



The Dag Hammarskjöld Program - Voksenåsen

networkers
**SOUTH
NORTH**



A PEOPLE'S CHARTER
ON
PEACE FOR LIFE

A STATEMENT FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL ECUMENICAL PEACE CONVOCATION - IEPC - JAMAICA 2011
DEVELOPED BY THE INTERNATIONAL PEACE FOR LIFE NETWORK CONFERENCE AT
HWACHEUNG PEACE BELL PARK, SOUTH KOREA DEC 2009

A PEOPLE'S CHARTER ON PEACE FOR LIFE

Preamble

Recognizing the yearning and right of people to live in peace with dignity;

Realizing that a new global situation has arisen with new challenges and threats to peace, in which the total life of all living beings is at stake;

United by the need to rediscover the true meaning of peace today as peace with justice and peace for life;

Conscious of the need to be self-critical about accommodation and compromise with the forces of domination and exploitation;

Underscoring the need for a new commitment as well as the need to mobilize people in order to make and build peace;

This Charter is adopted as an affirmation of the ardent desire and aspirations of the people for peace.

Objectives

This Charter is adopted with the following objectives:

To articulate the people's vision of peace for life;

To clarify and redefine the context and concept of peace for life;

To affirm the fundamentals of peace;

To serve as a reference point as well as a guide to action for groups and movements for peace; and,

To provide a framework on which instruments for peace efforts can be built in specific situations.

SECTION I A New Context

The New Context

Peace is the condition for the fullness of life, just as justice is the precondition for peace. Peace ensures the harmonious living of all humankind and creation. In essence, peace is the defense of human dignity and the integrity of the cosmic order of living beings.

From the most violent and war-ridden century in history, the world emerged into the 21st century only to witness the inauguration of an endless and borderless imperial war. A new international order of a global empire with its political, militaristic and ideological/religious dimensions is emerging. Led by the USA, the 'coalition of the willing' consisting of other major powers and international financial and trade organization is waging a permanent war.

Under this situation, intolerance, xenophobia, racism and discrimination are being reinforced often in violent and even genocidal fashion. Their practitioners justify them on the grounds of religious, national, cultural, ideological, racial, and ethnic affiliations.

The War on Terror, unleashed by the United States of America and its allies, has disastrous consequences for the whole world. This war poses present and future threats to peace. The War on Terror is limitless, borderless, endless and ever changing in its aims, targets, and enemies and thus is potentially an instrument for total control of the world.

This is part of the broader geopolitical reality that takes its roots in the twentieth century and emerges more aggressively at the beginning of this century. The Global Empire. It is intertwined with the militarization of globalization and the attempt to build a new military and economic order threatening all living beings, their future and self-determination, cultures and economies, as well as the ecosystem.

All these have created a world of systemic and structural violence unparalleled in history. The threats to peace and security are no longer solely of a military nature. In the recent period, there has been a fast deterioration both at the national and international levels of various dimensions of security. The scope of destruction and devastation wrought by the combination of these threats is unprecedented in the history of humanity.

SECTION II Understanding Peace for Life

1 The Right to Peace.

The peoples of our planet have a sacred and inviolable right to life, the precondition of which is peace. Citizens of each country can therefore demand of their governments to ensure that their national and international objectives are directed toward attaining peace for life.

The human right of every woman, man, youth, and child to life and peace lies at the very heart of the realization of all human rights. War and violence result in the systematic and sweeping denial of civil and political rights as well as economic, social, and cultural rights. People have a right to live convivially in harmony with all living beings.

The right to life is denied through various forms of violence such as political killings, forcible displacement, and destruction of habitat.

Peace is a prerequisite for the exercise of all human rights and duties. It is not, however, the peace of silence, whereby men and women remain passive either by choice or by constraint. It is the peace of freedom, of happiness, equality, and solidarity in which all citizens' count, lives together, and share. Peace is not an abstract idea but one that is rooted firmly in cultural, political, social, and economic contexts.

The right to peace has to be exercised mainly to promote and protect the right to life through peaceful settlement of disputes, the prohibition of the threat or use of force in international relations, total disarmament, and the enforcement of international laws and standards of human rights.

2. Redefinition of War

"By a combination of creative strategies and advanced technologies we are redefining war on our own terms," the US has officially claimed.

This is an ominous declaration as the Empire redefines not only war strategies but also aims and doctrines of war. War aim has been redefined for "regime change" in and 'occupation' of the adversary state. The redefinition of war places nuclear weapons as essential for military purposes. Preemption is redefined as "preventive war" with the empire claiming an exclusive right to it, even in defiance of international law and multilateral agreements.

Therefore, the redefinition of war has grave implications for peace. The "creative strategies and advanced technologies" are well reflected in the new doctrines of war. More alarming is that the redefinition is "on our own terms," i. e., the terms of the Empire. Hence, it is a definition of imperial wars.

These doctrines have to be challenged from the perspective of people, grounded in people's sovereignty and integrity of life of all living beings. Peace has to be redefined on the terms of the people even as rulers and aggressors of the world redefine war on their own terms. The new terms of war- the terminology as well as the conditions they impose - have to be rejected.

Peace can be recovered, reclaimed, and regained only by unmasking the powers, their religion, systems, and institutions that perpetuate war and injustice.

3. Exposing the New Image of War

New images of war are deliberately and assiduously created with a view to sowing fears about so-called new "enemies of freedom" and "non-traditional threats to security" while thwarting efforts and opportunities for peace.

The two World Wars in the twentieth century led people all over the world to develop an abhorrence of war. After the Second World War, wars in many forms, regional and civil, were fought in many parts of the world, often sparked by imperial aggression. Social movements and cultural resistance against war strengthened through various forms of social and political thoughts as well as art and literature denouncing war.

As the 20th century came to a close a new image of war emerged or rather was contrived, competing and challenging, if not fully replacing the old one. A new lexicon of military terms appeared. War became "surgical", "precise", "frictionless", "post-modern" and even "abstract".

The killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians, through preemptive strikes as well as cruel economic sanctions, was called "collateral damage".

At the turn of the 21st century another perhaps more profound and disastrous change came. War is projected as inevitable. Its doctrinaires justify war as the means to peace and claim that it is through war that freedom is ensured. Thus, the Empire's army is praised as the greatest force for freedom. Wars waged by the Empire's forces will build democracy and free market in many countries, it is argued. Weapons of war are called instruments of peace. The producers of weapons of mass destruction are hailed as the new peacemakers. The new images of war are glorified by the powers that be through media manipulation with the aim of globalizing a culture of war.

These images of war have to be exposed and challenged for what they are: myths and lies. One of the casualties of the culture of war is the colonization of our imagination. People need to resist subjugation and reclaim their imagination. They have to dream anew of new possibilities. People need to exercise their imagination and envision a new world -a world without war or violence.

4. A Holistic Understanding of Peace

Simplistically equating peace with the mere absence of war has to be rejected. The peace that is usually projected is the peace that is maintained by the "peace through strength" posture that has led to the arms race, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, and the ultimate threat of mutually-assured destruction. It is precisely through this machination that big powers are able to bully small nations and create disequilibrium and disharmony throughout the world. This actually creates conditions for war even as the imperial wars for profit threaten peace no end.

More disturbing is the fact that many nations of the world erroneously believe that security alliance with the USA will guarantee peace. "Peace" that is tied to the threat and intention to kill vast numbers of human beings is hardly a stable or justifiable peace worthy of the name.

Peace is fundamentally about sharing universal values such as respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, and equality. A holistic understanding of peace involves the recognition that humanity cannot exist independently of the biosphere, which sustains all life.

Peace is the condition for the fullness of life. Human beings can become truly humane only in conditions of peace. Creativity, spirituality, individual and collective achievements attain glory and grandeur only in the salubrious climate of peace.

The notion that war is inevitable is totally unacceptable. If war is inevitable then peace becomes dispensable; peace has no space. The commitment to regain and expand the space for peace by struggling for a just and inclusive world community has to be reaffirmed.

The understanding of peace has to be broadened to lead to Great Peace. Toward this, the rich resources on peace from Asian traditions and religions need to be tapped.

Peace and justice are indivisible. Justice is the condition for peace, just as peace cannot be built on injustice. Peace requires a radically new international order based on justice for all and within nations, and the respect for the humanity and dignity of every person. Peace is the effect of righteousness. Recent history teaches us that without justice for all everywhere there will not be peace anywhere. Peace is for life with its fullness of humanity and dignity.

SECTION III Threats to Peace

1. Threats to Peace from the Global Empire

The US war on terrorism, invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, expanded military budget, new military doctrines and the ideology of the National Security Strategy 2002, have thrust the USA into the light of the day as an empire. Its ideology claims a mandate for the pursuit of permanent military superiority.

The Pentagon is moving at breakneck speed to re-deploy U.S. forces and equipment around the world in ways that will permit Washington to play "GloboCop". The vast network of U.S. bases on every continent except Antarctica actually constitutes a new form of empire. These military bases are today's version of the imperial colonies of the world. The USA has military relationships with the vast majority of the nations of the world ranging from alliances to access to facilities.

The Empire claims "global freedom of action". It is geared toward intervening militarily in any part of the world where dictated by its security doctrines and global strategic interests -it perceives a threat, whether present, future, or potential. This constitutes today the most visible threat to peace.

The Empire's use of religion has to be challenged while exposing the nexus between the neo-conservatives and the Religious Right in the USA. Cultural imperialism of the USA is undermining cultures of many nations.

Since war has been redefined to suit imperialist objectives, the struggle for peace has become today a struggle against imperialism in general and resistance against the U.S. Empire in particular.

2. The War on Terror, an Imperial War

The War on Terror is an imperialist war. On the pretext of attacking terrorists, their organizations and the states that allegedly support them; the U.S. administration has actually

been building the new American Empire. It has changed the nature of war: It has become a war of conquest and a war of exploitation and control of resources in the countries occupied. It is claimed to be continuous and permanent. In the name of the War on Terror, the USA claims its right to intervene in the world militarily anywhere and anytime.

The terminology of war assumes that terrorism has to be combated solely through military means. War on terrorism is based on a dangerous logic that modern terrorism is primarily a military threat and warrants a military solution. It disconnects between countering terrorism and pursuing the War on Terror for imperialist objectives has to be exposed.

The special nature of the War on Terror poses an unending threat to peace. It represents the transition from conventional wars to imperial wars in the 21st century. Planning for imperial wars is different from planning for conventional wars. The maximum amount of force is used as quickly and preemptively as possible for psychological impact and to demonstrate that the empire cannot be challenged with impunity. Even after imperial wars end, imperial garrisons are left in place indefinitely in the name of order and stability.

3. Patriarchy and War

The links between patriarchy and war need to be emphasized. The very structure of the military is patriarchal. To galvanize to full potential the struggle against militarism, its gender-based approach has to be challenged. Since the very beginning of war, women have been considered spoils of war and, as victims, are today subsumed under the euphemistic phrase "collateral damage".

The War on Terror intertwined with neo-liberal globalization has intensified exploitation and oppression of women, commodifying them, trafficking them, and thus systematically violating their dignity.

The main casualties of war are women and children. The economic consequences of war are exacerbated by patriarchy. Militarization reinforces the sexual commodification of women. It also perpetuates sexual violence against women. Military occupation further degrades women.

4. The Misuse of Religion

Religion has been used to create and exacerbate conflicts often fuelling violence. Religious beliefs and symbols are exploited to justify wars. Religion often appears to be against peace. This results from misuse and distortion of religion. The steady rise and growing influence of fundamentalism in all religions is a matter of serious concern. This actually promotes imperialist attitudes and its masculinity further reinforces patriarchy.

5. The Threat of Terrorism

Terrorism is a form of political action. It cannot be treated apart from its specific historical, social and economic context or considered as a generic phenomenon. It is a strategy rooted in political discontent and in the service of many different beliefs and doctrines that help legitimate and sustain violence.

Sometimes it is easier to understand a terrorist act than to define terrorism or terrorist. An attack on innocent people is a terrorist act. Such terrorist acts are carried out by some states and non-state actors as well as state agencies, and some organizations and sections of organizations. Attacks that mainly target civilians are terrorist acts, whoever perpetrates them.

Terrorism does not help the cause of freedom or justice. It cannot be part of the struggle for freedom or liberation. In fact, terrorism can endanger freedom and justice and counterproductively encourage reactionary forces. Terrorist acts are a threat to peace.

Military means have a limited role in countering terrorism and often generate more terrorism or as such constitute a terrorist act. Only the resolution of the basic political, economic and social problems that cause the discontent that, in turn, gives birth to terrorism or is capitalized on by terrorists, can deal with terrorism.

6. The Military Corporate Complex

The military corporate complex has emerged as one of the biggest threats to peace. It thrives under war and promotes war. It is encouraged by major powers and international financial and trade organizations. Globalization and the war on terror have caused quantum leap in military expenditure and arms trade across the world, distorting priorities, especially of developing countries and reducing allocation for welfare activities.

7. The New Nuclear Arms Race

Nuclear arms have always been one of the biggest threats to peace. The continued existence of nuclear weapons as well as their threat or use, by accident, miscalculation or design, threatens the survival of all humanity and life on earth.

The stockpiling of nuclear arms and their spread especially in the recent period in the Asian region has to be decried and opposed. There is a close link between the new nuclear doctrines of the USA and the new stage of proliferation. The new nuclear doctrine of the USA places new emphasis on the utility of nuclear weapons in U.S. military strategy. It considers new uses of nuclear weapons and claims that nuclear weapons may be used in any war including preventative wars. When the mightiest military machine in the world claims that nuclear weapons are indispensable, the message it sends to nations is clear and dangerous. The national missile defense of the USA marks a new and even more disastrous stage in nuclear arms race and the weaponization of space with the US claiming monopoly of control over space.

Thus, the campaign against nuclear weapons and weaponization of space must be a major component of peace activity.

8. The Threat from New Weapon Systems.

A particular cause for alarm is the emergence of new weapons systems resulting from new technologies, the merging of conventional and non-conventional weapons, and the extension of the arms race to space. Cyber strategy changes the nature of warfare. New technologies of remote control, electronic warfare, and laser weapon are alarming developments.

SECTION IV

1. Violation of Human Rights

The violation of human rights is one of the roots of war; war itself is a massive violation of human rights. These violations, exacerbated by neo-liberal globalization, have resulted in the denial of economic, social and cultural rights as well as political and civil rights on a scale larger than before. The artificial distinction between these two sets of rights should be rejected.

The universality and indivisibility of human rights has to be affirmed. Mechanisms need urgent strengthening to implement and enforce human rights treaties and to afford redress to victims for violation of their rights.

While the right to life is fundamental, it is constantly denied by attacks of various forms on the human person particularly extra-judicial killings, forced disappearances, and torture. The War on Terror in a qualitatively new way causes a denial of human rights. In many countries where wars of intervention and occupation are waged or where anti-terrorist operations are staged and people are denied their collective rights to self-determination and national sovereignty.

The defense, protection and promotion of human rights and support to struggles for human rights are important areas of peace activity.

2. Internal Conflicts and Civil Wars

Ethnic, religious and racial intolerance and narrow nationalism are among the principal causes of armed conflicts today. In many countries, internal conflicts, civil wars, sectarian strife, as well as class conflicts take place leading to killings, destruction, ethnic cleansing, and other forms of large-scale violence. It must be emphasized that various factors contribute to these internal conflicts: Among these are the unjust distribution of political power and economic wealth, feuds over land and resources, ethnic and religious divisions, and intervention by outside forces. Civil wars take place between the establishment and organized groups of those who are denied political and economic rights. Unjustly, many of the wars that are waged against social, economic, and political inequities are redefined as non-traditional acts of terrorism. Under the guise of the War on Terror, national liberation movements have been demonized and labeled terrorist.

Seeking political solutions and resolving internal conflicts are extremely important for peace actions.

3. Counterinsurgency, Low Intensity War

As part of the War on Terror and under other pretexts, counter-insurgency and low intensity wars are carried out against sections of people in many parts of the world particularly in neo-colonial countries. Counter-terrorism is implemented most often through brutal military actions backed by so-called anti-terrorism laws. Counterinsurgency and low intensity wars, which were developed as Cold War anti-communist strategies, are now increasingly subsumed under the War on Terror. They result in widespread violations of human rights, such as extra-judicial executions and forced disappearances, and the displacement of large numbers of people, their future, and economies.

This is an issue, which should receive high priority in planning peace activities.

4. Neo-liberal Globalization, a Threat to Peace

Economic injustice is at the root of war and war results in further economic injustice and exploitation. Economic injustice violates dignity and degrades the human person. Financial capital, integral to neo-liberal globalization, has undermined economies of many countries, destroying especially the livelihood of farmers and those with small business and trade.

Neo-liberal globalization has produced more injustice, inequality and poverty. It has marginalized broad sections of the world's population, further widening the gap between the rich and the poor, between centers of global capitalism and peripheral countries. The concern is not only about globalization and the plunder and other unjust consequences it has but also about the fact that justice is alien to globalization. Justice has no scope or space in globalization. Globalization sets the paradigm of development only on growth that emphasizes profit maximization. This has directly led to the increase and intensification of poverty

endangering peace. Justice and people's participation, two essential components of development, have no place in globalization. In place of participation, intense competition is encouraged destroying possibilities of cooperation and solidarity among the people.

Exploitation and destruction of environment under globalization are threats to peace. Under neo-liberal globalization, increased poverty and unemployment are triggering a surge in global migration, its feminization and informalization a major source of human insecurity. In their countries of destination, the human rights of migrant workers including the Diaspora migrant communities remain largely unprotected and are often threatened with job discrimination, low pay, racism and xenophobia. Increasingly, women and children are victims of human trafficking and smuggling, with no possibilities of justice and protection.

Globalization and militarism should be seen as two sides of the same coin. On one side, globalization promotes the conditions that lead to unrest, inequality, conflict and ultimately war.

On the other, globalization fuels the means to wage war by protecting and promoting the war industries needed to produce sophisticated weaponry and that, in turn, are utilized to destroy national economies and people's lives. Weaponry is used or its use threatened to promote the interests of transnational corporations. Globalization and imperial security go together. Global capitalism, enforced militarily if needed, is integral to building the empire.

Neo-liberal globalization has to be vigorously combated. Struggles for economic justice and for peace have to be waged together.

5. Threats from Denial of Right to Self-Determination

Indigenous and unrepresented people are suffering from the suppression of their right to self-determination, ethnic and cultural genocide, the violation of their cultural, linguistic and religious freedoms, and the militarization and nuclearization of their lives, lands and waters.

Many of today's violent and persistent conflicts are between states and unrepresented peoples and are characterized by an extreme power imbalance. As a result, unrepresented peoples by themselves are unable to engage states in negotiations for peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Moreover, these conflicts tend to continue for decades leading to gross sufferings and cultural annihilation. To counteract the power imbalance, which drives these conflicts, it is necessary for the international governmental and non-governmental communities to support actively people's right to self-determination, to prioritize attention to these conflicts, and to promote their peaceful resolution.

The denial of the right to self-determination has led to several long-term conflicts most of which remain unresolved. It is important to comprehend that what generates conflict is not the legitimate claim of the right to self-determination but rather the denial of this inviolable right.

Thus, it is imperative that the internationally-recognized right to self-determination be actively promoted as a basis of conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

The efforts of colonized or neo-colonized peoples toward the exercise of their right to self-determination have to be endorsed by all those who believe in peace. Specifically, the demand for the establishment of a permanent forum for indigenous peoples within the United Nations and the full implementation of the rights under "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" deserves active support.

SECTION V True Security

1. Protection of Environment as Peace Policy

The primacy of ecological peace has to be underlined. The ecological consequences of war and militarization are extremely serious. Imperiling the environment, conflicts impair economic growth, sustainable development and livelihoods. Armed conflicts accelerate the loss of infrastructure and degradation of resources and reduce society's capacity for self-reliance.

The world's dominant consumers are overwhelmingly concentrated among the rich, but the environmental damage from the world's consumption falls most severely on the poor. It is important to end the military destruction of the environment and especially the militarization of indigenous lands. Peace being peace of and among all living beings, environmental destruction is a threat to peace.

Global warming and climate change are fast becoming one of the biggest threats to the survival of humanity on earth. Urgent action on this issue is essential for peace.

2. Towards True Security

In the imperial agenda, security is the substitute for peace. The meaning of security itself has been restricted and no longer contains economic, social and cultural rights. Security has left the universe of the people, and has nothing to do any more with the security of the people.

The doctrine of national security has narrowed down its definition to the security of the state, if not military security alone. Now it is not even the security of the state but the security of the occupier or the military. The notion of security today revolves around imperial security.

Other terms used in connection with this notion of security are "stabilization" and "pacification". Both generally involve the use of force. These notions have to be exposed for what they are: creating more insecurity and violence.

A holistic understanding of security with focus on people's security has to be affirmed. Security fundamentally as people's security has to be reclaimed and rediscovered. Security is fundamentally the condition in which people live in dignity enjoying all human rights--civil, political, economic, social and cultural--made possible only with the security of life.

To understand the significance of people's security the plight and situation of groups and realities of the people who are marginalized and oppressed at local and national levels must be understood. Such oppression is made more intensive by the collusion of local and national forces of domination with global forces politically and economically. People's security for the marginalized is a priority for peace.

National security and imperial security doctrines are threats to people's security. Neo-liberal globalization, which is predatory in nature, is a threat to people's security especially in its denial of social and economic rights.

It is time to redefine security in terms of human and ecological dimensions instead of national sovereignty and national borders alone. Redirecting resources from armaments to human security and sustainable development will establish new priorities leading to the building of a new social order that ensures the equal participation of marginalized groups, including women and indigenous people, restricts the use of military force and moves toward true collective international security.

3. From a Culture of War to a Culture of Peace

A Culture of War is characterized by:

A Culture of Peace is characterized by:

Enemy Image	vs	Understanding and tolerance
Armies and Armaments	vs	Disarmament, general & complete
Authoritarian governance	vs	Democratic participation
Secrecy and propaganda	vs	Free flow of information, knowledge
Violence (structural and physical)	vs	Respect for human dignity
Male domination	vs	Equality between men and women
Education for war	vs	Education for peace
Exploitation of the weak development	vs	Sustainable economic, social and env. development
Destruction of the order of life	vs	Convivial life of all living beings
Aggression and arrogance	vs	Affirmation and humility

Since war begins in the minds of human beings, it is in those very minds that the defense of peace must be constructed.

The transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace is a process of individual, collective and institutional transformation, developing within particular historical socio-cultural and economic contexts. A culture of peace aims at transforming values, attitudes and behavior based on violence to those which promote peace and nonviolence. It aims at empowering people at all levels with skills of dialogue, mediation, and peace building.

SECTION VI PEACEMAKING

1. Victims, Vulnerable Sections

The fundamental vision of peace emerges out of the perspectives and experiences of the victims. It is their vision that needs to be pursued.

Concern for peace has to be reflected in awareness about and concern for victims of wars, militarism and neo-liberal capitalist development. Their human rights are grossly violated.

Large numbers of refugees and internally-displaced persons result from militarism and militarized globalization. Women, children, and old people are particularly vulnerable. Among the most vulnerable as a result of armed conflicts and militarization are the indigenous people.

Working for the rights of the victims should receive priority attention in peace activity. It needs underlining that the victims are the protagonists and thus should be empowered.

2. Taking Initiatives in Peacemaking

There are valuable strategies and methods of conflict resolution and peacemaking in different cultural traditions. They have to be explored and developed for innovative action in peacemaking. It is time for people to assert their right and commitment to peacemaking, to wrest peacemaking away from the exclusive control of politicians, national security doctrinaires and military establishments. Peace initiatives are often taken as a last resort with negotiations restricted to war protagonists and imposed on those most affected, particularly women and children. When peace agreements are negotiated, those who have suffered most must have a seat at the table. Civil society should also take peace initiatives before crisis gets out of control and more lives are lost. This can help to turn early warning from a slogan to a reality.

Armed conflicts are often "resolved" by external actors with little or no reference to either the just demands of those who assert their right to resistance and self-determination, or the rights of those who must live with the situation. As a result, either there is no satisfactory, multilateral

solution or the solution reached is ephemeral. If efforts to prevent, resolve or transform armed conflicts are to be lasting and effective, they must be based on the active participation of local groups committed to building peace. Strengthening such local capacities is vital to the monitoring and maintenance of peace.

There is a strong need to promote the specialized training of civilian men and women in the strategy and techniques of conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, etc., and to facilitate their deployment in conflict areas in order to carry out peace-building tasks. But such skills should be grounded on the principles of true peace and justice.

3. The United Nations

The United Nations remains the best inter-state mechanism to build the conditions for peace and provide human security for all. Its achievements in peacemaking and peace-building and humanitarian efforts should not be underestimated.

However, its weaknesses and failures a by-product of big power dynamics and not necessarily of the international organization as a whole -should be considered and addressed. The manipulation of the organization by the Empire is a matter of serious concern. Many countries, including some of the most powerful use the UN as a fig leaf and a smokescreen to blur unwanted focus on them, to defuse political pressure, or to dilute or evade their own responsibilities. States often make commitments, which they do not honor.

We believe that urgently needed are:

The reform and democratization of the United Nations, including democratic strengthening of the General Assembly;

The reform of the United Nations Security Council to make its composition more representative of the international community and its decision-making process more transparent;

The promotion of regional institutions to advance peace through adherence to international law; and

The meaningful and effective participation of non-governmental organizations in the processes and programs of the United Nations.

4. A New Peace Movement

Considering the new context and fresh challenges, the new nature of warfare and the need to rediscover peace, there is a strong need for a new peace movement. There are already initiatives in many parts of the world, reviving some of the old movements to face challenges today and also creating new ones. These initiatives have to be supported while forming new groups and movements where necessary, locally, nationally, and regionally. There is a need to affirm international solidarity and actively support one another's struggles and issues. Information and experiences have to be regularly exchanged. It is necessary to build a broad platform of people's movements for peace.

5. Role of Women in Peacemaking

UN Security Council resolution 1235 mandates the protection of, and respect for, the human rights of women and girls and calls for the increased representation of women in decision-making for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and in peace processes.

There is need for specific initiatives aimed at understanding the interrelationship between gender equality and peace-building, strengthening women's capacity to participate in

peace-building initiatives and equal participation of women in conflict resolution in decision-making levels.

The perspective of women in distinguishing between force and power, emphasizing the pro-people use of power is valuable in peacemaking.

6. Mobilization of Public Opinion

Public opinion has to be regularly mobilized in support of peace agenda, nationally and internationally. This has to be done through organized campaigns and other effective ways of communication and advocacy.

An important method for clarifying issues and marshaling support of the wider public is public tribunals on situations/issues of militarism and conflicts. They can be a significant means to create greater awareness of causes and consequences of armed conflict, military actions (by states), and internal security laws and regimes.

A people's tribunal relies on the preparedness of victims to testify about their plight as well as the participation of credible personalities (nationally and internationally) to adjudge the evidence and testimony within a people's security and holistic justice framework. The publication of the findings of such tribunals will contribute not only to an understanding of the problems but also their solutions.

Another method will be public hearings. These hearings also will help bring out the issues in a particular situation, including the sufferings of the victims.

5. Inter-faith Cooperation

In building a platform for peace as broad as possible, inter-faith cooperation is important. In doing this convergence among religions for peace can be explored, identified and highlighted. The positive affirmations from religions envisioning peace through concepts like shalom, Salam, Shanti and Pyunghwa etc have to be highlighted. The wisdom and insights from traditions, religions and philosophies can be translated into a language that will motivate and activate the broadest sections of the people.

6. Signs of Hope

In the midst of a seemingly desperate situation, many signs of hope are visible. There are in the struggles of resistance against foreign occupation, struggles of farmers and workers against corporatization, struggles of local communities to protect their ways of life, actions of solidarity with victims of war and globalization and in the prophetic witness of many around the world committed to peace and justice. They have to be affirmed and supported.

EPILOGUE

The People's Charter goes beyond inter-state agreements. It has spiritual, cultural, philosophical and ethical foundations, which have national legal and international juridical implications.

The Charter is addressed to the peace movements of the people, peace-making organizations as well as nation states and international organizations.

The Charter is not a fixed and rigid system, but is an open declaration in the process of convergence of diverse experiences on all levels of locality, nation states, and world community. Therefore, it is an open document to be enriched further and encouraged to be adopted by all involved in peacemaking in the present global context.