General Assembly of the United Nations about the French nuclear tests in the Pacific. France had announced the tests. There was a motion as every year, a proposal for a resolution against the test. Now, the Minister for Foreign Affairs called me and said, well we have this resolution and the tradition is that all the members of the European Union will abstain so as not to offend France. But at that moment, I remembered my visit to Hiroshima and I told the Minister: Sorry, we are going to vote against,

which means we vote in favour of the resolution which is against the explosion.

And so this is very complicated because other ambassadors already promised the French that they would abstain as always. I said it doesn't matter, we vote against the nuclear explosion. Afterwards two other European countries, I think Austria and another one, when they knew that Portugal was going to vote against, they also voted against.

We'd probably keep on with this abstention if I had not come to Hiroshima. So it's impossible for people to come here and not to feel the absurdity of the existence of nuclear weapons. And I join my voice for Heads of State of all over the world to come here to understand that we must have a world free of nuclear weapons.

... The current context also gives us pause to consider the devastating humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Any use of nuclear weapons would have immediate and long-term consequences, creating a devastating humanitarian crisis and emergency significantly beyond the response capacity of States or international organisations. I welcome the adoption of the Vienna Declaration of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which sends a clear message of alarm and dismay at threats to use nuclear weapons, and unequivocally condemns "any and all nuclear threats, whether they be explicit or implicit and irrespective of the circumstances." The outcome of the Vienna meeting successfully demonstrated the value of the TPNW for its States parties as a pathway to fulfilling Article VI obligations. The TPNW is fully compatible with and complements the NPT. We hope to see the positive contribution of the TPNW reflected in the outcome document of this meeting ...

**Ireland's National Statement at the
10th NPT Review Conference**