

## Peace Declaration

78 years ago there was a terrible ground battle the civilian population was dragged into, in 1945, here in Okinawa.

The typhoon of steel, which lasted for 90 days, reshaped the islands' terrain, destroyed the verdant natural environment and most of the invaluable cultural heritage, and claimed more than 200,000 precious lives.

The people of Okinawa suffered unimaginably due to the ground battle, but also due to the sinking of the ship from the South Sea Islands, the sinking of the school children's evacuation ship, the "10/10 Air Attack", student mobilization, wartime malaria, and for many other reasons.

Every year, on June 23, we reaffirm our determination to never allow Okinawa to become a battlefield again. We reaffirm our abhorrent feelings toward any kind of war, taking to heart the absurdity and cruelty of it, and the reality and lessons that were handed down by war survivors.

After 27 years of post-war U.S. rule, this year marks the 51st anniversary of Okinawa's reversion to mainland Japan in 1972.

However, Okinawa is still home to about 70.3% of all U.S. military facilities in Japan. Additionally, aircraft noise, water and soil pollution, and other environmental problems, incidents and accidents deriving from U.S. military bases have various negative impacts on the lives of the citizens of Okinawa.

For this reason, Okinawa Prefecture will strongly demand solutions that will help negate military base problems in Okinawa. Solutions that will be sought include requests for different arrangements and the downsizing of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, a fundamental review of the Status of Forces Agreement, removal of any dangers as soon as possible, including the immediate suspension of operations and the handing over of Futenma Air Station, and abandoning the construction of a new base in Henoko.

There are a number of descriptions related to the defense buildup in Okinawa in the "National Security Strategy of Japan", the "National Defense Strategy" and the "Defense Buildup Program", that was approved by the Cabinet last December. This and the memories of the fierce ground battle has triggered great concern among the residents and peaceful diplomacy through dialogue is being demanded.

It has been almost a year and 4 months since Russia invaded Ukraine and the situation is still concerning.

The people of Okinawa sincerely hope that the solidarity and cooperation of the international community will bring about a ceasefire as soon as possible and that peaceful living will be restored.

Let us assure one another that it is the shared wish of all people to pass down the way of life, culture, and the natural environment that we currently possess to our children and grandchildren, who will be responsible for the future.

The demands have been higher than ever to ease tensions and build mutual trust with other countries and regions in the Asia Pacific region through peaceful diplomacy and dialogue, as well as through the understanding and actions of residents and citizens to support these efforts.

We will strive to contribute to the peacebuilding in the Asia Pacific region through international exchange with regions in various sectors, such as tourism, economics, the

environment, public health and medical care, education, culture, as well as peace, and through engaging our own regional foreign affair policies utilizing the network available to us, which Okinawa prefecture has built.

Okinawa prefecture erected the "Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum" and "Cornerstone of Peace" here in the Peace Memorial Park. We mourn the souls that have fallen victim to the war, ensure the historical lessons from the Battle of Okinawa is passed down to the next generation, and continue to pray for eternal world peace.

In the private sector, a wide range of generations have taken actions towards ensuring peace and that the circle of wishing for more peace has been expanded.

Through the Chura Uchina Grassroots Peace Contribution Award, which shines light on the local contributions to society which bring about peace, and the "Okinawa Peace Prize", we share the "Okinawan heart", which aspires to bring peace to the world. Additionally, we aim to become the "Bankoku Shinryo", a bridge between countries in the Asia pacific region.

Gandhi, who believed in non-violence, said, "There is no path to peace. Peace is the path".

"Peace" not only describes the absence of wars and conflicts, but also the absence of poverty, violence, suppression of human rights, discrimination, and environmental destruction. It describes peace and prosperity. The "Okinawan Heart·Chimugukuru", that is transmitted onwards by Okinawa, includes protecting "Human Security" which prioritizes human dignity above all else.

Okinawa prefecture declares that we will not tolerate unjustifiable discriminations against anyone and will do our utmost to realize a compassionate society where no one is left behind, a society in which people live together respecting each other's identities and characters.

Each one of us should think about peace and help pass the baton of peace from Okinawa to the rest of the world. We will continue to make relentless efforts in ensuring the abolishment of nuclear weapons, the renunciation of war, and eternal peace.

【essence】

Today, on Memorial Day, I offer my heartfelt condolences to the souls of all the victims, regardless of nationality, and declare my determination to continue to convey the value of peace bequeathed by our ancestors to the next generation, and to work with all my strength to create a better future in Okinawa for the children and grandchildren who will live in it.

June 23 2023

Denny Tamaki  
Governor of Okinawa Prefecture