

Religious Leaders' Recommendations for the G7 Summit
— Aiming for Sustainable Peace Guided by the Spirit of Hiroshima—

Seventy-eight years ago, the single atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima razed the city to ashes and slaughtered countless innocent people. The cenotaph for A-bomb victims is inscribed with the following words: “Let all the souls here rest in peace; for we shall not repeat the evil.” These words convey the pledges of all people never to repeat the same mistake of committing war, along with our prayers for the souls of the victims. Moreover, the words convey the Spirit of Hiroshima, or the aspiration of the people of Hiroshima, who endured the sorrowful incident in the past, have overcome our hatred, and wish for permanent world peace and coprosperity of all people around the world.

On May 10, 2023, together with hibakusha (A-bomb victims) and representatives of civil societies seeking to build permanent world peace, we, as religious leaders, assembled at the Memorial Cathedral of World Peace (the Assumption of Mary Cathedral), located 1.2 km from the hypocenter in Hiroshima. There, we held the Prayer and Symposium by Religious Leaders to announce our recommendations for the G7 Hiroshima Summit.

To begin with, we truly hope that the world leaders participating in the G7 Summit, to be held in Hiroshima, will deeply embrace the Spirit of Hiroshima in their hearts. Unless they do so, no meetings shall be fruitful. With this in mind, we strongly demand that the leaders steadily work to embody the Spirit of Hiroshima in international political policies.

To this end, we suggest that they earnestly listen to the voices of the hibakusha, who are dedicated to realizing the Spirit of Hiroshima. Even though their average age now surpasses 84 and they have been deeply injured both physically and mentally, they continue to demand nuclear abolition based on their firm, humanitarian belief that there should be no more hibakusha and no more war.

At present, the international community is suffering from various kinds of violence, including wars and armed conflicts, all of which cause serious problems. Underlying this situation is excessive nationalism or the policy of putting one's own country first, which breeds self-righteous and exclusive attitudes across the international community. In addition, excessive pursuit of profit has exacerbated economic disparity to the worst level in human history, causing the Global South to remain entrenched in poverty. Moreover, the extravagant consumption of valuable natural resources, which are essential for the very survival of humankind, and the acceleration of climate change pose a serious menace to the sustainability of the earth and humankind.

In this world situation, together with the world leaders participating in the G7 Summit, we, as religious leaders, are determined to fulfill our responsibility to build a peaceful and sustainable global society. At the 10th World Assembly of Religions for Peace, held in 2019 in Lindau, Germany, together with our religious leaders from around the world, we reaffirmed the following belief: “As fundamentally relational, our well-being is intrinsically shared.” This belief is shared by many religions of the world and has been passed down throughout their long histories. The Quran, for example, says, “...whoever saves a life, it will be as if they saved all of humanity.” The New Testament commands, “So whatever you wish that others would do to you,

do also to them...” In addition, the Dhammapada (a collection of sayings of the Buddha) states: “Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased.”

To ensure the sustainability of the earth and humankind, based on this belief, we hereby deliver the recommendations stated below for the leaders participating in the G7 Summit.

Recommendation 1: Reversing the trend from division to reconciliation and from opposition to dialogue

At present, the international community is involved in various kinds of oppositions and divisions caused by wars and armed conflicts. As evidenced in the Russia-Ukraine War, mutual distrust has been exacerbated by the division of people into friend and foe. Aggressive attitudes serve to incite conflicts and attacks on enemies, promoting violence and increasing the number of tragic incidents. The member states of the G7 Summit must exert their leadership to reverse the trend from division to reconciliation and from opposition to dialogue, and ultimately to the termination of war.

Recommendation 2: Averting nuclear war and abolishing nuclear weapons

Amid the Russia-Ukraine war, there is a growing risk of the potential use of nuclear weapons. The member states of the G7 Summit should strongly communicate the risk of the annihilation of all people and all ecosystems, and repeatedly deliver the message that the use of nuclear weapons should never be tolerated in whatever case. As hibakusha from Hiroshima and Nagasaki clearly state, the very presence of around 13,000 nuclear weapons in stockpiles around the world poses a great menace. The member states of the G7 Summit should announce their intention to abolish nuclear weapons as soon as possible and take concrete measures together with legal actions to that end.

Recommendation 3: Fulfilling the responsibility for global sustainability

The United Nations warns that the average global temperature will rise 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels by 2030 in the earliest scenario. The member states of the G7 Summit must reinforce their present measures against climate change. The member states should reaffirm their firm determination to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to virtually zero by the mid-21st century in compliance with the Paris Agreement, and establish legal bases in individual states to achieve carbon neutrality at earlier stages.

Recommendation 4: Fulfilling the responsibility to achieve the SDGs

This year marks the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Reportedly, the global levels of SDG achievement have been declining over the past few years due mainly to the vulnerability of food security and the hike in energy prices caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war. The member states of the G7 Summit should well remember that the achieving the SDGs is critical for human survival, and fulfill their responsibility to achieve them. Japan, which currently serves as the G7 Summit chair, should promptly improve its programs to eliminate gender- and nationality-based discrimination since the country is reported to lag behind in these areas.

Recommendation 5: Correcting extreme economic disparity

The wealth possessed by the 2,000 richest people is greater than the sum of the wealth of the 4.6 billion poorest people. This extraordinary economic disparity is being widened by the COVID-19 pandemic and changes in industrial structures caused by rapid digitalization. While the richest people become wealthier, the poorest people become poorer and poorer in a negative cycle of economic disparity. To change this unconscionable situation from the viewpoint of human security, a concept of protecting the human dignity of each and every individual, the member states of the G7 Summit should fulfill their responsibility to fairly allocate profits from economic activities and to reduce inequality in terms of income and asset value.

Recommendation 6: Protecting the freedom of religion

It is reported that in 2019, 79% of the world's population lived in countries where the freedom of religion and faith was seriously infringed. This situation leads to the occurrence of violent conflicts and religious discrimination. Freedom of religion is the basis of all fundamental human rights and should be afforded the utmost priority. The member states of the G7 Summit should pay close attention to the present trend of the international community, where the number of authoritarian states is increasing, as is the threat to freedom of religion. The member states should also take all possible measures to firmly protect the freedom of religion.

As religious leaders, we offer our sincerest prayers that the G7 Hiroshima Summit will provide impetus to promoting the sustainability of the earth and humankind. At the same time, we hereby renew our pledge to make untiring efforts to fulfill our own responsibility toward peacebuilding.

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