



Call to Faith-Based Organisations Disarmament for Development Campaign

Faith-based organisations and religious communities worldwide are invited to join the Disarmament for Sustainable Development Campaign. The main aim of this initiative is to press for an end to the over-funding of military establishments and for the creation of new funds to tackle human insecurity and common threats to the planet. In addition, the campaign supports all efforts to limit or eliminate weapons that impact negatively on communities in conflict zones. We are approaching faith-based organisations to stimulate conversations and actions around this issue.

Two major concerns of mankind in general are development and disarmament, both inseparable from the peace point of view.

Disarmament means the reduction and elimination of weapons, weapon materials, and weapon delivery systems, in order to enhance security, peace, and the survival of humanity.

“Our world is over-armed and peace is underfunded.”ⁱ
UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, August 2012.

Development is the reduction of poverty, satisfaction of human needs, and the steady improvement of the quality of life (economic, social, and environmental) for all individuals through sustained efforts by the international community.

Disarmament and development are mutually reinforcing processes: disarmament helps to create conditions favourable for development, while development creates conditions favourable for disarmament. Security is intertwined with development policy, peace-building, conflict prevention, human rights and good governance.

Why not channel the funds at present being spent on the military (some **US\$ 1735 billion annually**) into development? The availability of greater investment funds, if wisely spent, would give a significant impetus to development.

Disarmament and development do not automatically trigger each other: disarmament must be accompanied by efforts to build or rebuild economic, social, and governing structures that foster political participation, social integration and equality, and that transfer resources effectively to the programmes and efforts that require them most. Disarmament also does not necessarily result in an immediate surplus of resources – the disarmament process can be expensive, and funds freed by a reduction in military spending will not necessarily be plugged into development measures.

Nevertheless, true development is more a question of self-sufficiency, which enables a government to ensure that the basic needs of the population are satisfied. It is a question of increasing the strength and the quality of life of the people. Great efforts are needed to create a healthy, well-educated people. It is true that security costs some money. But it is also

clear that weapons of mass destruction, and the expenses (and risks) of that, do not help to create the basic needs for security.

Responsibility of Rich Countries

The greatest military spending takes place in the rich countries, the USA alone accounting for close to 50% of the total. One topic that presents itself with great urgency is the human and financial cost of maintaining – and even rebuilding – the U.S. stockpile of nuclear weapons.

In April 1953, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower said, **“Every gun made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in a final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”**ⁱⁱ

Despite President Obama's declared commitment to nuclear disarmament, the United States plans to spend at least \$355 billion to maintain and rebuild its nuclear arsenal over the next decade, according to a recent report by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Over the next 30 years, the bill could add up to \$1 trillion.

Those funds would be better used for those who are impoverished, not least in the USA itself. The continued investment in weapons of mass destruction is not only intrinsically immoral, but it is an immense violation of the dignity of those who are forced to live on the margins of our world. On behalf of the poor and excluded in society, all plans to refurbish nuclear arsenals, and to resist moves to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth, should be abandoned.

In the *“Statement on the Way of Just Peace”* of the World Council of Churches at its Assembly in Busan, South Korea, November 2013, it is stated that governments are recommended to **“Reallocate national military budgets to humanitarian and developmental needs, conflict prevention and civilian peace-building initiatives amongst others;”**ⁱⁱⁱ

Governments and regional organisations such as the European Union should decrease their military spending and put peace and development at the centre of their **Post-2015 Development Agenda**.^{iv} Although efforts have been made to promote a human security approach there are still gaps between rhetoric and capabilities. Political authorities should do more regarding preventive diplomacy by investing in disarmament for development.

The International Peace Bureau, and many of its member organisations such as Pax Christi International, are campaigning primarily on the reduction of military expenditure because they are convinced that, given political will, by reducing funding for the military sector, significant amounts of money could be made available for social and environmental projects, first of all domestically, but also in other countries, especially the poorest.

“Because there is global insecurity, nations are engaged in a mad arms race, spending billions of dollars wastefully on instruments of destruction, when millions are starving. Just a fraction of what is expended obscenely on defence budgets would make the difference in enabling God's children to fill their stomachs, be educated, and given the chance, to lead happy and fulfilled lives.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa, Nobel Peace Laureate, December 1984.

We believe that faith-based organisations worldwide can play a crucial role in national debates, because they reach across all sectors of society and are uniquely placed in communities to give a moral lead on matters of peace and justice. Faith-based organisations have strong interest in seeing that resources allocated to military spending are shifted towards development. This is a profoundly important ethical and political issue which touches questions of stewardship of earthly resources and of identifying priorities based on a “preferential option for the poor.”

“One of the most serious (challenges) is increased military spending and the cost of maintaining and developing nuclear arsenals. Enormous resources are being consumed for these purposes, when they could be spent on the development of peoples, especially those who are poorest.”^v Pope Benedict XVI January 2011.

What can you do?

1. A robust and open public debate is needed on military expenditures. Governments should be required to justify why the large amounts invested in military expenditures are a better use of national resources than competing areas of security or alternatives such as social welfare or development programmes and assistance.
2. Organise meetings and consultations with religious organisations and participate in religious meetings, conferences, or assemblies to spark conversations around these issues. Faith-based communities can stimulate the national debate.
3. Invite religious leaders in your country to speak out publicly on disarmament for development.
4. Write articles and analytical background materials for religious publications, websites and social media spaces.
5. Support the religious sector of our society in efforts to engage with the wider campaign on military spending. All are invited to join the [Global Day of Action on Military Spending \(GDAMS\) campaign](#). In 2014, the day of action is on 14 April.



Please keep us informed about any action taken.

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ⁱ <http://www.un.org/disarmament/update/20120830/>

ⁱⁱ "The Chance for Peace". Address of April 16, 1953. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9819>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace>

^{iv} <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/mdg.shtml>

^v http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2011/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110110_diplomatic-corps_en.html