**HIROSHIMA TREE PLANTING CEREMONY**

Remarks by Professor the Hon Gareth Evans, Chancellor of The Australian National University, Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU, Canberra, 21 July 2016

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

My first visit to Hiroshima was for me, as it has been for so many others, a life-changing event. I was a 20 year old student, on my first overseas trip, and I remember vividly the emotion of that day, particularly as I stood in front of one particular exhibit in the Peace Park Museum: a granite block, part of the front steps of an office building, against which someone had been sitting in the sun when the bomb exploded early that August morning. Starkly visible on the stone was the shadow of that man or woman, indelibly etched there by the crystallization of the granite around his or her body as it was, in an instant, incinerated by that terrible blast.

We know why, and can understand why, the US Government made the decision to drop that bomb: to try to bring a speedy end to a terrible war, and avoid the deaths and suffering of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions more – although the testimony of history is now increasingly clear that another factor, the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan that same week, was the more decisive factor.

But however defensible the intent, the bombing of Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, marked a catastrophic turn for the worse in the history of humanity. Not only did we see the birth of the most indiscriminately inhumane weapons ever invented, we saw the birth of a weapon the use of which could destroy life on this planet as we know it.

I, like Ramesh Thakur – with whom I have worked closely in establishing the ANU Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament which heads – and some others here, have devoted a good part of my public and professional life to trying to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth.

* Joining President Obama in his fervent wish, so memorably articulated in Hiroshima in May this year, that “we must have the courage to escape the logic of fear, and pursue a world without them”.
* Joining Prime Minister Abe in his own determination, also memorably expressed on that day, “to realise a world free of nuclear weapons, however long and difficult the road will be”.
* And joining those hard-headed Cold War realists Henry Kissinger, George Shultz, Bill Perry and Sam Nunn in their judgement that whatever stabilising role Mutually Assured Destruction may or may not have played in the Cold Ward, in the world of today the risks associated with the possession by anyone of nuclear weapons far outweigh any possible rewards.

In words of the 1996 Canberra Commission, so often repeated since, ‘So long has any state has nuclear weapons others will want them. So long as any nuclear weapons remain they are bound one day to be used, by accident or misadventure if not design. And any such use would be catastrophic for life on this planet as we know it”.

Making progress on nuclear disarmament is a slow, grinding, frustrating, unrewarding process – and with the present state of the world global zero seems as far away as it has ever been, notwithstanding all the hopes generated by President Obama’s intellectual, moral and emotional commitment when he came into office in 2009.

But it is an effort that must continue, for the survival of humanity depends on it. The crucial thing is to keep the flame of hope alight, not just in big diplomatic ways, but in a myriad of small ways: taking steps to keep the memory of Hiroshima alive, and to keep alive the idea that out of the ashes of Hiroshima a better and more humane world can indeed grow.

That is the core idea behind this tree-planting today – part of a world-wide exercise planting, in appropriate sites around the world, seeds or saplings from Hiroshima’s A-bombed survivor trees.

This tree will be a constant reminder to passers-by – and in our case, very appropriately, many successive generations of students of public policy at this great national university of ours – not only of the horror of what occurred in August 1945, but what can be regenerated, what can grow out of that horror. President Obama talked in Hiroshima of us choosing “a future in which Hiroshima and Nagasaki are known not as the dawn of atomic warfare, but as the start of our own moral awakening”.

I know that all of you here share that hope, and wish for a safer and saner nuclear-free world. Thank you for joining us in this ceremony.

#