

Tommy Koh Ambassador-At-Large Singapore



Tommy Koh is a Singaporean international lawyer, professor, and diplomat. He is the Rector of Tembusu College, National University of Singapore, as well as Ambassador-at-Large at Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He has held numerous significant positions in Singapore and around the world, ranging from Singapore's Permanent Representative to the United Nations to Chairman of the Singapore National Heritage Board and Chief Negotiator for the US-Singapore Free Trade Agreement. His vast experience and innumerable achievements in law, diplomacy, academia and the arts have made him the recipient of various awards, honors, and prizes, including being recognized "Champion of the Earth" by the United Nations Environment Programme in 2006. Besides his diplomatic achievement, Koh is also an outspoken advocate for minority rights and an avid defender for Singapore's signature hawker food.



Left and middle: Ambassador Tommy Koh (left) with GLH Committee member Professor Shinichi Uye (right) at Tembusu College planting ceremony of Second-Generation Hibaku-Jumoku Camphor on Earth day, 22nd April, of 2014 ; right: Amb. Koh with GLH Coordinator, Dr. Nassrine Azimi, at Tembusu College in 2017

When was your first visit to Hiroshima? What were your impressions and what stands out most about the visit in your memory?

I visited Hiroshima in 2005 to co-chair a conference. I had mixed feelings during that visit. On the one hand, my heart was with the brave people of Hiroshima, who were the first victims of an atomic bomb. It reinforced my feelings against nuclear weapons. I was also inspired by how well the city had recovered from that horror of horrors. On the other hand, my head wondered why the Japanese people were not equally horrified by the atrocities which the Japanese Army had committed in China, Korea and parts of Southeast Asia.

Why did you decide to champion the partnership between GLH and Tembusu College, and the Singapore Botanic Garden? And what do you believe is the most important message of Hiroshima we should be promoting, and your vision for these saplings (and the GLH campaign) in the future?

I championed the partnership between GLH and the Tembusu College and the Singapore Botanical Gardens,

because of my strong belief in world peace. The other message from Hiroshima is the opposition to nuclear weapons. I hope we can also disseminate the message of peace with nature.

Are you optimistic about the elimination of nuclear weapons and about our ecological survival? What gives you the deepest fears, and what gives you the greatest hopes for a peaceful world?

I am not optimistic about the elimination of nuclear weapons. Those who possess them will never give them up. There are some countries which aspire to possess such weapons. In truth, the greatest threat to world peace is not by nuclear weapons. The greatest threat comes from us, human beings. We are our own worst enemies. We kill each other for tribal, racial, religious, ideological and other reasons. The killing will go on till the end of time. In the meantime, we are also making war against nature and against the ecosystems which sustain life on earth. We must however not despair. We must fight for peace between human beings and between human beings and nature.

