

Dear participants of the second cohort of the “Youth Leader Fund for a World without Nuclear Weapons,”

First and foremost I would like to congratulate each of you on your selection to this program, and extend my heartfelt welcome as you begin your visit to Nagasaki and Hiroshima. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation for those whose dedication and hard work have made this program possible.

Having spent my youth in both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it is a great honor to address you as you embark on this visit to the two cities that experienced the devastation of atomic bombings.

At the high school in Hiroshima from which I graduated, there stands a cenotaph in remembrance of the 344 students that perished, when the atomic bomb was dropped on the city around eighty-one years ago. I vividly remember my teachers speaking about the immense suffering and loss caused by nuclear weapons, and passing on to my generation, the stories and experiences of those who endured the bombing. These memories have convinced me that educating young people about these realities is the first and most important step toward ensuring that such a tragedy is never repeated.

At the 11th NPT Review Conference, which concluded last month, Japan delivered a joint statement on disarmament and non-proliferation education. The statement emphasized that it is young people who will lead and support the disarmament and non-proliferation architecture in the future, and it received the support of a record 116 countries.

As the only country to have ever suffered atomic bombings during war, Japan remains firmly committed to promoting a deeper understanding of the realities of the atomic bombings, while advancing realistic and practical efforts toward realizing a world without nuclear weapons.

Although the path remains challenging amid an increasingly severe international security environment, Japan will never cease its efforts to realize this goal. The Youth Leader Fund is a testament to our unwavering commitment to this shared aspiration of humanity.

During your time in Nagasaki and Hiroshima, I encourage you to learn from the history of these cities, listen carefully to the testimonies of the hibakushas, or atomic bomb survivors, and reflect on the lessons they wish to pass on to future generations. I hope that you will carry these experiences with you and share them with others.

I look forward to seeing you bring your insights to communities around the world and serve as bridges across borders and generations, as you take on active roles in advancing the cause of nuclear disarmament, and realizing a world without nuclear weapons.

Allow me to conclude by wishing you a meaningful, fruitful and inspiring visit. Thank you.