

The Florence Appeal

to prevent the scourge of war

A call for the full implementation of peace and human security aspects of the United Nations

A document for the UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change

We, members of Civil Society,

- **responding** to the Secretary-General’s request to provide contributions to the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, established in 2003;
- **having examined** appropriate Civil Society documents;
- **having gathered** in Florence on 25 and 26 September 2004 in a Focus Group meeting of experts and other representatives of Civil Society organisations, organized by the Italian office of International Peace Bureau;

RECOMMEND

the inclusion of the following **PRINCIPLES** and means of **IMPLEMENTATION** in the Final Report of the High-Level Panel, with the aim of re-enforcing the United Nations.

a) **PRINCIPLES**

1. Peace and human security

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states that "everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person ...". We strongly believe that the quest for peace, the primary and absolute value, is inter-connected with the quest for human security, a concept that now encompasses, in a broad sense, economic, health and environmental concerns.

2. Human Rights

We re-affirm the importance of all human rights, whose full implementation is a pre-requisite for the achievement of peace and human security.

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3. Prevention of armed conflicts and terrorism

We condemn unequivocally all forms of terrorism and we urge the Panel to give greater priority to dealing with root causes, and to non-violent methods of detecting and preventing likely violent eruptions.

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4. Pre-emptive attacks

States and the United Nations must exhaust all diplomatic and other non-violent approaches before resorting to force. We utterly condemn the tendency towards “pre-emptive” and “preventive” war. This implies the refusal of any interpretation of the “duty to protect” as an implicit authorisation to use force in international relations and the refusal of any kind of preventive war. The basis for this

policy is the re-affirmation of article 33 of the United Nations Charter, dealing with the obligation of peaceful settlement of international disputes.

5. Application of International Humanitarian Law

Deeply concerned about the increasing level of civilian casualties in armed conflicts, we urge that the protection of civilian populations embodied in International Humanitarian Law be made a reality. This implies also a worldwide programme of education about International Humanitarian Law, calling for its respect in all situations.

6. Absolute right of anyone “not to be subject to any form of violence”

We call for the establishment and widespread application of a general principle of law guaranteeing personal safety in all situations. This implies that citizens everywhere – not only in cases of armed conflicts – where Human Security is threatened, can denounce violations of fundamental human rights and seek an effective guarantee before an impartial tribunal, whether domestic or international.

b) IMPLEMENTATION

1. Eradication of poverty

This requires the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2000. The Organisation must develop – in concert with other stakeholders – innovative means of financing development programmes in order to reach the objectives set out in the Millennium Development Goals. National governments must set out their strategies for fully implementing their commitments in the Johannesburg Declaration on sustainable development of 2002.

2. Peace education The United Nations once had a peace education office, which we believe should be reopened and professionally staffed so that peace education can be integrated into all national education systems. Peace education prepares people for democracy by providing a participatory holistic approach which includes the study of human rights, gender equality, disarmament, nonviolence, sustainable development and social and economic justice. Peace needs to be learned and the United Nations is perfectly positioned to adopt this role since so many of its agencies engage in education. But numeracy and literacy are no longer sufficient to ensure a peaceful people.

3. Disarmament and arms trade control

This requires the adoption of stricter international legally binding restrictions on production and trade of all types of weapons - conventional and unconventional - and on the establishment of processes for progressive and sustainable disarmament. We call for the United Nations to facilitate the adoption of global and regional agreements and regulations among states. Moreover, the upholding of existing arms control regimes (e.g. the Non Proliferation Treaty of 1968) must be accompanied by more ambitious measures to bring about the complete elimination of nuclear and other unconventional weapons, whose use is already considered illegal in international law.

4. Gender equality

This requires systematic implementation in international and national practice of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2000). Until women are able to take their rightful and equal place at the decision-making table in questions of peace and security an enduring peace is unrealizable.

Evidence demonstrates that women are concerned for implementation of human rights and for methods of reconciliation. Their presence naturally tends to advocate for healing and prevention of further violence and to call for the institutionalization of peace education in post- conflict societies.

5. Sustainable development and environment

Global threats to our ecosystem (including global warming, diminishing fossil fuel reserves, pollution of oceans and rivers, desertification, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, etc) are now so severe as to demand unprecedented and urgent trans-boundary partnerships among States. Competition for resources is increasingly leading to violent disputes involving States and non-state actors. The gravity of the global environmental crisis calls for a more powerful intervention by the United Nations together with Civil Society so as to coordinate more effectively measures for the prevention of conflicts over natural resources or environmental disruption.

6. United Nations in general

We urge that all governments renew their dedication to the spirit - and the letter

We support the recent proposal by the Government of Spain that the United Nations set up a high level group to study the creation of an “alliance of cultures” in order to prevent hate and misunderstanding in human society.

We believe the Security Council should construct an institutional link with the Economic and Social Council for the comprehensive implementation of human security.

We support the proposals of the Cardoso Commission to strengthen the relationship between the United Nations and Civil Society. In the longer term, we recommend the institutionalisation of some form of worldwide Civil Society representation within the United Nations.

We re-affirm our support for the 50-point *Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century* (UN A/54/98) launched by the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference in 1999, whose detailed proposals remain very relevant and comprehensive.

We rely on the basic idea that the United Nations Charter is still the best tool for building world peace and security. All the above recommendations, implemented with the active co-operation of Civil Society, will re-empower the Organization, promoting the awareness that both civil society and the United Nations are working toward the same goals.

Signed by: the participants of the Focus Group 25-26 September 2004, Florence.