

SPEECH

Presented by HE Mr YAMAGAMI Shingo

Ambassador of Japan to Australia

On the occasion of International Day of Peace

at Canberra Nara Peace Park - 21 September 2022

Ms Alicia Payne,
Mr Damien Cardona Onses,
Members of the Rotary Club of Canberra,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I join with you all in this tranquil setting of Canberra Nara Park to mark the International Day of Peace; a day whose significance and importance has been made ever more poignant by events that have taken place this year both afar and closer to home.

On this day, peace bells are rung throughout the world to call attention to the cause of peace and to the duty of humanity to protect and preserve this most precious of civic virtues.

The echo of these bells, modelled on the temple bells found in Japan, reminds us that armed conflict produces the most devastating consequences not only for the individual, but for every strata of society.

Next year, Japan will play host to a meeting of the G7 leaders.

The venue of their meeting will be Hiroshima, a city whose inhabitants, together with those of Nagasaki, know only too well what tragedy is wrought by war.

The experiences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are brought into sharp focus by events in Ukraine, and the almost cavalier way in which threats of nuclear war have been bandied about by aggressors.

It seems that now, more than any other time in the recent past, the global community must act to ensure that the tragedies that befell Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the hundreds of thousands of deaths resulting from the bombs themselves and their lingering radiation, are never, ever repeated.

We have just heard Secretary General Guterres's address emphasizing the importance of persisting in our ongoing fight against racism.

For much of its history as a modern state, Japan stood at the forefront of efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination, working to overcome racial inequality.

It was Japan that strived so hard to catch up with the West.

It was Japan that proposed to add a clause to ban racial discrimination to the Charter of the League of Nations at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

However, racism remained prevalent in many parts of the world.

It has often been pointed out that such stereo types and xenophobia were not uncommon at the time when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Japan once again took up its task in the postwar period, striving to create a world where the individual is respected and able to develop, free from any racial, ethnic or other form of discrimination.

This ethos and its noble sentiment was reflected in the concept introduced for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, that of "Unity in Diversity".

The relationship between Japan and Australia is perhaps the finest example of this spirit made manifest.

Two nations, once so fiercely opposed to one another, walked together along the path to full reconciliation.

In doing so we grew ever closer, realizing that in our shared values and interests we have an even brighter future ahead of us.

Today we look upon one another as a best friend with respect for each other, with whom we can freely share our views.

Japan and Australia have shown the way to other states haunted by the spectre of division and conflict or entangled by past history.

In doing so, we remain a beacon of hope for humanity to navigate its way towards a more peaceful and harmonious future.

Thank you.