

## Declaration of Peace

Today, as we reach the 75<sup>th</sup> year milestone of the end of the Battle of Okinawa, we cannot let the horrible memories of the war fade, we cannot repeat those same mistakes, to ensure they are never repeated, the lessons learned from the war must be properly passed on to the next generation, and we must call for the spread and sharing of the peace seeking “Okinawan heart-*Chimugukuru*” with the world.

Post-war, when human rights and autonomy were suppressed under U.S. military occupation, the people of Okinawa, while protecting the culture that had been carefully passed down from their ancestors, and nurturing the Okinawan spirit of *Chimugukuru*, vigorously pursued a path of reconstruction and development. However, even today, 75 years after the war, approximately 70.3% of the facilities for the exclusive use of the U.S. forces in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa Prefecture, which only accounts for 0.6% of Japan’s total land area. Additionally, accidents, incidents, and aircraft noise caused by American soldiers and army civilian employees, environmental problems such as water pollution caused by PFOS, continue to have a significant impact on the lives of the citizens of Okinawa.

The ocean around Oura Bay where construction is currently going forward on a new base in Henoko, Nago City is a “hope spot” of life inhabited by over 5,300 species of sea life including 262 endangered species. The Yanbaru forest, which is expected to be registered as a World Natural Heritage Site, is a treasury of biodiversity; this Okinawan ecosystem that connects land and sea is to us Uchinanchu an irreplaceable treasure.

In order to leave this ocean and forest full of wildlife to the next generation, and the generation after that, it is important for those of us living now to take responsibility and think towards the future.

With the goal of sharing the peace seeking “Okinawan heart” with the rest of the world, and contributing to the creation of international peace, the Okinawan Peace Award was created in 2001. However, at the end of last year we learned the sudden sad news that its 1<sup>st</sup> laureate, Doctor Tetsu Nakamura of the Pashawar-kai was shot and tragically killed in Afghanistan. Doctor Nakamura explained human happiness as, “being able to have three meals a day and live peacefully with one’s family” for the lives of the local people he irrigated water from rivers and turned the dry earth green. He exchanged their weapons for farm tools, and led them to happiness. We sympathized with the "nonviolence and selflessness" of Doctor Nakamura, and through his attitude toward life, we learned what it meant for people to live peacefully.

However, there are still countries and regions in the world that face regional conflict and where the threat of terrorism, structural violence such as: poverty, hunger, suppression of human rights, and environmental destruction continues to occur.

Furthermore, the rampant spread of the Novel Coronavirus across the world has threatening people's lives and livelihoods in an unprecedented way, and has had a devastating impact on economic activities. This virus inspires a fear of illness, and that fear inspires anxiety, and that anxiety creates discrimination and prejudice, and threatens to divide society.

For this reason, it is important for the people all across the world to recognize each other's positions and differences, to cooperate, and to trust each other, and by doing so lead peaceful and fulfilling lives. Further, to realize the goal of human security, including the promotion of programs such as "SDGs" advocated by the United Nations, the international community must work together.

Here in the Peace Memorial Park, regardless of nationality or race, all those who lost their lives in the war, have their names etched on the Cornerstone of Peace. Tracing the names etched on the stone in order to feel the evidence that they once lived, and the images of bereaved families praying to never forget, is something deeply ingrained in our hearts.

In the middle of the Peace Plaza, fire taken from the sites of atomic bomb detonation; Hiroshima's "Flame of Peace" and Nagasaki's "Flame of Commitment" as well as from Akajima, Zamami village, the first landing site for U.S. forces in the Battle of Okinawa are brought together to form the "Fire of Peace". We share the desire for peace with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who experienced unprecedented devastation never before seen in human history. So that humanity never again experiences "black rain" or a "typhoon of steel", we light the "Fire of Peace" in our hearts, and resolve again to continue our vow.

Now is the time to bring together the wisdom of all mankind and make a collective effort to eliminate nuclear weapons, abandon war, and establish lasting peace.

I pray that the souls of those who lost their lives in past wars may rest in peace. I will continue to pray for peace and happiness in the future of mankind.

On this day, the anniversary of the end of the Battle of Okinawa, we offer our most sincere and heartfelt prayers to the souls of all those who lost their lives during the war, and sincerely look for ways to keep the memory of the war from fading. Our country prides itself as a nuclear-free and peaceful nation, as such, hand in hand with those from around the world, I hereby declare my determination to work with all my might to have this island serve as a center of peace exchange and play a role in contributing to the realization of international peace.

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Governor of Okinawa Prefecture