

NUCLEAR AGE
PEACE
FOUNDATION

The Honorable Joseph Robinette Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.,
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

Near the end of his life and in fear of nuclear war, our first Catholic President, John F. Kennedy, told friends: "I keep thinking of the children, not my kids or yours, but the children all over the world." Today, we want to know if you are thinking about nuclear war and the children of the world when you go to sleep? And if so, why are you not doing more to prevent the end of human civilization as we know it?

This is not a world that you own. This is a world that we all inherited from generations upon generations of our ancestors. They migrated across the globe and lived through natural disasters, plagues, and famines. Children often died before the age of five. Mothers died in childbirth. Most of our forebears died of infections, without any understanding of what had caused their illness and suffering. But for each of us to be here, there had to be an unbroken line of humans who lived long enough to reproduce, one day giving us a chance at this thing we call life on Earth. To destroy this world because nation states, including our own, put their own selfish interests ahead of humanity, would be to disregard entirely that someone somewhere in the past suffered so that each of us could be here today.

Moreover, we owe the same chance at life to all of the generations that are yet to come. A Native American proverb says that this is a world we are borrowing from our children and grandchildren. To leave it to them worse than we received it would be to fail at what generations of our ancestors accomplished. To leave to those born today a world with nuclear weapons would be to put them at more than a fifty percent risk of dying in, or living through, a nuclear war, according to an estimate by Stanford Professor Martin Hellman.

This week, you will meet with other G7 leaders in Hiroshima, the first city to witness the horrors of the atomic bomb. We agree with Prime Minister Kishida that the summit presents a unique opportunity "to deepen discussions, so that we can release a strong message toward realizing a world free of nuclear weapons." While in Hiroshima, it is imperative that you give the survivors, like Setsuko Thurlow, a chance to tell their stories, as well as visit the exhibits in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, so you can see for yourself how the people of the city suffered and continue to suffer from US bombings.

But more than taking the time to learn about the horrors of nuclear weapons, you must also honor all of the victims of the atomic bombings, as well as global victims of nuclear testing. As the first country to develop and test these ominous weapons and the only one to ever use them, the moral and ethical responsibility to lead the world in nuclear disarmament lies with the United States. This is why you must sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, whose singular goal is a world free of nuclear weapons. After joining this historic treaty, you can begin negotiations in earnest, with allies and adversaries alike, aimed at getting together at nuclear zero.

There is a reason that the United States is seen as a global leader, including as part of the G7. Combined, the G7 have nearly half of the world's GDP. As such, we bear historic responsibility for global warming and must also tackle, with urgency, this existential problem. What better way to address both threats than to divert current and future spending on nuclear weapons to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This is a win-win proposal.

President Biden, if there is a nuclear war and hundreds of millions of people die in the explosions and from ensuing radiation and billions die from starvation due to the onset of nuclear winter, there will be no history books to judge you. Human civilization, which we have patiently built for thousands of years, will have met its end. If you survive the initial stage, you will regret that you didn't do more when you could. Don't let that happen. You have the power to change the status quo. And you must use it. Please think of the children.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ivana Nikolic Hughes
President
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

CC: The Honorable Anthony Blinken
U.S. Secretary of State