

**ASIA-PACIFIC LEADERSHIP NETWORK**

FOR NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION AND DISARMAMENT

HIROSHIMA'S COMMITMENT TO CULTIVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS FOR A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD**Hidehiko Yuzaki**, Governor of the Hiroshima Prefecture of Japan

05 August 2024

In May 2023, the G7 Summit was held in Hiroshima, where leaders of nuclear-weapon and nuclear umbrella states confronted the reality of nuclear weapons use and pledged to abolish them. However, with conflicts such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Hamas-Israel conflict, fears and concerns that nuclear weapons may be used in the near future have never been higher among the public. Our world's perspective on nuclear weapons has shifted dramatically.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, we cannot fully eliminate the risk of their intentional or accidental use. We constantly live under the threat that Earth and humanity could be destroyed within the span of 30 minutes. Additionally, in the past year alone, governments and the private sector worldwide invested over \$90 billion and vast numbers of personnel to maintain and modernise these weapons.

As we approach the 79th remembrance of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, the world remains divided over the issue of nuclear weapons. The A-bomb survivors, who have been a significant force in efforts to abolish nuclear weapons, are now over 85 years old on average, with several thousand passing away every year. Inheriting the survivors' wishes and advancing nuclear disarmament, even under challenging international circumstances, is a top priority in cultivating the next generation of professionals and practitioners.

Hiroshima Prefecture and the Hiroshima Organization for Global Peace (HOPe), dedicated to achieving a peaceful world without nuclear weapons, are therefore focusing on developing individuals who can contribute to nuclear disarmament in the international community. The "Future Leaders' Program for Global Peace," aimed at high school students in the prefecture, trains youths aged fifteen to eighteen in international issues such as nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and conflict resolution, with the goal of disseminating information in both Japanese and English. Moreover, the "Hiroshima Junior International Forum," held every August, brings together high school students from all over the world to discuss and exchange views on international peace and send messages of peace to the world.

In addition, the “Hiroshima-ICAN Academy on Nuclear Weapons and Global Security,” which targets university students, young practitioners, and graduate students, provides both online and on-site training in Hiroshima. Youths from both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states can learn about the reality of the A-bombing and receive lectures from experts on security, diplomacy, and civil society. Many graduates of these programs deepen their knowledge of security and nuclear issues at graduate schools and go on to work as diplomats, UN staff, or international NGO staff. Others launch their own organisations or use social media to disseminate information on nuclear weapons, thereby contributing to civil society efforts.

Hiroshima is also home to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), a specialised UN agency for personnel training, and a branch of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Many people, including young government officials from various countries and the UN, visit Hiroshima through the training programs offered by these organisations. It is crucial for future decision-makers, including those involved in diplomacy and national defense worldwide, to deepen their understanding of the consequences of nuclear weapon use and reconstruction efforts in Hiroshima, thus contributing to the stability of future international society. Hiroshima Prefecture and HOPE collaborate with and provide financial support to these organisations, both directly and indirectly, to cultivate the next generation of experts, policymakers, and leaders.

The Japanese government is also focusing on developing young professionals. The "Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons," a program implemented by the UN with financial support from the Japanese government, is a prime example. Young people selected from thousands of applicants worldwide will engage deeply with nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation during a two-year course and are scheduled to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki for a one-week study tour at the end of August. Through these efforts, Hiroshima provides learning opportunities, including personnel training programs, to more than 20,000 people domestically and internationally each year.

Considering the increasingly chaotic global situation and the impending loss of A-bomb survivors' voices, cultivating the next generation of leaders is more urgent than ever. This importance cannot be overstated. The vast resources devoted to maintaining and modernising nuclear weapons must be redirected toward cultivating the next generation of leaders who can guide us through these challenging times. Hiroshima must continue to be a powerful source of inspiration and training for young people and professionals to contribute to the world. It is not only a few world leaders who should face this global challenge, but each and every one of us.

The opinions articulated above represent the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Network or any of its members.

This commentary is also published on the [APLN website](#).

ABOUT APLN

The **Asia-Pacific Leadership Network for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (APLN)** is a Seoul-based organization and network of political, military, diplomatic leaders, and experts from across the Asia-Pacific region, working to address global security challenges, with a particular focus on reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons risks. The mission of APLN is to inform and stimulate debate, influence action, and propose policy recommendations designed to address regional security threats, with an emphasis on nuclear and other WMD (weapon of mass destruction) threats, and to do everything possible to achieve a world in which nuclear weapons and other WMDs are contained, diminished, and eventually eliminated.



@APLNofficial



@APLNofficial



apln.network