

Speech delivered by Ms. GOKAN Sakura
Japanese High School Peace Ambassador

1 “This is our cry, this is our prayer, to build a world of peace.”

These words are inscribed on the Children’s Peace Monument which is in Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. The Children’s Peace Monument was built to comfort the spirits of the many children who died in the atomic bombing and constitute a call for peace in the world.

2 After one of their classmates died of disease as a result of the atomic bombing, junior high school students started to give out flyers asking for donations to build the monument. Thanks to the donations and assistance of numerous people, on May 5, 1958, the Children’s Peace Monument was finally built with donations. These young people worked together and achieved their goal.

3 The name of this classmate who passed away was Sasaki Sadako. She stands at the head of the Children’s Peace Monument. Sadako was two years old when the atomic bomb was dropped. After that, she continued to grow up like a normal child. However, her dream was suddenly ended by an illness. This disease was leukemia caused by radiation from the atomic bomb. She started folding a thousand paper cranes which are said to cure illness, but her disease unfortunately did not recover, even after she folded more than a thousand paper cranes. On October 25, 1955, Sasaki Sadako’s short life ended when she was only 12 years old. Now, about 10 tons paper cranes are sent to the Children’s Peace Monument from all over the world every year.

4 My grandmother was also irradiated at two years old, the same age as Sasaki Sadako on the day of the bombing. She was exposed to radiation when she was in Hiroshima city being carried to search for her relatives in the aftermath. My grandmother doesn’t have any memories immediately after the atomic bombing and her mother, my great-grandmother, didn’t want to talk about the events in Hiroshima. To talk about it, to recall what happened on that day was simply too painful for her and many other survivors.

5 The fallen people covering the ground with their skin was burned off, too difficult to know if they were alive or dead, or even whether they were male or female. In one moment, every day was turned into hell.

6 But the damage of the atomic bombing did not end here. People who weren’t acutely

injured died one after another from the effects of radiation. War and the atomic bombing have taken too many innocent children from their dreams, hopes, and future.

8 As a young person born in Hiroshima and a family member of an atomic bomb survivor, I feel a strong responsibility and mission to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons must never be used again.

9 We need to look at things from the perspective of time.

10 I don't want to hand down a world where security is maintained by holding weapons to each other's heads for our children of the future. I'd like to leave future generations a world of peace, peace by communication, not by force.

11 We ask that you abolish nuclear weapons, promote disarmament, and work on reconstruction, education, and climate change countermeasures. Peace is not something that merely exists, it is something that is created. Let us work hand in hand, adults and youth, to create peace.