

Common Security

'Common security' can be summed up as the simple but elusive idea that "security is for all of us, or it is for none of us". It is basic common sense but requires a large dose of good sense to be realised. We publish this dossier to encourage such realisation.

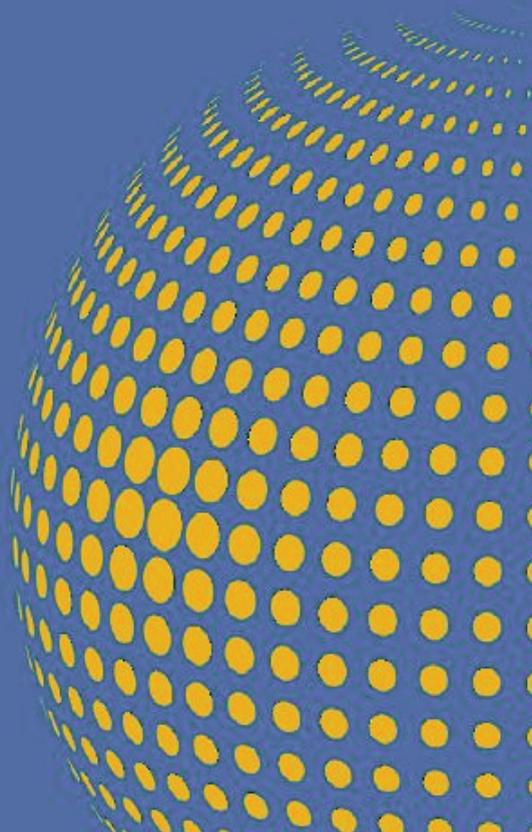
For Our Shared Future: Common Security 2022 was launched forty years after publication of the Palme Commission's *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament*. The new report addresses concerns not included in the original, not least questions of gender and climate change, but in fundamental respects it grapples with the same key question: how to avoid annihilation of humankind in a nuclear inferno?

We re-publish sections from the original Palme Report and two further documents on the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Such zones are an essential component in achieving common security.



COMMON
SECURITY 2022

FOR OUR SHARED FUTURE



Common Security 2022

For our shared future

Common Security 2022 is the work of the International Trade Union Confederation, the International Peace Bureau and the Olof Palme International Center, together with a 'high-level' commission of experts.

In 1982, the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, led by the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, published the report, Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament. At this time, Cold War tensions and the frightening prospect of nuclear war dominated the international agenda. The report laid bare the horrendous consequences of nuclear conflict, and exposed the fallacy that nuclear deterrence provides security. A nuclear war cannot be won, but would be disastrous for all parties involved. The Commission developed the concept of common security: the idea that cooperation can provide the security that humans crave, where military competition and nuclear deterrence have failed. That ultimately, nations and populations can only feel safe when their counterparts feel safe.

Common Security 2022: For our shared futures marks a return to the concepts and proposals of the Palme Commission and situates them in the very dangerous and worrying conditions of the third decade of the twenty-first century. As the new report explains, its "recommendations are indications, or steps forward, in the process of removing the threat of nuclear annihilations and turning around the 'supertanker' of war."

Foreword

Looking at the news in the morning we are faced with pictures showing the terrible cruelty of war, extreme weather events leaving people homeless, and reports on rising poverty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The international order, which enables us to prevent wars, stop global

warming, fight a pandemic and tackle global challenges, simply does not work well enough. We have to fix it. For our shared future.

In times of acute crisis, there must be those who can look ahead and give a vision of a better future. Forty years ago, the relationship between the superpowers was at rock bottom. The risk of a devastating nuclear war was high. In that situation, an international commission led by Olof Palme presented a report showing that security is something we create together. More and more powerful weapons are not the answer. The concept of common security was established. That way of thinking came to play a role in future negotiations for disarmament and detente.

By taking the concept of Common Security as its starting point, the Common Security 2022 initiative has analysed the world we live in today and some of the great challenges facing humanity. When reading this report, I hope that you will feel an increased optimism about the future. It is possible to make the world better, if we do it together. The idea for this project came from a conversation in February 2020 between myself and Philip Jennings, Co-President of the International Peace Bureau. Common Security 2022 has worked with limited financial and human resources. But because many have shown an enthusiasm and a willingness to contribute their knowledge, we have created this document together. The International Trade Union Confederation, the International Peace Bureau and the Olof Palme International Center are three organisations different in nature, but we all share a vision of a more peaceful world. When starting this journey, little did we know of the situation we would find ourselves in when presenting this report. Some may say it is naïve to even talk about peace, disarmament and common security when the world is on the brink of a new world war. But, on the contrary, now more than ever, we need a stronger discourse for peace.

I would like to extend a deep thank you to all the members of our High-Level Advisory Commission for the time you have spent attending meetings and providing input to the report. The Commission consists of a highly qualified and hugely experienced group of people from all over the world. The collective knowledge within the Commission is what makes this initiative unique. I would also like to thank everyone who participated in the Common Security 2022 webinar series. The webinars provided us with valuable expertise and insights that are reflected here in the report. To my fellow Steering Committee members, thank you for your time, dedication, and engagement. But there are two people I would like to give an extra heartfelt thanks to: Björn Lindh, our coordinator, and Clare Santry, our editor. Without the two of you we would never have pulled this off.

This initiative does not end with the presentation of this report. Rather, it should be seen as the beginning of work that must continue for a long time to come. Our world is in danger, but together we can build our common security.

*Anna Sundström
Secretary General, Olof Palme International Center*

Introduction

The world stands at a crossroads. It is faced with a choice between an existence based on confrontation and aggression or one to be rooted in a transformative peace agenda and common security. In 2022, humanity faces the existential threats of nuclear war, climate change and pandemics. This is compounded by a toxic mix of inequality, extremism, nationalism, gender violence, and shrinking democratic space. How humanity responds to these threats will decide our very survival.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Olof Palme's Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues. The Commission presented its report in 1982, at the height of the Cold War, and the Commission developed the concept of Common Security – the idea that nations and populations can only feel safe when their counterparts feel safe. Palme's Commission established a number of 'principles' – including that all nations have a right to security, that military force is not a legitimate means for resolving disputes between nations, and that reductions and limits on arms are necessary for mutual security.¹ In January 2022 the leaders of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council jointly stated that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.² This echoed the declaration by US President Ronald Reagan and the Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev at their Geneva Summit Meeting in 1985.³

Our new Common Security 2022 report comes at a time when the international order faces severe challenges. A devastating war is raging in Europe and unceasing conflicts continue to plague people in far too many places. We are witnessing a global crisis marked by the inability to stop climate change, a patchy and unequal global approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a long list of conflicts where the international community has failed in its response. Even before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic more than six out of seven people worldwide felt insecure.⁴

Our common systems and structures – needed to provide security, combat poverty and inequality and prevent human suffering – are inadequate, and frequently ignored or violated. The future of humanity

depends on us fixing the struggling global order. If we fail to repair our common systems, we will also fail in our fight against the climate crisis and future pandemics.

The global security system is teetering on the edge. As the UN Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* says: "Humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: breakdown or breakthrough".⁵

This breakdown should serve as a wake-up call for the world.

Since the Palme Commission there have been multiple wars and acts of military aggression that show a blatant disregard for international law, such as in Iraq, Yemen and most recently in Ukraine.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, while this report was being finalised, represents a catastrophic breakdown in common security. It has resulted in a horrific loss of life, millions of refugees and displaced people, and global economic shockwaves. It is a terrible reminder of the fragility of peace. A ceasefire and peace settlement between Ukraine and Russia should be reached without delay in the interests of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples.

This breakdown in security is a reminder of the importance of international cooperation and respect for international law. The current system needs to be overhauled to prevent war and meet the common security interests of all states.

There is an ongoing militarisation in the world, with rapid increases in military spending accompanied by nuclear threats. But nuclear and military deterrence strategies have categorically failed to achieve peace and stability. It is time for a renewal of the global security system, based on common security principles. Now more than ever, we need a strong and efficient multilateral system for peace and security.

To turn the tide, we must:

- Reaffirm the UN Charter based on the rights and obligations of "we the peoples".⁶ International cooperation and respect for international law must be fundamental to all states.
- Revitalise and implement the call by the UN Secretary General for a worldwide ceasefire as the starting point for peace processes in different regions of the world.
- Reinforce respect for International Humanitarian Law as a matter of urgency, given the increasing harm to civilians in recent conflicts.
- Realise that global peace and security are created jointly – that when your counterpart is not secure, you will not be secure either. There must be respect for the UN Charter's prohibition against the use of force and the inviolability

of borders.⁷

- Recognise that the threat of nuclear war and climate change are both existential threats to humanity.
- Strengthen trust between states and peoples, so that countries with different systems, cultures, religions and ideologies can work together on global challenges.
- Build a world order based on human needs. There is no development without peace, nor peace without development. And neither is possible without respect for human rights.
- Ensure inclusive governance at all levels in society, to safeguard democratic principles and the inclusion of women, young people and minorities.

Forty years on from the original Palme Commission, the challenges of our interdependent global society demand, more than ever, collaboration and partnership rather than isolation and distrust. Common Security is about human beings, not just nations. Now, in 2022, it is time to consider whether Common Security can help bring us back from the brink.

Common Security 2022: The Principles

Although the world is now in a very different place to forty years ago, the Common Security 2022 project looked back to see whether the original concept of Common Security endured, and how it could be adjusted to be relevant and pertinent to our times. With that in mind, in this report we established six new principles for Common Security. These principles retain the spirit of Palme's Commission but reflect the new threats and complexities of the modern world.

1. All people have the right to human security: freedom from fear and freedom from want.
2. Building trust between nations and peoples is fundamental to peaceful and sustainable human existence.
3. There can be no common security without nuclear disarmament, strong limitations on conventional weapons and reduced military expenditure.
4. Global and regional cooperation, multilateralism and the rule of law are crucial to tackling many of the world's challenges.
5. Dialogue, conflict prevention and confidence-building measures must replace aggression and military force as a means of resolving disputes.
6. Better regulation, international law and responsible governance also need to be extended to cover new military technologies, such as in the realms of cyberspace, outer space and "artificial intelligence".

A Call to Action

The need to move away from the idea of nuclear deterrence as a foundation of international security is more urgent than ever. The nuclear threats used by nations reveal the flimsy basis upon which nuclear deterrence is supposed to work. Humanity will not survive a nuclear war, nor can we prepare for or mitigate the consequences of nuclear war. So an alternative path must be found. A positive and cooperative approach to security must be developed, as a means to making people and governments feel secure. Common security is the alternative to nuclear competition and the threat of mass destruction.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that without international cooperation, a global crisis is very difficult to address. Incremental change is not sufficient to save humanity. Action at government level needs to be complemented by action at the level of local communities. A new social contract must be established, and a new dialogue of peace should replace the narrative of militarisation and competition. This approach should place accountability, verification, and transparency at its heart.

Common Security requires action from not just governments but also from national parliaments and from civil society – including from NGOs, social justice and peace movements, faith communities, women’s and youth movements, and trade unions. In addition, the corporate sector has a responsibility to respect human rights and to contribute to human security, as stipulated by the UN’s *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*.⁸

There is an urgent need for institutions and laws that engage and involve citizens and not only policy- and decision-makers, in cross-border discussions, fairer trade, climate solutions, reducing inequality, and peace and confidence building. Civil society must act as a watchdog, a motivating force, and a counterweight to political posturing – with the support of the verification and trust-building measures included in existing and new treaties. Furthermore, non-governmental organisations must play an active role in advocacy work and raising awareness – not just on common security, but also on militarisation, just conversion and beyond. Dialogue at diplomatic levels should also involve organised civil society – both alongside and separate from government dialogue.

The threat of war and its consequences have not diminished over the years. But political will, people power, and a collective attitude can lead to change. There is still time to be innovative and ambitious in reframing security and reimagining our world.

Recommendations

The Common Security 2022 recommendations are indications, or steps forward, in the process of removing the threat of nuclear annihilation and turning around the ‘supertanker’ of war. They are practical steps, but also set out a vision for a better, safer world. They aim to motivate public opinion and have a positive impact on policy- and decision-makers about what is necessary and achievable. It is for others to take these proposals forward – in particular the UN with a broader engagement of civil society rather than just of governments. The recommendations in this report are in no way complete or the last word. There is still much work to do to realise Olof Palme’s vision of common security.

These recommendations originate from the global experts who took part in the Common Security 2022 Project. The recommendations should be spread through representative organisations and forums – such as the UN Social Summit, the World Social Forum and World Economic Forum, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD), the Munich Security Conference, and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

The recommendations will also be disseminated via social and traditional media communications, through mass organisations and civil society such as peace and environmental activists, faith communities, trade unions and the women’s, youth and civil rights/ racial justice movements. The recommendations are focused on four main areas:

1. Strengthen the Global Architecture for Peace
2. A New Peace Dividend – Disarmament and Development
3. Revitalised Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament
4. New Military Technologies and Outer Space Weapons

1. Strengthen the Global Architecture for Peace

The multilateral system has come under increasing strain in recent years. There is an urgent need to strengthen the structures that uphold peace and that prevent and manage conflict. Multilateralism must also confront the critical challenge of climate change and of creating fit for purpose global architecture for pandemic preparedness and response.

1.1 Encourage regional bodies, such as the African Union, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

(ASEAN) to develop frameworks that incorporate the principles of common security, and to build structures that can mediate and build confidence between antagonistic sides. Deter the creation of new military alliances and reassess existing military alliances – using cooperation based on common security as an alternative.

1.2 Establish or renew global and regional peace architecture, building on the model of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Hold a Helsinki II process in 2025 – 50 years after the first Helsinki agreement laid the foundations for the OSCE and proposed that human rights and freedom of expression should be the foundation of peace.

1.3 Support the immediate resumption of strategic stability talks between the USA and Russia and the resumption of strategic dialogue between the USA and China, with a view to the final elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

1.4 Integrate climate-related security risks into United Nations conflict-prevention strategies. Commit to the sharing of green technologies, the redistribution of military resources for tackling the climate threat, and the promotion of alternative solutions to environmental problems. Ensure justice for those nations most affected by climate change – through reparations, relocation, and support for climate-resistant infrastructure.

1.5 Establish regular UN Peace Conferences on the basis of the UN report *Our Common Agenda*, following the model of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP). Hold the Peace Conferences every three years to review progress on arms control treaties, address the peace dialogue gap and provide scope for intergovernmental agreements. Bring civil society into the centre of the discussions, just as the tripartite International Labour Organization (ILO) is able to do in the way it works.

1.6 Expand the mandate and resources of the UN Peacebuilding Fund and Commission to be used in transnational dialogue processes, people-to-people contact and collaboration, and democratic mobilisation. Continue the Fund's strong focus on women-centred peacebuilding solutions. Use the Fund to increase the number of multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural and multi-faith peace universities, colleges and Congresses ensuring that they are present in regions and nations at risk of conflict. These institutions give younger generations the knowledge, skills and tools to create the conditions and institutions for practical conflict resolution and peace.

1.7 Strengthen the international agenda for Women, Peace and Security

by setting a 50 per cent goal for women's participation at all levels of international peace and security undertakings.

1.8 Reform the UN to give more power and authority to the General Assembly – particularly on security matters – to avoid individual members paralysing the whole UN common security system.

2. A New Peace Dividend – Disarmament and Development

The international community needs to find a way to create a vested interest in peace, with the goal of general and complete disarmament. This also means finding innovative ways to utilise equipment and expertise for peaceful purposes and to support the transition of military personnel to non-military professions – the idea of “transforming weapons into windfarms”.⁹ More than simply a financial benefit, this new peace dividend should help tackle the causes of conflict and fear – such as climate change, inequality, migration, scarce resources, and pandemics.

2.1. Strengthen international law and revitalise treaties in the area of disarmament, arms control, non-proliferation and the arms trade – particularly the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Establish strong international rules on the export and use of small arms and light weapons, breaches of International Humanitarian Law, violent crime and terrorism. Adopt a political declaration against the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and strengthen existing commitments, such as the ‘Safe Schools Declaration’ that protects schools and universities from attack.

2.2. Convene a special UN General Assembly for disarmament in 2023/2024 to set a global commitment to reduce military expenditure by two per cent per year. Set a global ambition to abolish nuclear weapons to free-up more than USD 72 billion annually.¹⁰

2.3. Use the reduction in military spending to generate a ‘global peace dividend’ to fund the UN Sustainable Development Goals, UN peacebuilding, and a just transition to climate friendly jobs. Establish a UN ‘just conversion’ institution and aim to create 575 million new jobs by 2030 – through converting jobs and technology in the weapons industry into environmental and health innovation, and vaccines and treatments. Reduce spending on military personnel by creating civil service options as an alternative to military service.

2.4. Invest in human security by creating a New Social Contract that tackles inequality and builds a more inclusive, resilient and peaceful society. Forge the new social contract by implementing the 2019 Centenary Declaration of the ILO; holding a World Social Summit in 2025; setting-up a Global Social Protection Fund; creating a universal

floor of workers' rights; establishing a multilateral binding treaty that imposes human rights due diligence on companies across supply chains, and regularise more than one billion informal and platform jobs. Reinforce the fight against inequality by establishing a global commission and regulatory instrument focusing on transnational tax levels and systems, illicit financial flows, and national social security systems and taxation.

3. Revitalised Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament

The recognition that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought demands the complete abolition of nuclear weapons. The first steps in the process of comprehensive nuclear disarmament must be taken immediately and in good faith. The imperative to prevent the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear war should unify the international community and underscore the urgency for progress.

3.1 Reinstate arms control treaties, particularly regarding nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, for example the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). As a first step, a moratorium on a deployment of the INF land-based systems in Europe should be introduced. Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) must urgently develop and present concrete, time-bound, and transparent plans of how they intend to implement their obligation to nuclear disarmament. Ensure that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT) enters into legal force. Negotiations should begin on a treaty prohibiting any additional production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. Reinstate and develop confidence-building measures, such as the Open Skies Treaty.

3.2 States are encouraged to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Nuclear-armed states should engage with the treaty and send observers to the Meeting of States Parties.

3.3 Resume with urgency nuclear arms reductions, with a view to achieving the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. Prioritise the states that possess the most nuclear warheads, but include all nuclear-armed states from the start. Cease the development of new nuclear weapons, as well as the modernisation and upgrading of nuclear arsenals. Nuclear-armed states, and states under extended nuclear deterrent arrangements, should engage with non-nuclear weapon states in a serious process to discuss how to move away from the nuclear deterrence paradigm, and to develop alternative security approaches and policies.

3.4 All nuclear-weapon states must establish a firm 'no first use' policy.

3.5 Revisit the idea of establishing nuclear-weapon-free-zones,

particularly in the Middle East/West Asia, Northeast Asia, and in Europe.

3.6 The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), known commonly as the Iran nuclear deal, must be fully reinstated and faithfully implemented by all signatories.¹¹

3.7 States that carried out nuclear testing must provide immediate victim assistance and environmental remediation, particularly to indigenous communities.

4. New Military Technologies and Outer Space Weapons

The digital revolution gives us information and communication technologies that make our lives easier, but it also creates new risks. Modern military weapons systems are being developed which have a profound impact on humanity and raise serious legal and ethical questions. New weapons technologies need to be regulated or prohibited.

4.1 Ban cyber attacks on nuclear command and control systems, accompanied by a disentanglement of conventional and nuclear weapon command and control systems.

4.2 Prohibit autonomous weapons systems, to ensure that humans keep control over weapons and armed conflict.

4.3 Prohibit automated nuclear weapons command and control systems.

4.4 Prohibit attacks on space-based early warning satellites and early warning communications systems.

4.5 Strengthen the Outer Space Treaty and establish a new culture of responsible space governance to prevent further militarisation of the domain. Reinforce international space law to safeguard its use for peaceful purposes and for the benefit of all humanity.

4.6 Limit hypersonic missiles, and create a timeframe for banning these weapons.

The Olof Palme Commission and the Concept of Common Security

In the early 1980s, the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, led by the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, developed the concept of Common Security: the idea that cooperation is the only way to provide the security that humans crave, where military competition and nuclear deterrence have failed. Palme's premise also asserted that fewer weapons, rather than more weapons, leads to increased security for all. As Sweden's Minister for EU Affairs, Hans Dahlgren, who worked for the Palme Commission, says "we cannot achieve sustainable security with an adversary by threatening his life".¹²

The Independent Commission was established in 1980. It consisted of

14 high-profile individuals from around the world, including from the United States and the Soviet Union. The members were predominantly former politicians and diplomats. All but one – the former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland – were men. Two years later, following extensive meetings and research, the Commission published the report, *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament*. The report laid bare the horrendous consequences of nuclear conflict, and exposed the fallacy that nuclear deterrence provides security. As the report stated, “International Security must rest on a commitment to joint survival rather than a threat of mutual destruction”.¹³

At the time of Palme’s Commission, Cold War tensions and the frightening prospect of nuclear war dominated the international agenda. The principles and recommendations proposed in the report reflected the dominant global dynamic at the time: the clash of two superpowers – the Soviet Union and the USA. For this reason, the Palme Commission was almost entirely focused on nation states and the overriding threat from national militaries.

The recommendations of the Palme Commission were wide ranging. They included: reductions and qualitative limitations of nuclear forces; a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Europe; a ban on anti-satellite systems; universal adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty; and conversion of a large proportion of military, scientific and technological efforts to civilian purposes.¹⁴

The concept of Common Security, developed by the Palme Commission, proved significant in the years following the publication of the report. The President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, cited the importance of the idea of Common Security in March 1986 – marking what was to be the start of the end of the Cold War.¹⁵ Yet, despite the disarmament moves of the 1980s, the ideas and recommendations of the Palme Commission have, for the most part, not been adhered to or acted upon.

The concerns and focus of the original report have a disturbing resonance in 2022. The Cold War of the 1980s, the nuclear threat and the risk of major power conflict have renewed relevance in today’s global situation. But the idea of security must be broadened beyond nation states to include all people. Human beings desire, and have a right to, security. Forty years on from the Palme Commission, the world also faces new existential threats that pay no heed to national borders – such as climate change and pandemics.

Common Security Risks Today

In 2022 human existence faces both old and new threats and challenges. There are also issues that were apparent forty years ago, but have become more pronounced in recent years. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has been accompanied by a threat of nuclear weapons use, which is an alarming echo of the Cold War rhetoric. But, there are also other challenges facing humanity today. The climate crisis is an enormous existential risk for humankind. Meanwhile, inequality and rising authoritarianism have a corrosive and insidious effect on global society. Today's common security risks can be categorised under six broad themes:

Challenges to Multilateralism in a Multipolar World

In 1982, the world was divided into two camps; but since the end of the Cold War new powers have come onto the world's stage with differentiated interests and alliances. Yet – despite these geopolitical realignments – strategic competition and power struggles between nations continue unabated. Borders have shifted and alliances have waxed and waned; but conflict and violence remain constant. According to the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, the number of full-scale wars increased from 15 to 21 between 2019 and 2020.¹⁶

In his address to mark the 75th anniversary of the UN General Assembly, the UN Secretary General warned that, “conventional wars are growing more entrenched and difficult to resolve. Geopolitical tensions are escalating. The threat of nuclear proliferation and confrontation has returned”.¹⁷

The critical challenges facing the world demand a renewed commitment to strategic cooperation through multilateralism and institution building. But instead the world has entered a new era of strategic confrontation and competition. The inviolability of borders and respect for the territorial integrity of states is undermined and disregarded. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is one example of a flagrant violation of the UN Charter, upon which multilateralism rests. The validity of the international rules-based system still stands, but it is increasingly in crisis, with the rules being ignored and violated.

Respect for the core principles of international humanitarian law is increasingly under threat, as witnessed in recent conflicts such as Iraq, Palestine/Israel, Yemen, Syria, and Ukraine. These conflicts have seen horrific civilian casualties, the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas and the deliberate targeting of schools, hospitals and vital civilian infrastructure, such as water and energy supplies.

All too often, military solutions are the default response to global disputes. The role of the ‘military-industrial complex’ – when an element of the economy has inappropriate political influence – needs to be addressed to make common security viable. While any profit and wealth resulting from war and destruction is morally abhorrent, governments must, at the very least, ensure that military expenditure does not attain a self-sustaining and self-reproducing power over political decision-making. Moreover, the huge investment in military personnel around the world is a catastrophic waste of capabilities. Globally, the United States, China, North Korea and Russia employ the largest number of people in the arms industry. Fifty per cent of the military budget of NATO countries is spent on personnel.¹⁸

Gender equality in the quest for peace and security was a relatively unexplored topic by the Palme Commission. Yet, women, men, boys and girls are differently affected by security crises. Women and children are often the first signifiers of a humanitarian crisis. Statistics show that when women are at the negotiating table, peace agreements are more likely to last 15 years or longer.¹⁹ But between 1992 and 2019 women constituted, on average, just 13 per cent of negotiators. Moreover, just 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes around the world were women.²⁰

In an increasingly multipolar world, regional conflicts and emergencies frequently spill over into the global arena. Diplomacy and open channels of communication between countries are more vital than ever – as rifts between the USA/China and the USA/Russia demonstrate. Taiwan and the South China Sea are flash points for the rivalry between the USA and China, where a mishap between warships or warplanes could have terrible consequences. Ukraine has turned, with horrible consequences, into an epicentre of confrontation between Russia and USA/NATO.

In the twenty-first century, populations and nations cannot expect to isolate themselves from the rest of the world in order to live securely. It is clear that global issues cannot be solved by individual nations, only by multilateral cooperation among them. Yet, many countries do not seek this cooperation, and this national egoism threatens our common future.

The Palme Commission sought to empower the UN for the purposes of peace. Today, the UN’s role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding is one of the most visible examples of international cooperation. But the authority of, and trust in, the United Nations as the prime global governance body is increasingly undermined and challenged.

Today’s geopolitical confrontation is being waged on many fronts. So-called ‘hybrid warfare’ spans economics, trade, political philosophy,

democratic principles, technology and military power. The use of disinformation, proxies and cyber attacks blur the line between combatants and civilians, and engender distrust between nations and peoples.

An estimated two billion people live in conflict-affected countries and in 2020 there were 56 State-based conflicts – a record number.²¹ There are also ‘frozen’ conflicts that come in different forms. Sometimes it is where a past conflict has not found a stable resolution, for example there has never been a formal peace settlement ending the Korean War. In other cases it is where land or sea is disputed or occupied – examples of this include Western Sahara, Georgian territories, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Transnistria. While some of these conflicts are between individual states, others are civil wars, insurgencies and guerrilla actions – such as in central India. Several are, in part, proxy conflicts where the actual combatants are influenced by, supplied by, or acting at the behest of global or regional powers. Israel’s occupation of Palestinian Territory is more complex still, although there are elements of several typologies involved. Other unresolved conflicts, for example between India and Pakistan, involve states that have acquired nuclear weapons.

A multipolar world requires common security to be promoted through multilateralism. This multilateralism needs to be sensitive, and adapted, to different conflicts and different regions.

Global Warming and Climate Crisis

In addition to nuclear weapons, the world is facing a new existential threat in the form of the climate crisis. Climate-related risks have far-reaching implications for the health of humanity and the planet. If unaddressed, climate change will cast a major shadow over humanity’s survival.

Climate change is already affecting the lives of people around the world. Global temperature rises are fuelling droughts and wildfires. July 2021 was the hottest month ever recorded, and the last decade is the hottest since records began.²² Extreme weather, such as storms and floods, threaten people’s lives and livelihoods and expose millions of people to acute food and water insecurity, particularly in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and in the Arctic.²³

There are many other major environmental challenges that are linked to the climate crisis. Biodiversity and habitat loss, and the impoverishment of those who once were able to subsist on the land, are just some of the examples. Other effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, will take longer to unfold.

Gendered divisions of labour mean women are often responsible for

collecting water and sourcing food and fuel, particularly in rural areas. This leaves women disproportionately vulnerable to changes in the availability of natural resources. Yet, women are consistently disadvantaged in terms of land ownership and control over these resources. Excluding women from natural resource management and climate change mitigation strategies is patently wrong and also a missed opportunity. As the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security says: “Where women can overcome structural barriers to their participation, they are uniquely positioned to contribute to sustainable natural resource management, climate-resilient communities, and enhanced peace and stability.”²⁴

When environmental problems – such as lack of water – become too big, then the result is social unrest, conflict and war. There is an alarming overlap between ecological degradation and conflict. Of the 15 countries facing the worst ecological threats in the world, 11 are currently in conflict. Meanwhile, by the end of 2020 conflict had forcibly displaced 34 million people from their home nations. Of this total, 68 per cent came from the 30 countries described as ‘ecological hotspots’ by the Institute for Economics and Peace.²⁵

Climate change is a risk multiplier for every existing vulnerability and tension. Climate change fosters inequality, increases insecurity, destabilises existing relationships, fuels forced migration, and intensifies competition for key and scarce resources.

However, the activism and determination of the climate change movement over the past few years has united populations and nations. There is now a momentum for climate cooperation, which is driven by people power. Climate change offers a unique opportunity for rallying collective action in the pursuit of global peace.

Inequality

The Olof Palme Commission met between 1980 and 1982. During the 1980s and after, neoliberal globalisation became the dominant economic model. Individualism and profit maximisation, coupled with minimal investment in jobs, wages and social security, have left the world with a ticking time bomb of critical inequality.

A century ago the ILO was created on the premise that “universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice”.²⁶ Similarly, the Palme Commission warned that economic inequality, poverty and deprivation were major threats to security, and that “peace and prosperity are two sides of the same coin”.²⁷ Forty years later, rising

income inequality has been blamed for increasingly polarised politics, and the ascendance of populism and nationalism.

All too often, political conflict spirals into violence and war. Social unrest, exclusion and alienation also lead to violence outside of conflict areas, such as urban violence, the rise in power of organised crime, and domestic violence. The presence of conflict also leads to an increased likelihood of terrorism. The Institute for Economics and Peace found that 97.6 per cent of deaths from terrorism, in 2020, occurred in countries affected by conflict and that “as the intensity of conflict increases, so does the lethality of terrorist actions. Terrorist attacks in conflict countries are more than six times deadlier than attacks in peaceful countries.”²⁸

The discrimination and marginalisation evident across the globe today are symptoms of an extremely unequal world; that exacerbates the differences among us. Nearly half of the world’s population – 3.4 billion people – survives on less than \$5.50 a day. Meanwhile, women around the world earn 24 per cent less than men and own 50 per cent less wealth.²⁹ Global income inequality is increasing, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights. Since 1980, the top 10 per cent of earners have held half of the world’s income; whilst the top one per cent of earners increased their share from 16 per cent in 1980 to 22 per cent in 2000. Latin America and the Middle East are the world’s most unequal regions, with the top 10 per cent of earners capturing 54 and 56 per cent, respectively, of the average national income.³⁰

Inequality between and within nations masks a major persistent inequality – gender. The inequality faced by women in many countries often involves prioritising care for their families and concentrates them in occupations which are, partly in consequence, under-funded and therefore reproduce gender inequality in income. This vicious cycle of discrimination – and the persistent problem of gender-based violence in workplaces, homes and public – results in the exclusion of women from decision-making roles in society, including over issues of peace and war.³¹ It is therefore unsurprising that while the women’s movement is a leading force for peace, decisions on military expenditure, foreign policy and war are made in male-dominated environments.

Since the Palme Commission, there has been progress in tackling some aspects of inequality. In 2019, the global primary school attendance rate reached 87 per cent, while the number of out-of-school children has declined by more than 40 per cent over the past two decades.³² However, in 2020 the World Bank recorded a rise in extreme poverty, reversing a 20-year steady decline.³³ The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and armed conflict are among the forces driving this backward slide.

Current and future pandemics

COVID-19 has brutally underlined that the world is more interdependent than ever, and that a pandemic threat will know no national boundaries. As the climate becomes more degraded and the biosphere changes, there will likely be more frequent and more serious pandemics.

With the emergence of COVID-19, the scientific community responded effectively and speedily to create vaccines and treatments. But problems arose from the state of the world's trading arrangements, including the protection of intellectual property rights founded on public investment and in a state of emergency. Underfunded health services and social protection systems, coupled with growing health inequality, prevented vaccine equity and exposed the weakness in pandemic preparedness, and prevention. Global society appears increasingly vulnerable to future pandemics.

Inequality has been exacerbated by COVID-19. According to Oxfam International, the world's 10 richest men doubled their fortunes during the global pandemic. Meanwhile the organisation projects that over 160 million people were pushed into poverty by the pandemic.³⁴ Inequalities that existed before COVID-19 – in terms of income and access to education, health and vaccines – also resulted in the faster reopening of ordinary life and economic activity in some countries compared to others. Universal social protection and the fair distribution of economic growth are vital for building future resilience.

The pandemic, and disagreements over the response to COVID-19, also fuelled divisions and conflict. The Institute for Economics and Peace found that civil unrest rose during the pandemic, with over 5,000 pandemic-related violent events recorded between January 2020 and April 2021.³⁵

Women's employment has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. This is particularly notable in upper-middle-income countries, where "women's employment-to-population ratio in 2022 is projected to be 1.8 percentage points below its 2019 level, versus a gap of only 1.6 percentage points for men, despite women having an employment rate 16 percentage points below that of men to start with".³⁶

Other repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic are still being assessed. But the ILO is projecting a working-hour deficit of 52 million full-time jobs in 2022. Meanwhile, global unemployment is expected to reach 207 million in 2022, a rise of 21 million on 2019 levels.³⁷

Authoritarian Regimes – Shrinking Democratic Space

Trust in governments is declining, and authoritarianism is increasing. Less

than 20 per cent of the world's population now live in what Freedom House defines as “a free country”. Eritrea, North Korea, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Belarus and China are among the countries with the lowest freedom score in the world.³⁸ The past 15 years have seen a growing democracy gap, with a consistent expansion of authoritarian rule and a decline in major democracies. Civic space, with respect for the right to assemble, organise and bargain, is under threat. In 2020, the level of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen was down to levels last found around 1990, according to the V-Dem Institute. And although democratisation is still occurring around the world, it is predominantly taking place in small countries.³⁹

Shrinking democratic space and increasing tyranny is a threat to human security, frequently resulting in the use of force and aggression. Non-democratic states not only threaten regional and global peace, but also fail to provide safety or security for their own citizens. The Institute for Economics and Peace found that both the fear of violence and the experience of violence were lower in full democracies than in flawed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes.⁴⁰

Women often bear the brunt of democratic backsliding – facing increased opposition to gender equality and threats to previous progress on women's rights. The rights of women are particularly vulnerable in countries where the space for civil society is limited or shrinking.⁴¹ Limited education and employment opportunities, restrictions on abortion rights, and a failure to address discrimination and gender-based violence all conspire to reduce the voice of women in decision-making and to reproduce male power structures.

Many people have not seen a dividend from democracy and feel left behind by society. This disconnect has led to a breakdown in trust between people and governments. With democracy on the back foot, corruption, populism and right wing extremism are filling the void in many countries. History teaches us that this situation leads to autocracy, aggression and competitive rivalry – rather than cooperation for collective progress. The rise of demagogues, in countries across the world, encourages divisions within and between peoples. Democracy can no longer be taken for granted, and citizens must understand their agency and power.⁴²

Violations of democratic values go hand-in-hand with the repression of human rights. The annual Global Rights Index, from the International Trade Union Confederation, found that the number of countries where freedom of speech and assembly was denied or constrained increased from 56 in 2020 to 64 in 2021. There was also a rise in workers being detained and arrested around the world.⁴³

Militarisation

At the time of the original commission, nuclear weapons were clearly the most powerful lethal force. Unfortunately, in the twenty-first century the threat of nuclear war remains undiminished. Scientists have now set the Doomsday Clock at 100 seconds to midnight for humanity. There are more than 13,000 nuclear warheads in the world today⁴⁴ – thousands of which are ready to be used in an instant and are far more powerful than those used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Massive investments in faster, more lethal nuclear weapons, coupled with increasing tensions between nuclear-armed states, create a dangerous combination for conflict.

Meanwhile, discussion of the nuclear threat largely takes place away from the mainstream media and popular culture – with climate change replacing nuclear as the predominant existential danger in the public perception. Progress on disarmament has stalled in the past decades, and commitments to reduce weapons are disregarded. The Korean peninsula represents one area of particular concern, where nuclear tensions remain high and there is increasing militarisation. This is compounded by the fact that the Korean War never officially ended, with no peace treaty ever signed. Meanwhile, the deployment of conventional weapons continues to cause human misery all over the world. Battles between states and Islamist militants in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso resulted in over 1,300 civilian fatalities in 2021.⁴⁵ Global instability and volatility, in Africa in particular, hinders economic and institutional development and creates an overarching feeling of insecurity within societies. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons initiate and exacerbate armed conflict and crime, as seen in Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Haiti and Myanmar.

The economic and social burden of military spending was a central focus of the Palme Commission. 40 years later, military expenditure continues to rise and to divert funds from social and environmental investment. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), world military spending has been rising since the 1990s. In 2020 global military expenditure rose to almost \$2 trillion, a 2.6% increase in real terms from 2019.⁴⁶

Fuelled by corporate interests, the cost of global militarism stands in stark contrast to the shortage of money to tackle other challenges. This triggers a vicious circle – spending money on arms instead of people fosters inequality and stokes fear and division, which requires yet more military resources.

There is a clear gender dimension to weapons and arms control. As the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs says, “the ownership and use of arms is closely linked to specific expressions of masculinity related to control, power, domination and strength.”⁴⁷ Men are predominantly the perpetrators of armed violence, and in 2018 men made up 92 per cent of the global deaths from firearms.⁴⁸ But small arms facilitate violence against women, frequently in the form of domestic and sexual violence. Additionally, women often bear the brunt of indirect impacts from armed violence, such as psychological trauma, impoverishment, exploitation and economic burdens.⁴⁹

New technological developments – such as in the field of cyberspace, artificial intelligence, and drones – raise serious legal and moral questions. The use of computers or autonomous weapons systems to identify military targets presents a severe danger to international security. Algorithms cannot be relied on to decide on ‘legitimate’ military targets or follow international humanitarian law. The execution of human beings by algorithms, without human control, runs counter to the most basic tenets of international law and morality. In addition, the decision time with increasingly autonomous and digitalised systems is reduced, and a false alarm cannot be identified in time before the weapon hits.

Other new technological threats include cyber attacks on nuclear command, control and communications systems and the production of hypersonic missiles – with their manoeuvring capabilities, target ambiguity and the ability to reduce radar tracking. As a consequence, the concept of nuclear deterrence has become unreliable even for those who believed in it.

Forty years ago, the Palme Commission cautioned against the militarisation of outer space as a dangerous expansion of martial competition. This prediction appears prescient, with outer space becoming an increasingly contested and militarised environment. The deployment of weapons into outer space, whether offensive or defensive, is creating a new domain for conflict.

The Common Security 2022 recommendations are indications, or steps forward, in the process of removing the threat of nuclear annihilation and turning around the ‘supertanker’ of war. They are practical steps, but also set out a vision for a better, safer world. They aim to motivate public opinion and have a positive impact on policy- and decision-makers about what is necessary and achievable.

Full report available at commonsecurity.org

Notes

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