**

**Rev. Kyoichi Sugino**

Deputy Secretary General

*Religions for Peace*

New York

Your Excellency Mr. Erlan Idrissov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, allow me to express my appreciation to your government’s irreplaceable leadership in critical areas of international affairs, particularly the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world and the advancement of global interreligious dialogue and cooperation for peace. Kazakhstan's foreign policy, emphasizing peace, dialogue and international cooperation has been guided by the recognition of the "immorality" of nuclear weapons, "the vision of security", and "ensuring a healthy environment.”

This year is the 25th anniversary of the closure of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site. The decision reflected a strong political will, the courage to translate it into reality, and put a series of follow-up measures in place which, as your Excellency have said, gives Kazakhstan "the moral right to push for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, both globally and regionally".

I am here today, speaking on behalf of *Religions for Peace,* founded in 1970 and headquartered in New York, *Religions for Peace* is an international coalition of world’s religious communities through its affiliated interreligious councils in more than 90 countries in six continents. *Religions for Peace* has been enjoying its partnership with the government of Kazakhstan since its initial launch of the Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in 2003.

Permit me to briefly touch upon three issues of importance that are in our shared concerns:

**I. Manifesto: “The World. The 21st Century” and the Notion of “Shared Security”**

President Nazarbayev has called for mankind to set, as its main goal for this century, ridding our world of nuclear weapons by 2045, the centenary of the United Nations. With his Manifesto: The World. The 21st century, he has produced a blueprint to show how this goal could be achieved.

The Manifesto: “The World. The 21st Century” has offered a new political paradigm, challenging the status quo and advancing the notion of “shared security.” The Manifesto says: “We should have learnt from past wars and conflicts that it is impossible to ensure our own security by undermining the security of others.”

The notion of “Shared Security” was also advanced by more than 800 senior religious leaders from over 140 countries who convened for the 8th World Assembly of *Religions for Peace* in August 2006, Kyoto, Japan.

“Shared security” is a new political paradigm. It echoes the holistic notions of peace that are found in the world’s great religions. It recognizes that each person’s vulnerability is an invitation to approach others with compassion. Our interrelatedness calls us to cooperate to protect all persons and our earth. Today, my security depends on yours and no one is safer than the most vulnerable among us.

Its declaration states: “The moral and ethical convictions of our diverse religious traditions provide a moral foundation for a vision of shared security. Existing notions of security inadequately address violence in its many forms. National security does not necessarily ensure peace; in fact, it often promotes violence and foments insecurity. ... Importantly, shared security would highlight the collective responsibility of all people to meet our common need for security. Shared security requires all sectors of society to acknowledge our common vulnerabilities and our shared responsibility to address them.”

**II. The Strategic Action-oriented Partnership between Parliamentarians and Religious Leaders**

H.E. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Chairman of the Kazakh Senate, in the recent International Conference on Religions against Terrorism, stated: “Religion and parliamentary diplomacy play an increasing role in modern societies…. Religious leaders and parliamentarians, being prominent and powerful representatives of their people, should be extensively involved in counter-extremism activities including prevention measures, crisis management and the reconstruction of societies that suffered from terrorism and extremism.”

For our effort to create a nuclear-weapon-free world, this strategic partnership between parliamentarians and religious leaders has been advanced by *Religions for Peace*, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament and Mayors for Peace through the adoption of a joint statement issued in Hiroshima on August 6, 2015 – the 70th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of that city. Leaders of the world’s major religious traditions joined forces with parliamentarians and mayors from around the world to call on world leaders to “commit to nuclear abolition and to replace nuclear deterrence with shared security approaches to conflicts.”

The joint statement stated: “Together—as mayors, parliamentarians and religious leaders— we support the common good of nuclear abolition. We reject nuclear weapons, which threaten our humanity, contravene our moral principles, violate international law and thwart the safety and well-being of current and future generations.” It was presented to the President of the United Nations General Assembly by Honorable Saber Chowdhury, President, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Dr. William F. Vendley, Secretary General, *Religions for Peace*, and other leaders in the coalition.

This critical partnership among parliamentarians, mayors and religious leaders is being further strengthened through our important conference here today led by the government of Kazakhstan. Your Excellency Foreign Minister, we thank you again for the irreplaceable leadership you are offering in advancing shared security through such strategic, action-oriented multi-stakeholder partnerships.

**III. 20th Anniversary of 1996 ICJ Advisory Opinion and Multi-religious, Multi-stakeholder and Inter-Generational Partnership to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons**

More than 100 religious leaders, parliamentarians, diplomats, civil society leaders from 11 countries, as well as *“Hibakusha”* (survivors of nuclear bombing) and high school students representing the younger generation, convened at the United Nations University in Tokyo, Japan on 2-3 August 2016 to advance multi-religious, multi-stakeholder and inter-generational partnership for the abolition of nuclear weapons. This special session of the *Religions for Peace* International Standing Commission on Disarmament and Security was held on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which declared that “the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be contrary to the rules of international law…there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.”

Judge Christopher Weeramantry, former Vice President of ICJ, in his message, noted that "[the current notion of security is driven by] the short term perspectives that dominate our lives as opposed to the repositories of wisdom contained in the world's religions.” The final statement emphasized that “Nuclear weapons—as indiscriminate weapons of mass destruction—are intrinsically evil. Thus, even the development and possession of nuclear weapons is morally disordered.”

*Religions for Peace* global network has mobilized its global interfaith youth network to collect 21 million signatures through its Arms Down! Campaign for Shared Security. We are committed to continuing to educate, mobilize and engage our religious communities worldwide to work towards the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Your Excellency, once again thank you very much for your and your government’s leadership in presenting The Manifesto: “The World. The 21st Century”, a new political paradigm based upon the notion of Shared Security. We also appreciate your support for our critical strategic partnership between parliamentarians and religious leaders in advancing peace and security internationally.

Thank you.