

INTERNATIONAL PEACE BUREAU DISARMAMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

SEMINAR, JUNE 16 2006, GENEVA

SUMMARY REPORT

The International Peace Bureau, in cooperation with the World Council of Churches organised a seminar on the theme of its new campaign « Disarmament for Development ».

World military spending has once again exceeded \$1000 billion, more than it was at the height of the Cold War. The “long war against terrorism” engaged by the United States after September 11th give a justification to the increasing militarisation while many developing countries are facing the challenge of both poverty and armed violence. How can investment in war preparations be diverted into programmes that address the needs of the poor, the vulnerable, the victims of conflict?

In addition, the weapons themselves seriously impact development. NGO are engaged in a whole range of activities to reduce and control arms such as antipersonnel Landmines and small arms.

The International Peace Bureau has launched a new programme designed to help focus attention on these issues; in particular, to explore alternatives to the military responses of governments and private companies engaged in the 'long war against terrorism'; and to help create new partnerships worldwide.

In his welcome speech, **Samuel Kobia, President of WCC**, reminded the audience of the continuous support that his organization has given to disarmament issues. WCC has made numerous statements in favor of nuclear disarmament and has encouraged many times the civil society to put pressure on governments on this issue. It has called also for the eradication of violence in the beginning of this new century, and for interreligious effort to promote peace worldwide. Religious communities, civil society, diplomats and international organizations must work together to reduce armaments, and to make the concept “Disarmament for Development” a reality.

In his introduction, **Bruce Kent, IPB former President**, underlined the disparities that exist between military spending and social spending. He draws our attention to the fact that with only a quarter of what is spent for military purpose, poverty in the world could be eradicated. He called for development agency efforts to include in their policies the impact of arms on development. Military tradition has deep roots in our societies and military industries have a large influence. We have to change our mind, in order to reduce military spending and to divert these funds to fight against poverty at both national and international level.

MILITARY SPENDING

Professor Jacques Fontanel from the **University of Grenoble** (France) spoke about the evolution of military spending in the world since 1990. They have increased 34% between 1996 and 2005, and are distributed very unequally between different countries and parts of the World. The United States spends half of world military spending. The increase of military spending since the end of the 1990's is mainly due to the new strategic posture of western states engaged in the war against terrorism. It is also due to the economic weight that military industries represent in these countries. Military spending is also part of research and development spending because military research has

generally in the long term major civilian applications. Then there is an important role to play for civil society. It has the duty to raise awareness of governments on disarmament issues, and to denounce the lobby of militari-industries.

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Daniel Prins, diplomat at the Netherlands UN Permanent Mission, spoke about Disarmament and Development issues at the United Nations. These two concepts and the link created between them have evolved. With the end of the Cold War, military spending was for several years reduced and governments spent more on social and development policies. Then the question was how can military spending can be redistributed to development and social aims. The two concepts Disarmament and Development had been associated with a view to promote international peace (ex: UN peacekeeping operations).

Today, the problematic has changed. The focus is on Disarmament, Development and Security. How can the development capacities of states, but also their security be reinforced? Daniel Prins raised the question: does reducing armaments bring necessarily security? Opinions are divided. What is certain is that development cannot exist without security, and the contrary is also true. Then, diplomatic community has become aware of the inter connexion of the two concepts and of the impact of arms on development. However, there are practical obstacles, like the lack of coordination between the work of the different UN Committees, and the difficulty to reach consensus in the UN system.

ANTI- PERSONNEL LANDMINES

Tamar Gabelnick, International Manager of the ICBL, spoke of the effects of landmines on development. In the “Landmine Monitor”, we can read that landmines or Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) contaminate 84 countries, more than 200.000km² and the clearance costs \$400 millions each year.

The most affected countries are those who suffer the most from poverty and under-development. The existence of landmines and ERW in developing countries is an obstacle to economic development. People can not move, because roads and bridges are blocked. They have a lot of difficulties to feed themselves, because fields are contaminated. Landmines kill also the animals that live on their fields. Then families are obliged to move in less productive areas. Moreover, healthcare system is also affected. Survivors of landmines must be treated which costs money.

ICBL fight for the universalisation of the treaty on landmines. The signatories have the obligation to eliminate all the landmines on their territory within 10 years. It's a way to make the governments responsible.

Ruth Bottomley, representative of **Norwegian People's Aid**, who works in Cambodia, is also engaged in this thought on how can local communities participate in Mine Action. Local people have an important role to play in this field. It can be in using their knowledge of a specific local economic situation, or their knowledge of the geography of a territory, which has to be cleared. They can play an important role also in prevention and landmine education. Finally, they have a role to play in the clearance itself. NPA have conducted a pilot project in Angola to study how local communities can be involved in Mine Action in a concrete way. Mine Action is too centralised, it needs more flexibility to give an appropriate answer to each specific local situation. Moreover, the technology used in clearance is not appropriate. It doesn't bring enough safety, and it doesn't encourage employment of local people in clearance. Mine Action has to be reorganised around local community and has to answer the challenge of security and development.

SMALL ARMS

Joseph Dube, representative of the **International Action Network on Small Arms** (IANSA) came to speak about the impact of small arms on development and of his experience in South Africa. Small arms have an economic and a human cost. It costs \$4 billions to produce small arms, but it costs \$100 billions to treat the victims of armed violence. As with landmines, countries are more affected, the less developed they are. Armed violence has a serious impact on development, on health, on productivity and on psychology. The only solution is to reduce the arms supply and find other business with countries that have to face conflicts. In Africa, only Egypt and South Africa make arms. The problem is the transfer of arms between Western countries and developing countries. That is a crucial and a current problem, as the UN Review Conference on Small Arms opens in New York on June 26.

Valerie Yankey Waynes, **UN Institute for Disarmament Research**, showed us, through tables and diagrams that armed violence has a real impact on economic development. Through the example of three African countries that have lived through conflicts (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ghana), she has studied their impact on Growth. She called for development agencies to work more closely with International Organizations to elaborate their policies. And civil society has an important role to play to encourage this collaboration.

In conclusion, **Colin Archer**, **Secretary General of the International Peace Bureau** underlined the fact that military spending is not currently a theme of debate in the United Nations, and that it is the role of civil society to draw the attention of governments to this urgent problem. Think tanks, politics, development agencies must work together on military spending issues.
