

## **Message from Dr. Peter van den Dungen, General Coordinator of the International Network of Museums for Peace**

Dear colleagues and friends,

It is my pleasure to send you this message on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Association of Japanese Museums for Peace.

May I, at the outset, simply say how agreeable it is to know of the existence of the Association. It is quite unique, and similar bodies do not exist elsewhere in the world. For peace educators around the globe, and particularly of course for those who regard peace museums as ideal instruments for peace education for a wide public, the very name of the Association is uplifting and encouraging. Most countries (still) lack peace museums, but your Association suggests what is possible also elsewhere, and provides hope and inspiration for the establishment of peace museums around the world.

The fact that your organisation brings together the earliest, largest, and most important peace museums in the country makes the Association all the more significant – as is the fact that the majority of member institutions are museums which have been established at an official level, whether municipal or prefectural. This suggests a strong commitment to peace - on the part of both the respective authorities and the citizens which come under their governance. Again, this is virtually unprecedented in the rest of the world where it is hard to find peace museums which have been created by (and enjoy the support of) cities or regional governments (let alone national ones).

Not only in Japan but around the world, peace educators and activists continue to be inspired and encouraged by the permanent displays, temporary exhibitions, and educational projects of your members. Together, these activities represent an unparalleled contribution to making the world a more just and peaceful place and helping to show visitors (not least the younger generation) how they can make a difference. Please know that all members of the International Network of Museums for Peace (INMP) hold your museums in the highest esteem, and wish strongly for their continued prosperity.

In 1998, and again more recently in 2008 (ten years later), the third and sixth international conferences of peace museums were held in Japan. INMP acknowledges with deep gratitude the support and cooperation of several of your member institutions which made these unforgettable gatherings possible. I would like to mention in this connection today's host institution, the Osaka International Peace Center, as well as the Kyoto Museum for World Peace at Ritsumeikan University, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, and the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum

Your country is also unique in having not one but two associations of museums for peace. The strong peace movement at local and grassroots level is reflected in the existence of many smaller peace museums, which have come together in the 'Japanese Citizens' Network of Museums for Peace'. Several of these museums are small and struggling, and often have been created by an inspirational founder or a small group of idealists. I would also like to salute the valiant contributions of these museums, spread throughout the country, to peace education and peacemaking.

Today is a significant date in the annual calendar of a number of countries, including the U.S.A., Canada, and the U.K. They solemnly commemorate that on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, of the 11<sup>th</sup> day, of the 11<sup>th</sup> month, the Great War of 1914-1918 came to an end in November 1918. Known as Remembrance Day in Britain and Canada, and as Veterans' Day in the U.S.A., these countries remember the nearly 10 million soldiers who died in that man-made catastrophe. That war, which soon would become known as the First World War, was meant to be 'the war to end war'. Sadly, that proved to be too optimistic. The Second World War, which among countless atrocities and horrors also witnessed the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs, has made nuclear and general disarmament, and the creation of a just and peaceful world, an imperative of survival.

Your museums are in the forefront of promoting this vital message - not only for Japan but for the entire world. On behalf of INMP, I would like to express my profound recognition and gratitude, and am sending you my cordial greetings and best wishes for a successful conference.