



Call to Faith-based Organisations
Disarmament for Sustainable Development
Global Day and Campaign on Military Spending

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.

The world faces enormous challenges (environmental problems, migration flows, military conflicts, extreme poverty, regular economic crisis, etc.). Cooperation and solidarity among nations are urgently needed to confront them. Viewing the world today, the tragedies of military conflict and terrorism occur over and over again in many places. In addition to conflicts between nations and ethnic groups, now violence in the name of religion makes it increasingly seem as if throughout the world dialogue has become impossible.

In the face of such worldwide destructiveness, Pope Francis has expressed concern that some people seem to speak of a "Third World War" rather than making sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.¹ The world faces the sorts of crises that cannot but cause people to wonder if force is the answer. What has become of respect for humanity? However, repeatedly answering violence with violence will only lead to destruction of the whole earth community.

To continue investing in expensive weapon systems is paradoxical. In particular, to continue investing in the production and the modernization of nuclear weapons is not logical. Billions are wasted each year to develop and maintain stocks that will supposedly never be used. Can one justify such a high cost? Since the end of the Cold War more than twenty years ago the end of the nuclear stand-off has failed to provide a peace dividend that would help to improve the situation of the world's impoverished people.

Humanitarian agencies and world religions see support for the poor and promotion of a dignified life for all as essential to the global common good. But, the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal of reducing the number of people living in absolute poverty by one half by the year 2015 is far from realized. Contributions from wealthy nations to this important goal, which is essential to peace, have fallen short. Deeper cuts to military expenditures should be a worldwide goal as a direct contribution to the elimination of poverty.

¹ Pope Francis, Homily at the Military Memorial in Redipuglia, Italy, on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. (September 13, 2014)

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;**”²

Collective responsibility for promoting development

The re-allocation of funding from the production and trading of arms is essential to social and ecological justice. The disparity of resources between situations dedicated to human development or environmental protection and those dedicated to armaments is a fundamental injustice in the global political order. Re-allocation of resources from wasteful and dangerous weapons programs to the constructive and peaceful purposes of global human development and protecting the integrity of creation would undo shameful imbalances in public funding and institutional capabilities.

“Spending on nuclear weapons squanders the wealth of nations. To prioritise such spending is a mistake and a misallocation of resources which could be far better invested in the areas of integral human development, education, health and the fight against extreme poverty. When these resources are squandered, the poor and the weak living on the margins of society pay the price.”³ Pope Francis, 7 December 2014.

Weapons programmes divert public funds from health care, education, disaster relief and other vital services. The nine nuclear-armed nations for instance spend in excess of US\$105 billion each year maintaining and modernizing their nuclear arsenals. Funding allocated to national disarmament efforts is minuscule by comparison, and the principal UN body responsible for advancing nuclear abolition has an annual budget of just over \$10 million. It is time to redirect money towards meeting human needs.

Towards a Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS)

Pax Christi International and the International Peace Bureau 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.

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 moral leadership on matters of peace and justice. Faith-based organisations have strong interest in seeing that resources allocated to military spending are shifted towards development that is truly sustainable. 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.”

² <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace>

³ Message from Pope Francis to His Excellency Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister For Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria. President of the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, Vienna, 7 December 2014.

There is a wonderful verse in the Bible about turning swords into, ploughshares. It's a lovely image, a weapon transformed into a tool to serve basic human needs, symbolic of an attitude of inner and outer disarmament. In the spirit of ' this ancient message, I think it is important that we stress today the urgency of a policy that is long overdue; the demilitarization of the entire planet. Demilitarization will free great human resources for protection of the environment, relief of poverty, and sustainable human development. It is my hope that the United Nations can soon help make this a reality." Dalai Lama on Disarmament for World Peace.⁴

Disarmament steps need to be taken

The lack of sustainable development and the ongoing climate change affects everybody, but especially the most impoverished and vulnerable people. Impelled by our faiths, we call on national and international political authorities to take the urgent measures necessary to aid the world's poorest communities in dealing with climate change impacts and anti-poverty programmes. Major steps toward real disarmament must be taken.

This Campaign intends to influence at least two international debates as well:

- **Development:** to ensure the inclusion of language relating to military spending and disarmament in the United Nation's Post 2015 Development Agenda.⁵
- **Climate:** to ensure that the target of \$ 100 billion in annual governmental contributions to the Green Climate Fund⁶ is met by the date of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change⁷ in Paris, December 2015. These contributions should come from reductions in military budgets.

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. Make use of the materials and figures as provided by the World Council of Churches on Military Expenditure.⁸
4. Invite religious leaders in your country to speak out publicly on disarmament for development.
5. Write articles and analytical background materials for religious publications, websites and social media spaces.
6. Support the proposal of the International Peace Bureau calling for annual reallocations of (as minimum) 10% from the military budgets of all states; and for a process to be started to reduce arms production as well as the international weapons trade.

⁴ <http://www.dalailama.com/messages/environment/global-environment>

⁵ <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/mdg.shtml>

⁶ <http://news.gcfund.org/>

⁷ <http://climate-l.iisd.org/events/unfccc-cop-21/>

⁸ <http://website-box.net/se-keyword/world+military+expenditures>

7. 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 2015, the day of action is on 13 April.

The day of action is part of a Global Campaign on Military Spending (GCOMS). The International Peace Bureau is planning an international conference on disarmament for development taking place in Berlin, Germany, 30 September – 3 October 2016.

Please keep us informed about any action taken.

Brussels, 27 March 2014

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