

“No More Nuclear Weapons!”

Address by Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.

Hiroshima Day Rally

Calgary, Alberta, August 6, 2014

At 8.15 a.m. on the fateful morning of August 6, 1945, as World War II was drawing to a close in the Pacific, an American atomic bomb, containing the energy equivalent of 15,000 tons of TNT, exploded 580 metres above the heart of Hiroshima. An intense flash of light flooded the city centre. Enormous pillars of flame burst into the skies. A wind of nearly 1,000 miles per hour tore through the city. Buildings crumbled. People were charred. Hospitals were in ruins. Deadly radiation later devastated those not immediately killed. Before the end of the year, 140,000 people were dead.

Three days after the Hiroshima bombing, Nagasaki suffered a similar attack.

I was sixteen when the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki unleashed the nuclear age upon the world. It was only years later, on my first visit to Japan in the mid-1970s, that the full scale of the destruction made a lasting impression on me. I met the *hibakusha*, the Japanese name of the atomic survivors, listened to the stories of their excruciating suffering, and only then fully understood that nuclear weapons are the ultimate evil.

I have returned to Hiroshima many times and have been privileged to work with its leaders in the peace community, especially Tad Akiba, the former Mayor of Hiroshima, who lead the world-wide organization, Mayors for Peace. Three years ago, Mayor Akiba made me an honorary citizen of Hiroshima. So it is in that role that I come before you tonight to witness to the humanitarian catastrophe that took placed there and to say with the *hibakusha*: “Never again! No more nuclear weapons!”

Of course, we must do more than protest. Our words are hollow unless we stand up for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Some say this is impossible, that the nuclear states are too powerful and will never give up their instruments of power. Well, at one time, some said slavery could never be abolished. Some said colonialism was permanent. Some said apartheid could not be changed. All those social evils were done away with when enough people decided to change the laws.

The world needs a global law banning the possession as well as use of nuclear weapons. There are global treaties against biological weapons and chemical weapons. Isn't it logical to now construct a treaty banning nuclear weapons? Fortunately, we are on the way to constructing such a law. Three-quarters of the countries in the world have already voted at the UN to commence negotiations leading to a Nuclear Weapons Convention. This is a movement whose time has come. We must convince the Canadian government to join this movement. We must make our politicians listen to us when we cry out: “No more nuclear weapons!”

A model Nuclear Weapons Convention already exists as a UN document. It provides for the verification and compliance measures that will

make the elimination of nuclear weapons possible. It is not a mystery trying to figure out how to get rid of nuclear weapons. The technical aspects are known. What is missing is the political will.

That is why assemblies such as this one tonight are so important. We are showing the political will. So are the 750 members of the Order of Canada who have signed a statement calling on the Canadian government to support the UN Secretary-General's Five-Point Plan for Nuclear Disarmament. So are the international meetings of governments and civil society leaders now being held, which are stressing the "catastrophic humanitarian consequences" of any use of nuclear weapons. So are the leaders of tiny Marshall Islands, who have filed a suit in the International Court of Justice against all nine nuclear weapons states, charging them with breach of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

It is world pressure that forced the nuclear states to reduce their nuclear arsenals from a high of 65,000 at the height of the Cold War to 16,300 today. But the reductions process has stalled. The United States and Russia, the two biggest possessors, are not even negotiating in the current tense political climate. And all the nuclear states are modernizing their nuclear weapons. They are making nuclear deterrence a permanent military doctrine. The danger of a nuclear explosion through accident, miscalculation or terrorism is growing every year.

On this Hiroshima Day, we have a big challenge. We must get Canada back into the nuclear disarmament movement. Write to the Prime Minister and your Member of Parliament. Tell them to have Canada work with like-minded states to build a law against nuclear weapons. Help free

the world from nuclear weapons. Tell this also to the media. Make your voice heard. Work with Project Ploughshares and other peace groups. Say with one voice across our land: "No more nuclear weapons!"