



World Council of Churches

General Secretariat

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His Excellency the Hon. Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington DC 20500
USA

Geneva, May 26, 2016

Dear Mr President,

We are praying for you on the occasion of your historic visit to the city of Hiroshima. May God guide you in the responsibilities of your high office and as a pilgrim to this place of unique significance for all humanity. Your decision to make this visit carries special significance in a time when signs of peace and justice are so sorely needed.

We pray that you will be able to talk with the aging survivors of the atomic bombing – the *hibakusha* – who live to tell their story in the determined hope that no one will ever again suffer their fate. They speak for the hundreds of thousands of people from Japan, Korea and other countries whose lives were shattered by the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The *hibakusha* make a compelling plea for a world without nuclear weapons to be realized in their lifetime.

The World Council of Churches was founded in 1948, in the shadow of the atomic bombings. We believe that the case for the elimination of nuclear weapons is grounded in the responsibility to protect and care for goodness of all that God has created and for the dignity of all human beings, made in the image of God.

We believe that using the energy of the atom in ways that threaten and destroy life is a sinful misuse of the fundamental building blocks of God's creation. Churches in every region of the world refuse to accept that the mass destruction of other peoples can ever be a legitimate means of protecting one's own people.

In our experience, Hiroshima is a source of new resolve for many who visit. When the Assembly of the World Council of Churches met in South Korea in 2013, sisters and brothers from Northeast Asia asked how the only region where nuclear weapons have been used in warfare has become a region in which all states either possess nuclear weapons or depend on the nuclear arsenal of the United States. We pray that your commitment to building peace may help to change this reality.

News of the President of the United States visiting Hiroshima raises hopes in many hearts that the emerging international focus on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons can help shift the political calculus that has so far supported the nuclear-armed status quo. One clear sign of this collective resolve is the joint statement by more than 150 governments that "it is in the interest of the survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances". Another is the pledge to finally close the legal gap for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, endorsed by 127 states so far.

These are signs of the moral leadership which, as you have rightly said, is more powerful than any weapon. We commend such hopes to you for your journey to Hiroshima and for prayerful consideration and action when you return.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olav Fykse Tveit". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary