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Press Releases

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Statement by IAEA Director General on the 60th Anniversary of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

5 August 2005 | No one who has seen the victims, the film footage or photographs of the aftermath of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II can fail to be horrified by the devastation that was wrought by the use of nuclear weapons.

To date, Hiroshima and Nagasaki thankfully remain the only instances in which nuclear weapons have been used, and while it is difficult to speak of any good coming out of such ruin, it has always been hoped that the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki stand as constant reminders of why preventing the further use and proliferation of such weapons - and why nuclear disarmament leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world - is of utmost importance for the survival of humankind and planet Earth.

The International Atomic Energy Agency born out of President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" vision, came at a time when the horrifying consequences and images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were still fresh.

Through its safeguards and verification system in support of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and other similar non-proliferation agreements, the IAEA has done a great deal of work to help stem the tide of nuclear proliferation, while ensuring that the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy are made available to all those who want them.

While the Agency can effectively verify compliance with non-proliferation undertakings, the value of these efforts can be better realized if they are reinforced by all other components of the nuclear non-proliferation and arms control regime, and accompanied by the political will and dialogue among concerned States to address underlying issues of security and confidence building with a view to achieving a system of collective security that no longer relies on nuclear weapons.

A world without nuclear weapons remains a far-off goal and the world continues to be burdened with nearly thirty thousand nuclear warheads. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty has not entered into force and the negotiation of a global treaty on the verified production ban on fissile material for nuclear weapons has not started.

Despite these continuing challenges, there are symbols of hope and indicators of the path to follow - the NPT is almost universal, and nuclear-weapon-free zones cover all of the landmass of the southern hemisphere.

We should remain humbled by what we have learned from the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We cannot allow sixty years to soften our memories of how devastating such weapons are. Let us instead ensure that the memories of what happened sixty years ago are once again a catalyst for a new way of thinking. The best protection against nuclear weapons, and the only way to prevent future Hiroshimas and Nagasakis, is to bring about an end to all nuclear weapons. Let us renew today - on the 60th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons - the promise to the peoples of the world to spare no effort to work collectively to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons.

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About the IAEA

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) serves as the world's foremost intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology. Established as an autonomous organization under the United Nations (UN) in 1957, the IAEA carries out programmes to maximize the useful contribution of nuclear technology to society while verifying its peaceful use.

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