

International Peace Bureau
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THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN THIS TIME OF VIOLENCE

Thank you Mr. Foreign Minister for recognizing the indispensable role of civil society by coming here in the midst of your other official obligations. Thank you Kalevi Soumela and Laura Lodenius for enabling us to be here together. Welcome, dear friends, members of the International Peace Bureau, members of our colleague organizations, and citizens of Finland.

The role of the peace movement and of IPB, must be to educate, to inspire and to mobilize public opinion to rid the world of nuclear weapons, deploy diplomats not soldiers, to seek multilateral solutions to real security threats, preferably through the United Nations, and to build a culture of peace for our children and grandchildren and their children. There is no reason why the peace movement should not make a separate peace with civil society organizations in countries in conflict, as a role model for governments to replicate.

In Barcelona in June, 2004 we issued a joint statement with Fakhri Karim Ahmad of the Iraq Council for Peace and Solidarity and called for an exchange of contacts between our member organizations. We should make good on those words.

The peace movement may be facing the greatest challenge of its history. More people know how to pull a trigger, more children have been drugged or bribed to be child soldiers, more women are refugees from battles and abuses, more homes have been bulldozed, international laws have been ignored, torture is condoned, the lines to volunteer for suicide bombing are long and extremists of all kinds are in charge in too many places- it's a world out of control. Of course there are always wonderful pockets of hope.

I believe that the bombs dropped, the wars waged, the occupations, the humiliation and exclusion practiced, enormous poverty, and the national budgets that feed the military and deny human security, have created so much hatred and fostered revenge that healing the wounds of war, and finding ways to reconciliation will be a major challenge for the peace movement.

IPB has chosen to focus on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development, which is a long-term laudable goal. But, if we as peace builders, as peacemakers, we who seek a world without war, if we do not step up and engage in a massive effort to prevent revenge, to identify ways to reconciliation, to prevent the re-ignition of violence, and to engage women, we will, like Pluto the planet, become dwarfed.

The first thought I had when asked to address this topic, is that the **tone** of what we say and do will make an important difference. It is very easy to condemn, to protest, to denounce, especially when we see the monstrosity of the crimes being committed by governments and non-state actors alike. But won't we make a more serious impression, won't we be more apt to influence strategic opinion makers, if we establish **an informed tone that expresses compassion** for all the victims of any carnage, **while denouncing** the strategy of resorting to military solutions and **proposing alternative** means of resolving the issues.

I am concerned that we are entering a **new period of anti isms**. We will see the growth of anti-Semitism, of anti-Arabism, and anti-Muslimism. In turn this will fuel a period of revenge that could last for generations. No matter what we do, whether it is to call for abolition of nuclear weapons, disarmament for development, for reductions in military spending, or to mobilize relief and reconstruction support for victims of the wars, on all sides, we should make deliberate **efforts to also include** Arabs, Muslims and Jews, women and men in our deliberations and activities. We must become the peace we seek, as a popular person once said. We need to be the role models for humanity.

There is **another "anti"** that is happening. Anti American, Anti British, Anti Israeli, Anti-Arab, and soon anti-Iranian lumping people together with their governments. The lesson of distinguishing people from their governments is fast becoming lost.

There are remarkable developments in the United States alone: Iraq war veterans have entered politics to oppose those candidates for Congress who voted for the Iraq war. Now, many candidates face opposition on the issue of the illegality, immorality, and obscenity of the war. Families of 9/11 for Peaceful Tomorrows is hosting relatives of victims of terror attacks from Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Ireland, Rwanda, Colombia and elsewhere. They are talking about why they chose the road to reconciliation and against the road to revenge. They are courageous people who deserve our support. Martin Luther King said, "Wars make poor tools to chisel out peaceful tomorrows". And lastly there are the resisters. IPB needs to celebrate and support the resisters... the US soldiers and officers who face court martial for refusing orders to deploy, the Israeli pilots who deliberately avoided their targets in Lebanon, which they knew to be civilian and who now face punishment.

Lt. Ehren Watada is the first commissioned officer to refuse deployment to the occupation in Iraq. He said, "As the order to take part in an illegal act is ultimately unlawful as well, I must refuse that order." He told a group of veterans, "No one knows the devastation and suffering of war more than veterans- which is why we should always be the first to prevent it." He spoke of duty to the Constitution and to the people, of violating the prohibition against pre-emptive war, of violations of laws banning torture and degradation of prisoners of war.

There are many examples, not yet enough, of hopeful developments.. “For like nothing else in the world, hope arouses a passion for the possible,” said Rev. William Sloane Coffin. My assignment is to focus on the responsibility of the peace movement. I eagerly look forward to the open microphone so that IPB can hear concrete ideas from its members on what you think we should be doing to play a leadership role in putting an end to war and help build the peace. May I offer a few more suggestions to start that discussion?

There is a camp in Maine where Palestinian and Israeli children gather each summer. When asked what the best part of the day was for her, a Palestinian girl answered, the dialogue. What if every single IPB member organization were asked to **identify an organization** in a country at war: Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and make **sustained** efforts to talk to each other, to visit each other, to send relief supplies- to restore the confidence in those suffering, that they are not alone, that there are people who care and want to understand. What if we really worked at **twinning, connecting our members with victims of war.**

What if, in connection with the Disarmament for Development program, we were to have every IPB member organization identify members of their governments and make a **sustained** case for **reallocating a percentage of their national budgets away from the military** to build houses and schools instead?

The war in Iraq, is waged as part of the “war on terror” and instead has spawned more terrorists. One of our Members of Congress calls it a war on error. But it was police work, not a military adventure that uncovered the London chemical bomb plot. Unfortunately terrorism exists. Just ask the mothers in Derry, Northern Ireland, or the surviving passengers on the trains and buses in Madrid and London, or relatives of victims of suicide bombs in buses and cafes in Israel, or families of victims of suicide bombs in market places in Baghdad or Sarajevo or parents of children in the day care center in Oklahoma. To say nothing of the World Trade Center. And the list goes on. There is no Convention Against Terrorism because the UN can not agree on a definition.

But a recent paper on Global Responses to Global Threats: sustainable security for the 21st Century, by the Oxford Research Group, while acknowledging international terrorism, says that, “terrorism is actually a minor threat when compared to other more serious global trends, and current responses to those trends are likely to increase, rather than decrease, the risks of further terrorist attacks.” (Briefing Paper June 2006, Abbott, Rogers and Sloboda).

They identify four factors as root causes of conflict and insecurity in the world:

- climate change
- competition over resources
- marginalization of the majority world
- global militarization. And I would add, poverty.

They claim that these factors will lead to instability of “a magnitude unmatched by other potential threats.”

“Current security policies are self defeating and a new approach is needed.” That is a challenge for the peace movement. And the new approach must include women.

But military budgets will continue to rise in the name of the war on terror, and the US is not the only guilty party.

“The war on terror”, says America’s philanthropist, George Soros, “is a false metaphor that has led to counterproductive and self defeating policies.” The phrase, we are at war, has become the framework into which all US policies must fit, and the US is not alone. The British Home Secretary, Prime Minister Tony Blair and too many US government officials have decided that civil liberties were made for another age.

Soros appeals to Americans, saying, “The strength of an open society lies in its ability to recognize and correct its mistakes”. And I believe that the strength of the peace movement lies in our ability to move from protests to proposals, engaging in prevention of violence by fostering disarmament and sustained dialogue to reduce marginalization and exclusion.

Weapons of terror, says the Blix Commission, a copy of which each of you should have, “are nuclear, biological and chemical arms, whether in the hands of states or terrorists, they have the potential to kill thousands and thousands of people and their effects may persist in the environment and... in our bodies indefinitely.” (www.wmdcommission.org)

So I propose that every single member organization and individual of the IPB should be sent, and asked to read the Blix Commission 60 recommendations, and the Oxford Research Group briefing paper of June. And discuss them. Maybe each IPB member organization would agree to adopt one of the recommendations and see to its implementation. Invite any of the Blix Commissioners to speak to your groups. Open a chat room on the web site; circulate a monthly e-mail list serve with comments. Implementing the Blix Commission findings and acting on the findings of the Oxford Research Group may go a long way to prevent war and terrorism.

The lawyers who brought the question of the illegality of nuclear weapons to the World Court, are considering returning for a second opinion on whether nuclear states have made a good faith effort to eliminate their nuclear weapons. IPB should certainly be among the mobilizers of public opinion to support that campaign.

It would be a huge mistake to ignore the reality of terrorists and their insidious violent activities. Changing the policies and actions that provoke the volunteers who become human bombs would be a lot more successful than the military assault which only breeds more bombers. To change those policies will require changing the policy makers.

I do not suggest that IPB take on all these proposals. I do think that member organizations should be able to discuss these and whatever is proposed from the floor today. Then when you’ve decided what you think will be effective, perhaps each vice

president and members of the Steering Committee can be put in charge of administering and managing one project.

There is no end to wonderful surprises. One should end a talk on a positive note. Israel has lifted its air and sea blockade of Lebanon; Bush has admitted the existence of the CIA rendition program using prisons around the world for torture; and there is a war in the Pentagon between those generals who support going to war with Iran and those opposed. That is one war we can support.

Thank you for the opportunity to preside over the IPB for these past 6 years. I look forward to hearing your proposals and wish you well in the years to come.