

# **75 YEARS SINCE THE HIROSHIMA BOMBING**

## **A MESSAGE from RELIGIONS for PEACE**

### **AUSTRALIA**

Today is a sad day in modern global history. It is 75 years since the US bomber, Enola Gay, dropped the first atomic bomb upon the defenceless Japanese city of Hiroshima causing the deaths of 80,000+ people. Of course Hiroshima cannot be separated from Pearl Harbour, and the ethics of the first atomic bombing have continued to be debated ever since. Japan is the only country ever to have suffered atomic attacks – as a result, it put in place a peace constitution immediately after World War II.

The memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was a major driving force in the foundation of Religions for Peace International, formerly known as the World Conference of Religions for Peace. During the 1960s, seven religious leaders from the US, Japan, India and Germany came together to begin building a global movement.

At the first world assembly held in Kyoto in October 1970, the very first greetings were given by the Buddhist leader, Lord Abbot Kosko Ohtani who said that “ours is a nation that has absolutely discarded all aggressive war potential through the promulgation of a ‘peace constitution’”. The first WCRP President, Nikkyo Niwano, spoke of how “the time has arrived when religions, instead of antagonizing each other because of what we once thought was a religious conviction, should co-operate with each other to contribute to the cause of mankind and world peace”

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been called many things such as the Century of the Holocaust and Genocide. But equally it can be called the Multireligious Century. From the beginning, those seven religious leaders realized that peace can only be an abstraction unless we also deal with global poverty, environmental degradation, human rights abuses, discrimination, small wars and ethnonationalism as well as nuclear disarmament.

This remains our challenge today. And this is the central message of today’s sorrow-filled Hiroshima commemoration.

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