

In Commemoration of the Termination of World War II

*A Statement by the Director and the Honorary Director
of Kyoto Museum for World Peace, Ritsumeikan University*

As an institution open to the all, Kyoto Museum for World Peace was established in 1992 by Ritsumeikan University. Since then, it has been guided by the fundamental principles of "Peace and Democracy." These principles deeply recognize a social responsibility for contributing to the realization of all human potential. This responsibility includes the elimination of all causes of violence, including military conflicts. In its Charter of 2006, Ritsumeikan declared its resolution, as a Japanese institution located in the Asia-Pacific region, to establish an academy where many cultures would coexist in a spirit of mutual international understanding. This would be achieved by sincerely reflecting upon history, while pledging to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development in Japan and throughout the world as an institution of education and research. The Asia Pacific University Presidents' Peace Forum of 2010 held at Ritsumeikan issued a joint communiqué in the name of the 11 participants (from China, Taiwan, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, U.S.A., Canada, Australia and Japan), which expressed a common understanding of the philosophy and ideals of the Ritsumeikan Charter. The Peace Forum also recognized the social and educational significance of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace as a highly effective institution for the education of coming generations.

The Kyoto Museum for World Peace has welcomed more than 950 thousand visitors. This number is a result of its persistent efforts of adhering to the fundamental principle of "Facing the past honestly". The museum's ability to attract this number was accomplished by enriching the permanent exhibition and organizing nearly 100 special exhibitions, while paying attention to both the damage that WWII inflicted upon Japan as well as Japan's act of aggression. The museum has been taking care of the registration, storage, investigation and utilization of approximately 42,000 documents and materials, including those donated or deposited by citizens. The Media Library for International Peace has been providing about 45,000 books concerning international peace for public use, both inside and outside the university campus.

In this year of 2015, around 100 years from the WWI period along with the 70th anniversary of the termination of WWII, Kyoto Museum for World Peace is now concentrating its efforts on establishing the Kyoto Peace Research Institute in anticipation of further developments over the coming years. We hope to strengthen the function of our institution, not only in conceptual studies on peace, but also in realistic studies on peace in Japan and the world. This would allow a further contribution to the development of educational and research activities of Ritsumeikan University under the fundamental principle of (the furtherance of) "Peace and Democracy". A special exhibition based on research of post-war history has been held this year to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. This clearly indicates the stance of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace in that it deals with various current issues based on postwar history research.

When we view the current situation in Japan, such as the Diet deliberations on security-related legislation and the recent trend in the reduction of exhibitions at peace museums in Japan on the nation's past aggression, we recognize that we are now once more standing at a serious crossroad in the furtherance of peace and democracy. We also feel misgivings about the domination of state power over academic studies on constitutional law and history. In particular, we are seriously concerned about impetuous political trends toward a modification of the Constitution of Japan, the basic framework for peace in postwar Japan. This critical situation has been brought about by security-related legislation named "Laws of Peace and Safety" that may increase the possibility of Japan's involvement in war and may worsen its relations with neighboring countries.

As the Director and the Honorary Director of the Kyoto Museum for World Peace, which has been making great efforts for the development of both networking and cooperation with peace museums in Japan and overseas, we here issue our joint statement in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of WWII. This is done with a vision for the further development of our exhibitions, research and peace education in collaboration with other societal initiatives for peace.

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