

Gandhi Peace Prize Awarding Ceremony
Yohei Sasakawa
February 26, 2019
New Delhi, India

Honorable President, Honorable Vice President, Honorable Prime Minister,
Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very humbled to receive this prestigious award.
But I do not receive it alone. I receive it together with all who have worked with me over the years. This award will certainly give us renewed encouragement from Mahatma Gandhi.

Over forty years ago, I came face to face with persons affected by leprosy for the first time at a leprosarium.

They were abandoned by their families.
They were rejected by society.
They were deprived of their freedom.

All because of leprosy.

I was shocked to encounter the despair of those who could no longer live as human beings with dignity.

This is when I decided to devote my life to fight against leprosy.

Since then, I have been committed to the struggle against leprosy and its associated stigma and discrimination around the world.

Please imagine.

A person affected by leprosy having dinner with their beloved family.
Studying with you in the same classroom.
Working in the same environment.
Making their own decision of their lives.

This is the world that I seek to realize, but we are still in the midst of the journey.

We need strong commitments from governments, NGOs, and international organizations.
We need the courageous voices of persons affected by leprosy.
Together, we can realize a world where no one needs to suffer from leprosy nor its associated stigma and discrimination.

This is not an impossible dream.

Thank you very much.