

Action agenda of the International Peace Bureau

October 2016

Vision

The long-term vision of the International Peace Bureau is of a world without war. As part of this overall goal we also envision an end to gross inequality and the fulfilment of the commitment made by all states in the Universal Declaration to the full range of human rights for all. Above all, we dream of a world community living within its means according to sustainable principles. Taken together, it is a vision of a Culture of Peace; and it is one that requires hard work in order to be realised. We need to apply our values to the challenges we face and develop effective approaches and strategies to guide our actions. Naturally, the following Action Agenda is not the last word, and it is couched in very broad terms. But it offers a framework to guide the IPB community in the years ahead.

Challenges

Despite centuries of armed conflict, humanity has yet to learn the lessons and the practice of peace.

Weaponry: High on the list of institutions that need to be transformed is the economy that underpins the war system. Our principal focus is the high levels of tax revenues used to fund the military. The world's governments are spending more than \$1.7 trillion a year on their militaries, more than at the peak of the Cold War. Some \$100 billion of this vast treasury are devoured by nuclear weapons, whose production, modernization and use should be ruled out on military, political, legal, ecological and moral grounds. We are also concerned about the production and transfer of other weapons; the development of new high-tech systems such as missile defence, drones and robots; and the appalling toll of suffering caused by the use and spread of small arms in almost every society.

Terrorism and intolerance: Everyone now, it seems, is talking about terrorism – even though the actual number of deaths is very low compared to other threats to human life. Yet recent incidents, especially in the West in the years since 9-11, have led to a huge military response and a constant

◀ *Hugh Frost's display at Mould Map – Terraformers, Bonington Gallery, Nottingham Trent University, using material about the Lucas Alternative Plan from Phil Asquith's collection (see Spokesman 133).*

obsession with public security. Politicians reach for simplistic, aggressive solutions that usually worsen the situation. But they should know that the roots of the problem are a complex mix, involving historical grievances; contemporary wars and occupations of Muslim-majority lands; patriarchal structures; religious intolerance; and social polarisation closely linked to injustice, austerity and globalisation. It is naïve to think that it is possible to overcome terrorism by military means.

Conflict transformation: While many armed conflicts have indeed been brought to an end in recent years, others remained frozen or erupt with terrible violence. The casualties are many and shocking, the wounds deep and the scars long to heal. The economic and social effects are long-lasting. Peace ‘doctors’ and diverse types of healers are needed at every stage: for conflict prevention; for negotiation and resolution; for post-conflict peace building. As in medicine, we all know that prevention is better than cure.

Disregard for the rule of law: This is a serious symptom of a world in disorder. When armed forces repeatedly bomb hospitals and schools and attack civilians; when one country invades another and the question of its legitimacy is not even remarked upon; when long-standing commitments to disarmament are ignored; when the good offices of the UN and other inter-governmental bodies are sidelined in favour of big-power games – then citizen action is urgently called for.

Root causes: Armed conflict, organised violence, aggression: all have deep and complicated roots. Among them are the desire for dominance, national greatness and modern versions of empire. These ideas also reflect diverse forms of racism. We see increasingly ruthless competition for natural resources in a world of hungry economies, old and new. Such tensions could burst out in full-scale war or even global conflagration. It should be noted that economic competition, land grabs and similar policies often result in the ruining of traditional agriculture and the natural habitat that indigenous communities depend on, thereby also giving rise to food insecurity.

Inequality, human rights, gender: Less spectacular than all-out war, but far more common, are everyday violations of basic rights, especially those of women; but also people of colour, the elderly, the very young, the disabled, LGBT persons, and others with lower than average social status.

This is linked to the violence of inequality within our globalised economic system. To make progress on these and the other challenges, we need to reverse the trend of undemocratic, male-dominated and unaccountable decision making. Furthermore, in a situation of rapid population growth, it is also necessary to offer proper family planning in order to give each child a possibility to develop its full capacity and become a caring, cared-for and responsible citizen.

Climate catastrophe: Scientific research shows us the uniqueness of our Earth and we experience daily its immense beauty. It is imperative that we cooperate better in taking care of our planetary home. No serious progress on any of the above problems will be possible in the long run, unless humanity grasps more firmly the nettle of climate change, before it becomes a global catastrophe. Radical changes are required at all levels of society and governance, and in all countries. Militarism not only leads to war and violence and steals vital resources, but the massive, largely unrecognised, carbon emissions of the military machine itself are also a major threat. Almost totally ignored in the debate is the fact that even limited savings in the military budget could go a long way to meeting the financial targets set at COP 21 and other forums.

Militarisation of the mind: Underlying the willingness to devote resources to the war system is a mindset that accepts and even glorifies military culture. In a contradictory way, this ideology sees preparations for mass violence as a form of peace-making. The result is a set of institutions (armed forces, industries, academies and bureaucracies) that divert the intellectual capacities of literally millions of our best brains away from the urgent struggle for peaceful social and environmental change.

Approaches and Strategies

Action on these issues is needed at all geographical and political levels. For many peace promoters the smallest scale is that of the single individual, and her or his inner life: developing a vision of peace and finding the courage to act. There is then the arena of the family, the immediate circle of friends and neighbours, and the local political system, leading to city, state and regional authorities. There are thousands of peace-related initiatives to be taken at these levels. But the bigger decisions – including that of the military budget – tend to be taken by parliaments and national governments. They in turn may be part of regional and international structures whose apex is the UN and the

Security Council. A study of history shows the importance of the big decisions taken – for good or ill – by national leaders in the latter theatres. But it also demonstrates the crucial role played by citizens, both individually and in organised formations we now call civil society, in putting pressure on law-makers and leaders in all fields.

IPB sees its role in helping bind together those parts of civil society who share our vision. Our long history (125 years) has confirmed the importance of a coordinating structure helping bridge the divide between the grassroots and the official political structures. This involves several types of activity: researching, educating, formulating proposals and projects, networking, assembling teams, creating platforms, lobbying and public campaigning. It means operating in the diverse worlds of the internet and mass media, and of science and the education system; in the halls of parliaments and the UN; and across the vast ‘biodiversity’ of civil society. This work could be considered as peace education in its widest sense.

What an organisation like IPB can achieve depends primarily on its members and their capacities and connections. But it also depends on financial resources. Peace movements everywhere are short of money, nowadays more than ever. While IPB’s vision is wide and our history is long, our resources have always been small, given the scope of the task. In recent years we have therefore chosen to focus our programme work, concentrating on the theme of **Disarmament for Sustainable Development** (especially military spending), including nuclear disarmament.

The **Global Campaign on Military Spending** (GCOMS), formally launched by IPB in 2014 after several years coordinating the **Global Day of Action on Military Spending** (GDAMS), offers an example of the strategy-making process. We first began (2005) with a brainstorming and research period, resulting in several publications and conferences. This was followed by the launch of the Global Day (2011), offering opportunities for coordinated, simultaneous actions around the world on the same theme. Meanwhile we began to identify opportunities to make the case for ‘moving the money’ emerging within the work of the UN, notably the sustainable development goals, the COP 21 conference (climate), and the Istanbul Summit (humanitarian efforts). Meanwhile we continue to promote the formation of national coalitions on military spending, since the national level is where budget decisions are made. The Berlin Congress has provided an opportunity to reach a wider audience and to enlarge the community of activism. It is for the newly-elected Council and Board to decide on the concrete actions to be taken.

Actions and Demands

A comprehensive action plan covering all the issues sketched out in the first sections is beyond the scope of this document. Instead, we offer a programme of work that implies taking action to support a set of critical demands, addressed to decision-makers in the various institutions. But we do not exempt ourselves from the challenge of transformation. Politicians, even the greatest, cannot do everything; in many areas we depend on ordinary people making changes in their work and lives that support the wider policies we long to see implemented.

We are living on one single Planet Earth but exploiting its resources as if we had many. We are facing a **crisis of civilization**, which is even more far-reaching than an ecological and economic crisis. There is a need for a **'great transformative shift'** and among the absolutely necessary conditions is the **reallocation of military expenditure**. This transformation implies the end of militarism in favour of a new culture of peace and nonviolence; in this process the peace movement must play an important, and indeed leading, role.

Military Spending

The International Peace Bureau urges governments to make bold shifts in the allocations of public money. We want to see a major review of defence strategies in the direction of human-security approaches. This should result in releasing substantial amounts of taxpayers' money for purposes that can be grouped in roughly 5 areas:

1. Peace: disarmament, conflict prevention and resolution, human security;
 2. Sustainable development and anti-poverty programmes;
 3. Climate change and biodiversity loss – for mitigation and adaptation;
 4. Social programmes, human rights, gender equality and green job-creation;
 5. Humanitarian efforts to assist refugees, migrants and other vulnerable populations;
- all the above as part of a wider global transformation towards a culture of peace.

As an initial step, we make a specific call for a **10% yearly reduction in military costs in each country over the coming 15 years, in order to fund the work of the peace movement itself and the implementation of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. Major resources –and not only from the military budget – must be allocated to meet **the threat of global climate change**, which is menacing life itself and

warrants urgent remedial actions within a broad holistic approach. It requires changing attitudes and the rethinking of unsustainable and destructive consumption and production patterns. Moving the money to renewable energy means overcoming both the carbon and the nuclear eras.

Since one year of military spending equals 615 years of the UN annual budget, such a reduction in military costs would also strengthen the United Nations' efforts to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'.

NATO member states are responsible for over 70% of the \$1.7 trillion global total; to reverse the dangerous trend they are encouraging, we urge them to rescind the '2% of GDP target' and firmly resist pressures to increase their military budgets further. NATO, in IPB's view, is part of the problem, rather than any kind of solution, and should have been closed down with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.

We call for decent work to satisfy humanity's needs: moving the money towards a sustainable green economy without the straitjacket of the dominant growth model. Such an economy is incompatible with massive military spending. Our task is to find ways to bring the military industries towards zero. Moving the money means offering a future to the youth. It is a strategy for survival.

Disarming the economy requires **democracy, transparency and participation** – we need to show why and how. Not least this implies making operative a gender perspective, both on the military system, and on the models of peacemaking and development being promoted to replace it. The **Global Campaign on Military Spending** is more than simply about cuts in the military budget, it is also:

- Conversion to a civilian-oriented economy;
- An end to military research;
- Technological development to actively promote peace;
- Creating opportunities to implement humanistic solutions and sustainability in general;
- Development cooperation and prevention and resolution of violent conflicts;
- Demilitarisation of minds – new ways of thinking for all.

Specific measures in the disarmament field

IPB proposes the following non-exhaustive list of steps to be supported:

- Work actively towards general and complete disarmament under international control. The disarmament process requires the growth of trust and international solidarity in opposition to the model of competition and tension, which risks leading ultimately to apocalypse.

Establish urgently a new legal instrument or instruments banning nuclear weapons, which, when combined with pressure from popular movements, can pave the way for their complete elimination and the establishment of a nuclear weapons-free world. To this end, work to stigmatize nuclear weapons and build up public support for their prohibition and elimination, spreading awareness of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, for example through the International Signature Appeal of the Hibakusha and other nuclear victims.

- As interim measures: stop all production, modernization and proliferation of nuclear, as well as all other, weapons of mass destruction; close down and dismantle nuclear weapons production plants and bases with nuclear facilities; withdraw nuclear weapons deployed on foreign soil.
- Intensify independent research on how to get rid of waste from the nuclear arms industry and nuclear energy plants, which supply the infrastructure and raw material for nuclear weapons. Study seriously and independently the relations between nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, and the risks to health and human survival. Supply the public with correct information on the dangers.
- Reduce excessive and destructive arms manufacture and convert to civil production.
- Implement the Arms Trade Treaty, which is now in force but so far with almost no impact on arms transfers.
- Reduce the need for military spending by promoting and nurturing trust among countries and peoples.
- Establish major international funds to gather the savings from reductions made in the military budgets in order to support agreed social and environmental programmes.
- Urge full reporting by all countries of their military expenditures and arms transfers to the relevant UN transparency instruments.
- Shrink massively the worldwide network of military bases and installations.
- Establish a system of taxation (peace tax) to generate resources for the work of peace organizations.
- Develop a global ethical code of conduct for scientists that would halt research that is to the detriment of humanity and the planet.
- Ensure full gender equality in all decision-making bodies at international, national and local level dealing with peace, security and conflict transformation.
- Implement the new, universal sustainable development goals, and keep SDG16 on building peaceful societies in the centre of attention.

- Strengthen the conflict resolution capacities of the UN, leading to the reduction of armed violence and the ultimate elimination of war, the fundamental purpose of the UN.
- Introduce and support disarmament curricula covering all the above topics, as part of holistic, critical-thinking peace education programmes; this needs to operate in all countries, and at all levels of the educational system, both formal and informal.

Conclusion

None of the above can be achieved without a strong civil society everywhere; and in particular a revived, cooperating and effective peace movement. Opinions will differ on all kinds of issues: goals, priorities, strategies and tactics. That is normal in democratic community life. But what divides us is far less important than the common values we share. Over the last century or so, civil society has brought about extraordinary changes. We have ended wars, banned weapons, established new institutions, transformed mentalities. We can, and must, do so again. In the years to come, IPB intends to take action to bring about the changes we see necessary. We welcome the opportunity to work with partners of all kinds who share our vision and approaches.

Let’s make it happen!

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Edited by Louise Regan and Tom Unterrainer
 With contributions from Christine Blower, Siobhan Collingswood, Mary Compton, Jeremy Corbyn, Kevin Courtney, Alan Gibbons, Rosie Hancock, Jill Huish, Julie James, Sam Keely, Gawain Little, Kristine Mayle, Philip Moriarty, Tony Simpson, Kiri Tunks and Nadia Whittome
 Cartoons by Polly Donnison

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