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## CONCLUSION

The tragic war in Iraq, as well as many other contemporary armed conflicts, has reminded us of the high price of militarism and of the military-led response to the challenge of terrorism.

### **Making the challenge**

It is a political tragedy that so many billions of dollars are being poured into an apparently bottomless pit. It is also a moral scandal, given the colossal human needs around the world - needs which could be met if the world's great powers could only come to develop a different set of priorities. Helping them - encouraging them, pressuring them - to reach that different set of choices is the task of civil society. This represents a serious challenge to decision-makers, one that will entail disruption to many cosy relationships. But for the sake of the majority world, the 3-4 billion poor and disadvantaged people on this planet, and especially those communities who continue to suffer the effects of war and weaponry, such a challenge must be made.

### **A big tent**

The human security 'community' (if such a thing really exists) can be considered as a 'big tent', allowing many different approaches and embracing a range of philosophies that all have the comprehensive welfare - i.e. security in all its aspects - of the human being at their core. But we hope to have shown in this brief analysis that the good work done by the official commissions and networks needs to be supplemented by a more radical understanding of the obstacles to human security in today's world. This is a world dominated by

vested interests and military machinery, and subject to a process of globalisation rushing headlong in the direction of both accelerating inequality and ecological disaster.

### **Civil society responses**

The range of civil society responses to this situation is almost infinite, and - since civil society is divided into all kinds of cooperating and competing interests - in some cases contradictory. For example, the views of the National Rifle Association USA and the International Action Network on Small Arms are diametrically opposed. Yet both represent segments of civil society. Many people complain about the profusion, and diffusion, of NGOs and other citizens' associations. While duplication of effort can indeed be a danger, it can also be argued that duplication is even necessary in order to reach all corners of society with a strong and effective message.

It is also evident that experience of coalition-building (at all geographical levels) has grown rapidly in recent years with the communications revolution. Many coalitions have hundreds, even thousands, of partner groups. Large organisations like Amnesty and Greenpeace are constantly cited as examples of countervailing civil society influence, 'big players' in a globalised world of decision-making. However these are in fact rather untypical examples of just one type of civil society group, the international non-governmental organisation or 'INGO'. Other categories, according to Prof. Mary Kaldor, would include 'old' and 'new' social movements; think-tanks and commissions;



transnational civic networks; 'new' nationalist and fundamentalist groupings; and 'new' anti-capitalist movements.

"The array of organizations and groups through which individuals have a voice at global levels of decision-making represents a new form of global politics that parallels and supplements formal democracy at the national level."

(Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: an Answer to War*, Polity, 2003)

In the field of disarmament-development, the level of civil society mobilising has so far been weak (with certain exceptions such as the highly successful Ban Landmines campaign). The fact that the UN and its member states abandoned the terrain for nearly 20 years is certainly one explanation. The effort on military spending is at present largely confined to research institutes and (in a limited number of countries) lobbyists at the national level. Each of the different weapons systems has its community of specialists and activists, but there are not so many links made across the categories. This is something the IPB is helping to provide. In future we wish to bring together both communities affected by war and different kinds of weapons, and campaigning movements seeking to ban or limit those weapons and reduce military budgets.

### Partnerships for solidarity

Organisations striving to promote peace and development in areas seriously affected by war and weaponry have a wide range of needs. The conditions in which they operate are extremely difficult. Violent incidents may be occurring, or threatened, or recently ended. Obstacles to carrying out their work include repression, fear, loss of equipment or trained personnel, and of course poverty and lack of adequate finance. They need protection, resources, political and moral support.

Groups outside the area, or abroad, may be able to assist in specific ways. Not only with finance or by helping identify (or influence) funders, but also by securing media coverage, getting access to political leadership, providing training, or by setting up twinning arrangements. The list of possible forms of collaboration is long.

'Outside' groups have their own needs, the nature of which depend on whether they are themselves in a conflict zone or in a 'peaceful' area or country, one where it is easier to organise peace/disarmament campaigns or solidarity programmes. They will need testimonies and reports, analyses of how weapons are used within the conflict and how they effect communities, as well as photo/video/audio documentary material. Decades of experience now exists among the development, humanitarian and peace communities worldwide as to how best to develop these relationships and how best to meet the needs.

The IPB and its worldwide network of member organisations – the work of which the reader will have glimpsed in these pages – represent but one fragment of a wide field of endeavour. Every day, every year, a new start is made on the task of rolling back militarism. We invite you to join us.





