

Declaration of Peace

June 23rd marks 76 years since the final fierce ground campaign of the war in the Pacific. The raging battle took more than 200,000 precious lives, injured many people, and destroyed many irreplaceable cultural heritages and the natural environment.

We have not forgotten the unimaginable tragedy of the Battle of Okinawa, we remember the sadness and suffering of those who lost their lives, we pass down the regret-filled testimonies of those who experienced the war to future generations and bearing in mind the universal human lesson of the preciousness of peace and while strongly demanding the realization of lasting peace we have worked hard on the path of reconstruction and development.

However, the remains of many victims and unexploded bombs are still buried all across the prefecture, including here in Mabuni, and the wounds from the war have not yet healed.

I would like for the national government to follow the wishes of the people of the prefecture and take responsibility to collect the remains and dispose of unexploded bombs as soon as possible.

In addition, as 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, there is no end to the noise, environmental problems, and incidents and accidents involving the U.S. military.

25 years have passed since the SACO agreement was reached, and in that time the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region has changed drastically, and the U.S. military is moving forward with the decentralization of its forces.

In these circumstances, Okinawa Prefecture will mark the large milestone of the 50 year anniversary of its reversion to the mainland next year. I would like for the government of Japan and the government of the United States to actively cooperate with the prefectural government and create a forum to discuss and to create a "Roadmap for the Realignment and Reduction of U.S. Forces in Okinawa" and to resolve the heavy burden of U.S. bases in Okinawa in a visible manner, without being preoccupied with the idea that the construction of the new Henoko base is the only solution.

Okinawa has a very rich natural environment such as the region home to many rare flora and fauna known as the "Miracle Forest of Yanbaru," which is currently on its way to be registered as World Natural Heritage Site, as well as the nature rich unique outer island region.

It is our responsibility to entrust the children and young people who will bear the

future with Okinawa, which is rich in nature, Okinawa, where unique culture lives on, it is our responsibility to entrust Okinawa to a peaceful and truly prosperous world.

On the other hand, when we look at the world, regional conflicts continue unabated and there are many problems such as poverty, hunger, discrimination and human rights violations.

There is a saying, "The opposite of love is not hate but indifference." It is now necessary for people all over the world to work together, to recognize their differences and diversity in values, and work together and overcome their conflicts and divisions.

At this very moment, in the face of the threat of COVID-19, the world must work together to support each other's lives and livelihoods.

To create a peaceful society in today's globalized world, mutual understanding with neighboring countries is essential. We can weave and share our thoughts of peace and well-being that transcend time and place. Now more than ever in this time of hardship we must gather our wisdom and work together to realize a society in which no one is left behind.

In the past, throughout their long history, the people of Okinawa have nurtured a spirit of respect for their ancestors, respect for nature, and the Chimugukuru which understands the pain of others. Together with this, they have also established friendly relations through trade with neighboring countries, and have built a unique culture and peaceful society.

We must continue the "Bankoku Shinryo" spirit of our ancestors, who were active as "bridges" that connected the countries of the world, and we must share with the world the "Okinawan Heart • Chimugukuru," cultivated through Okinawa's history and climate that values peace above all else.

In order to honor the wishes of all those who have experienced war and never repeat such tragedy again, it is our important mission to properly pass on the experiences and lessons of war to the next generation.

Through the Okinawa Peace Prize, which with the wishes of the people of Okinawa, aims to contribute to the creation of lasting world peace, and the Chura Uchina Grassroots Peace Contribution Award, which shines light on local contributions to society which connect to peace; the baton of peace, through various activities, will be passed from hand to hand and entrusted to the future.

In addition, by having young people from Asian countries with tragic war experiences similar to those in Okinawa and young people from Okinawa learn together, they can connect with each other across nationality and culture, and share the desire for peace that they have cultivated, and built a network that can be a "bridge to peace" even if they are far away from each other.

With the aim of connecting the circle of peace from Okinawa to the world, we will continue to make efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, renounce war, and establish lasting peace.

”Let us free this planet from all battles and wars
By connecting the hearts of all those who wish for peace
Let us always live together with smiles
By sharing food, fostering hope and trust among nations
It is time to show our “Bankoku Shinryo” spirit to the
International communities and to pass the baton of
“Chimugukuru” to our children, and future generations!”

On today, Okinawa Memorial Day, while expressing my heartfelt condolences to all the souls of those who lost their lives, I hereby declare my determination to work with all my heart and soul to, with the hope of peace and prosperity for human society, continue to pass on the realities and lessons of the Battle of Okinawa to the next generation, and toward the realization of "an island where people can feel safe, secure, and happy" that can contribute to the realization of international peace.

June 23 2021

Denny Tamaki
Governor of Okinawa Prefecture