

## Check Against Delivery

Atomic Bomb Awareness Day

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In a blinding flash of light, the entire cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki lay in ruins 71 years ago, marking the first and only use of nuclear weapons in history. The tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is not just Japan's, but rather the whole world's.

Earlier that year, in New Mexico's Alamogordo desert, the first nuclear weapon was detonated. The Trinity Test marked the beginning of the nuclear age with an unprecedented explosion. Nuclear technology was new, tests were intimidating, 50 years went by and over 2000 nuclear tests were conducted. Nuclear explosions were being recorded across the planet almost on a monthly basis.

Nuclear explosions have had dire consequences for the environment and human health. Some of the early tests took place in the atmosphere releasing substantial quantities of radioactive materials. Many underground nuclear explosions were not properly contained and radioactive fallout was widely dispersed on the Earth's surface. At nuclear test sites and within their vicinities, the consequences were in some cases, ongoing and irreversible.

The evidence speaks for itself. Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the former nuclear test sites around the world, have demonstrated dire consequences. A number of genetic defects and illnesses in those regions, ranging from cancers to birth defects and other deformities have been attributed to radioactive fallout and contamination.

The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are a reminder of what horrors nuclear weapons can inflict. It also reminds us of the importance of a nuclear test ban. While 400-500 nuclear explosions were carried out in each of the previous decades between the dawn of the atomic age and the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in September 1996, we have witnessed only four tests this millennium. This remarkable achievement was only possible because of the CTBT.

This year we commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Treaty. As one of the most important instruments for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the strength of the CTBT lies in the fact that it is supported by a solid verification regime that makes Treaty compliance verifiable. Over the years we have witnessed many achievements to this end.

The CTBT already represents a de facto norm against nuclear testing. We have come a long way, but after 20 years, the Treaty has yet to enter into force, and the global risks of nuclear testing are not yet completely eliminated. We are near the finish line. We must finish what we started.

The catastrophic consequences of nuclear testing are well known. We have seen them, read about them and even worse many have suffered from them. Let's bring the CTBT into force. We owe it to ourselves and our future generations.

Whenever I think about Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the thousands of nuclear tests conducted, I keep remembering Oppenheimer's recollection of a passage in the Hindu script *Bhagavad Gita*, "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds." It is clear to me that we cannot forget the devastating consequences of nuclear weapons use and testing. Just as the atomic bomb survivors, the Hibakusha, remind us that "Never Again" should nuclear weapons be used, we need to also ensure that never again will nuclear testing occur.

Thank you.