

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, my name is Aika Tokuhisa.

Today, I'd like to talk about disarmament and how I feel that each and every one of us can contribute to creating a more peaceful world. In order to explain how I feel that I can contribute, I would first like to tell you a little about my life. I am 16 years old and a 10th grade student. I am studying at Kosei Gakuen Girl's High School which is in Tokyo and I'm a member of the Super Global Class at this school. The Super Global Class was founded two years ago when our high school was designated as a Super Global High School. The goal of our class is to research the development of peace in multi-ethnic societies through carrying out fieldwork. We have two chances to do fieldwork abroad. First, we will go to Thailand for two weeks next year. Second, we will visit the University of London the year after next for a month. As you can see, while I am a regular high school student, I am already in a position of immense privilege to have been given such opportunities. So, how can I use my privilege to make a difference?

First, I am really interested in learning more about the various cultural differences between Japan and other countries, so I am looking forward to having the chance to carry out fieldwork. Actually, I had a chance to visit Sri Lanka this April as a member of my school's brass-band. It was a wonderful experience and I had numerous opportunities to experience Sri Lanka's cultures, and communicate with the local people, who were really friendly. However, the most impressive experience for me in Sri Lanka was the day we visited Vajira Sri Children's Development Center. All of the children at this center lost their parents during Sri Lanka's civil war. At first, I was really nervous about performing in front of them. I have never experienced war, so I couldn't imagine the depth of the sorrow that they felt when they lost their beloved family members to this conflict. What's more, I thought, it might be impudent to try to console them through music, because we have never experienced the loss and sorrow that they have. However, looking at them smiling after our performance made me feel extremely happy and blessed. Beyond that, I felt the brutality and senselessness of war, and how it leads to the sacrifice of enormous amounts of innocent lives. On the other hand, I also felt that I can and must make a contribution to world peace in my own way through music, prayer and engaging in inter-cultural communication.

Today, there are still many internal conflicts happening all over the world. Furthermore, countries are still provoking each other to build up even larger stockpiles of nuclear missiles. We have to work together to solve these problems. In the recent past, there was an armament race between America and the former Soviet Union. This became known as the "Cold War". We have many things to learn from this era. Most importantly, that trying to show our strength through our weaponry will never lead us to a peaceful world. The famous children's rights activist, Malala Yousafzai said, "One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution." As per this statement, I believe that if we focus more on disarmament and reducing the number of arms in the world, we can then use the funds that have previously been spent on militarization, on education and development instead. I strongly believe that such initiatives would make our world a better place. If all children in this world could have a proper education, we could stand together to realize the dream of a truly peaceful world.

Last year marked the 70th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The nuclear radiation released by these bombs led to many Japanese people suffering from illnesses for decades afterwards. Fortunately, I've never had to experience living in a warzone, however, after hearing the statements given by the victims of the nuclear bombs, and reading about the many terrible consequences of nuclear war, I strongly feel that my generation has a responsibility to continue to strive for a world where people do not live in fear of nuclear weapons.

As the president of America, Barack Obama, said during his recent historic visit to Hiroshima, "Technological progress without an equivalent progress in human institutions can doom us." I strongly agree with his opinion. We shouldn't compete with other countries in an arm's race. We have a responsibility to contribute to the development of a peaceful world. Everyone who lives on our planet should have the right to live a safe and happy life. Each and every one of us should think about how we are contributing to the happiness of others and the development of a peaceful society. Having been raised in a truly wonderful and safe environment, I enjoy an immense amount of privilege. I have had the chance to study at a good school. I have a wonderful family, and good friends. In order to give back to the world that has given me so much, I must study harder. I will learn more about how to create a world that is free of conflict, nuclear weapons, and other deadly arms. I will deepen my knowledge of disarmament, and improve my English skills so that I can convey my thoughts to the world. I will also never forget how important it is to be receptive to other people's ideas and to engage in inter-cultural communication. I am still a student, but as a resident of this planet, I feel that it is my duty to both my ancestors and my future descendants to cooperate with the people around me to make a better, more peaceful world in any way that I can.

Thank you for listening.