

Message to the
NUCLEAR AGE PEACE FOUNDATION
2006 INTERNATIONAL LAW SYMPOSIUM

Greetings from Hiroshima.

I have to begin by thanking David Krieger for inviting me to send you a message. Then, I have to lament not being there to deliver it myself. Looking at the list of great topics and great speakers, I worry that you will totally eliminate nuclear weapons without me. If only I didn't have this city to run.

Actually, I have nothing new to say about nuclear weapons that won't be said better by the people to whom I am sending this message, but perhaps I can contribute the sense of magnitude and urgency that we feel here in Hiroshima.

The title of your symposium is *At the Nuclear Precipice*. This is a good attention-getting title, and I sincerely hope that you are sharing the emotion that phrase triggers in Hiroshima.

Collectively, we human beings accept the existence of nuclear weapons because we cannot imagine them. Our understanding of the term "nuclear weapon" is pathetically, mercifully, and dangerously superficial.

As I have said many times, the human family will, in the next few years, decide what to do about nuclear weapons. Will we eliminate them? Will we allow every nation capable of making one to have them? Or, will we try to make sure the good guys have them and the bad guys don't? These are our three alternatives, and two of them will lead to pain, suffering, and horror beyond our comprehension.

I am sure you are well aware of the fact that, even as you gather in sunny California, dark shadows of death and destruction are creeping toward you. During the next two days, you will be discussing, in effect, how to turn this planet away from violence and cut-throat

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competition toward nonviolence and cooperation. It is hard to imagine a more vital and urgent task.

I'm sure most of you already know that the term "crisis" in Japanese includes the Chinese characters for "danger" and "opportunity." In this sense, you stand at the heart of the most pressing crisis of your time. Nuclear weapons represent danger that defies description, but they also represent the best opportunity we have to shift the international community away from the deadly, competitive culture of war toward the prosperous, nonviolent, and cooperative culture of peace.

You begin with smiles, hugs, coffee and donuts, but now, as you start working, I hope you will keep in mind the awesome responsibility you carry. I know that you are all determined to carry out that responsibility, but if we are to succeed, we must do more than we have been doing. We must do something other than what we have been doing, and I suspect the answer has something to do with broader and deeper cooperation among those who perceive this problem. I look forward to acting on the ideas and strategies you generate.

You are the ones we have been waiting for. I fervently hope that you will point us toward the intensive, cooperative activities by which we will work together to awaken the global public to the terrible danger and wonderful opportunity before us. I will end this message now. You have a planet to save, and we are counting on you. Thank you all so much for being there.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tadatoshi Akiba". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Tadatoshi Akiba
Mayor of Hiroshima
President, Mayors for Peace