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THE OFFICE FOR DISARMAMENT AFFAIRS

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HIROSHIMA JUNIOR INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Message from Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

April 2021

I am pleased to send this message to the Hiroshima Junior International Forum – a venue in which young leaders from all over the world can gather to exchange innovative ideas on how to pursue the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Forum represents both the past and the future. It draws on the potent symbolic but also practical power of Hiroshima, the scene of the first nuclear catastrophe, but also the source of many nuclear disarmament movements – including the *hibakusha*, the valiant survivors. As a youth-oriented initiative, the Forum provides space for young people to express their views and develop the skills needed for the disarmament activists and policymakers of tomorrow.

The world today needs the fresh perspectives, passion and commitment that young people provide. Just last year we commemorated seventy-five years since the destruction of Hiroshima, but three-quarters of a century after that catastrophic event, the shadow of nuclear weapons still looms over us all. The historic progress in the elimination of nuclear weapons that followed the Cold War is reversing.

As relations between nuclear-weapon States become more fraught – defined by competition instead of cooperation and mistrust instead of transparency – nuclear weapons have assumed greater roles in security strategies and are being improved to make them faster, stealthier and more accurate. New and destabilizing weapons are being developed and, alarmingly, some States continue to increase their stockpiles.

We have not learnt the lessons of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We have not listened to the *hibakusha* about the dreadful human suffering caused by these horrific weapons.

It is time to reverse these negative trends, to commence reducing nuclear risks and chart the course to a world free of nuclear weapons.

To do so, we need you. We need to increase youth participation and create space for young people to make substantive contributions to disarmament. At the United Nations, we strongly support imparting knowledge and skills to young people, empowering them to contribute to these issues,

as both national and global citizens. You will be instrumental in creating the ethical, moral and legal frameworks of the future.

Young people from around the world have a critical role to play, not only in the future, but in the here and now, by raising awareness and developing new ways to achieve progress in the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Please know you have my full support as we work toward our shared goal of a safer and more secure world.