Message from Nagasaki University

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Exactly 60 years have passed since those unforgettable days for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At 11:02 am on August 9, 1945, the explosion of the second atomic bomb devastated Nagasaki almost completely. The ferocious heat and blast indiscriminately slaughtered its inhabitants. More than 75,000 people were killed and also 70,000 were injured. Even the people who managed to survive continue to this day to suffer from the late health and mental effects of radiation exposure.

Nagasaki Medical University, now Nagasaki University School of Medicine, is the only medical university in the world that has been completely destroyed by the atomic bombing, and almost 900 of its staff and students were instantly killed. Throughout this miserable tragedy, the survived medical staff and students made tremendous and heroic efforts for the rescue of atomic bomb survivors, in spite of insufficient medical facilities and poor knowledge available then about the acute radiation syndrome. Ms. Hisamitsu who is present here today, is one of the survivors of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki who worked hard together with Dr. Nagai in the relief efforts for the injured victims of the bombing. This year, she received the Florence Nightingale Medal of Nursing from the International Red Cross Society.

Despite the existence of unbelievable difficulties in keeping accurate records of medical care of the tragic cases just after the atomic bombing, such records were carefully made by our senior doctors at Nagasaki University, which recently have been translated to and published in English and nowadays serve as valuable textbooks. Today we are able to present in here three of such English books written by Dr. Nagai, Dr. Shirabe, and Dr. Yasuyama.

After the termination of World War II, our university was reconstructed and soon afterwards launched the Atomic Bomb Disease Institute in 1963, in order to help clarify the late effects of radiation exposure, and to take a new initiative for the medical care of atomic bomb survivors. Furthermore, as one of the WHO Collaborating Centers we have contributed to the medical care of radiation exposed victims in the world, such as Chernobyl and Semipalatinsk, for more than 10 years through the joint projects of Chernobyl Tissue Bank, Chernobyl Telemedicine and Emergency Radiation Medicine.

Based on its international medical aid achievements together with medical care of the atomic bomb survivors, Nagasaki University has been selected as one of the 21st century research Centers Of Excellence (COE) on Radiation Medicine in Japan since 2002. Today's seminar has been, therefore, co-sponsored with the WHO and Nagasaki University to help promote international radiation-related medical research and health care of the radiation-exposed, and also to help with the development of the global network of radiation health sciences in the world.

It is now 60 years past those unforgettable days for Hiroshima and Nagasaki and, the atomic bomb survivors have advanced into an old age and their memories are fading into the mist of history. The citizens of Nagasaki pray that such a miserable experience will never be repeated on earth. We also sincerely consider it our duty and mission to ensure this experience is not forgotten but passed intact into the future generations.

As the president of Nagasaki University, I do hope that all participants will recognize the importance of peace without nuclear weapons as well as the necessity of investigations on the long-term effects of radiation on atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, through scientific discussion that will also take place today at this meeting. I sincerely hope that our sad experience and valuable knowledge in Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be used for further strengthening of our knowledge about radiation safety and risk assessment in the world.