

Vice Chancellor Prof. O'Brien, Dr. Barclay, Mr. Takigawa,

Distinguished guests,

My wife and I very much appreciate the opportunity to attend the opening event of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Exhibition today, and I am pleased to be able to say a few words.

The exhibitions on atomic bombs are organised by the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and are held around the world every year to convey the reality of the atomic bombing and to foster international public opinion toward “a world without nuclear weapons”.

I was the Ambassador to Belgium in 2018, one hundred years after the end of the First World War, when this exhibition took place in Ypres, one of the towns which suffered particularly great devastation during that conflict. I had the privilege of attending the opening of the exhibition and of addressing the gathering. This time, as the Ambassador to the UK, I am delighted to be able to participate in this exhibition in this beautiful and historic city of Durham, which obviously hosts a World Heritage Site.

This event is unfolding just about two weeks after world leaders convened in Hiroshima for the G7 Summit. There, the G7 leaders visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum to underline their uncompromising commitment to peace. They directly touched upon the reality of the atomic bombings and joined their hearts in consoling the souls of those who had suffered and lost their lives.

I am convinced that this epoch-making visit provided an outstanding opportunity for the leaders to clearly demonstrate their desire for the realisation of a world without nuclear weapons. After the visit, they issued the “G7 Leaders’ Hiroshima Vision on Nuclear Disarmament”, an unprecedented independent statement by them specifically focused on the issue of nuclear disarmament.

This exhibition is being held in the UK at a time when the impact of the G7 Hiroshima Summit is still fresh and resonant. I sincerely hope that this will help ensure the message of peace from Hiroshima and Nagasaki is shared

among as many people as possible in the UK and beyond.

As the decades have passed since the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, the number of survivors who can tell their stories directly is dwindling. In such circumstances, it is important to bring home to more people the tragedy of nuclear weapons so that we, the people today – and also those of the next generation – will never repeat the same mistakes again.

When Prime Minister Rishi Sunak visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum he left a moving message in the guest book of the museum. It reads as follows: “Shakespeare tells us to ‘give sorrow words’. Yet language fails in the light of the bomb’s flash. No words can describe the horror and suffering of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But what we can say, with all our hearts, and all our souls, is no more.”

If the people here realise the tragedy of nuclear weapons and share the idea of creating a more peaceful world, this exhibition will have been a great success. Before concluding, I would like to thank the Oriental Museum of Durham University, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and all those involved for the hard works and dedicated efforts in organising this extremely worthwhile event.

Thank you very much.