The Helsinki+50 People's Declaration on common security and human rights

Drafted by Nordic Peace Alliance's working group on Helsinki+50

Preamble

Inspired by the Helsinki Final Act signed on the 1 st of August 1975, we, civil society organizations and individuals from Europe and beyond, call for the reinvention and revitalization of cooperation for common security and human rights in Europe. The conference in Helsinki paved the way for several positive achievements, serving as the closest thing to a peace agreement for post-World War II Europe during the continued Cold War period. The allied victory in WWII led to the formation of the UN and the adoption of indivisible human rights and the UN Charter which is the basis of international law. The Helsinki Final Act built on these achievements and promoted economic, social, cultural, environmental, scientific, and humanitarian cooperation. Thus, the Helsinki Final Act created the necessary environment for détente, arms reduction, and a dynamic peace and human rights movement of global importance.

Today the world and Europe once more need a revival of the Helsinki spirit. We, civil society organisations and people's movements, commit ourselves to build upon the whole Helsinki Final Act to address the issues of today. The need for renewed and expanded cooperation on the issues addressed in 1975 as well as the issues of the modern age is even more necessary today and must include the questions of migration, climate and women's rights.

We call for renewed efforts for the revitalization and expansion of a European security and peace architecture and a commitment to indivisible human rights without double standards. We are likewise committed to the creation of a Eurasian architecture for peace, cooperation, and security that is based on the Helsinki principles and is capable of addressing regional and global conflicts in the world in accordance with international law.

We acknowledge that there was an overwhelming dominance of male diplomats, state leaders and journalists when the Helsinki Final Act was signed. In a renewed Helsinki spirit, women must have a central role in the development of a modern security and peace architecture that acknowledges the necessity of gender representation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction.

We call especially upon democratic membership organizations open to anyone sharing their goals to take up the torch from 1975 and use it once more in the interest of humanity and all life on this planet.

We, the undersigned, inspired by the principles of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the UN charter,

· Reaffirming our commitment to peaceful coexistence, common security, disarmament for social well-being and environmental protection, and respect for human rights,

· Reasserting our commitment to the inviolability of State borders as guaranteed by international law and obligation to refrain from the use of force or the threat thereof in international relations.

· Guided by the belief in the equal value of all human beings and the indivisibility of their rights,

· Recognizing the inherent dignity of every person and the urgent need to uphold shared commitments in both word and deed, and

· Committed to international cooperation that is free from double standards and driven not by the short term interests of states or corporations but by a common duty to humanity and future generations,

Declare the following:

1. We see the right to equal sovereignty for all states including both security, environmental, economic, cultural and other aspects in accordance with international law as central for a renewed Helsinki spirit as long as it does not cause harm to others.

2. We support the development of frameworks for common security, in which the security of one is understood to be inseparable from the security of all.

3. We reaffirm that all human rights—civil, political, economic, social, and cultural—are interdependent and often also indivisible, while recognizing their political nature and need for pluralism and democratic processes in determining them.

4. We especially emphasize the social rights of workers and family farmers, indigenous peoples and migrants as a fundamental pillar of common security.

5. We emphasize the right to conscientious objection to military service and call for it to be enshrined in international human rights’ frameworks.

6. We call for proactive and early conflict prevention and resolution efforts, emphasizing the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women at all levels, including through the effective use of OSCE mechanisms and gender-responsive peacebuilding tools.

7. We recognise the rights and protection of refugees and asylum seekers; proposing neutral humanitarian corridors for divided families and guarantees of the right of keeping family ties, visa arrangements and safe travels.

8. We recognise the right to truth-seeking and the importance of memory transmission and intergenerational and international healing with our common history as humanity as cornerstone.

9. While we fully and in good faith commit to the Helsinki Final Act ‘Principle vii’ on human rights we reject the instrumentalization or selective invocation of human rights as justification for interference driven by strategic, geopolitical, or economic interests. Advocacy for human dignity must remain free from co-optation by national or corporate agendas.

10. We recognize the right and the responsibility of civil society and social movements to raise concerns across borders in defense of human rights.

11. We affirm that authentic internal democracy in a country cannot be separated from the freedom of speech and freedom of association, nor from recognizing the global disparities in military power, control of natural resources, corporate economic influence, and technological control that shape national and international policy.

12. We affirm the principle of non-intervention from one or more states in the internal affairs of other states.

13. We urge all actors—governments, international institutions, corporations, and civil society—to align their actions with their professed commitments, ensuring consistency between stated values and lived realities.

14. We call for renewed dialogue with all governments, especially those that are neutral and non-aligned, as well as with the United Nations and regional organizations, to strengthen multilateral security, economic, and cultural cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and develop better common institutions.

15. We underline the importance of regional agreements while emphasizing that such agreements do not allow those signing such regional agreements to act against international law in other regions.

16. We emphasize that peace, security, and global disarmament are essential for social well-being, environmental sustainability, and the protection of future generations. The militarization of international relations poses a grave threat to humanity and the planet.

17. We stress the need to address the climate crisis and the loss of biological diversity as fundamental human security challenges requiring global solidarity and immediate action.

18. Since the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, a majority of the world's states have taken an important step forward toward common security through the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, (2021). We urge all states to sign and ratify that treaty and thereby abstain from nuclear deterrence.

19. We emphasize that digital and cyber security are essential components of human security and sovereignty. The militarization of cyberspace and the use of autonomous weapon systems, disinformation, mass surveillance, and AI-driven inequality threaten fundamental freedoms, democratic governance, and international peace. We call for the development of human rights-based, transparent, and globally coordinated frameworks for digital governance and cyberpeace.

20. We recognize that all of the above are interdependent claims that require simultaneous efforts to do away with the immense economic inequalities and the concentration of power.

21. We pledge to contribute to a peaceful, just, and ecologically sustainable world order, grounded in equality, nonviolence, dialogue, and respect for the integrity of all life.

In witness whereof, we endorse this declaration as an expression of our shared values and intentions, and invite others—governments, organizations, and individuals alike—to join us in its spirit.