

A SPIRITUAL AGENDA FOR WORLD PEACE

by Soami Divyanand

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PEACE AND SECURITY – VISION VERSUS FACTS

In the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, the member states declare,

We the Peoples of the United Nations Determined

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind ...

Article 1 of the Charter defines the purposes of the United Nations

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace; ...

4. To be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

...

In 2000, the General Assembly renewed this pledge in the UN Millennium Declaration,

We will spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States, which has claimed more than 5 million lives in the past decade. We will also seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

Over the past sixty years, the UN has struggled hard indeed to assert its role as guarantor for global peace, and yet it appears as if it had not been successful. With increasing frustration, its officers and representatives realize that their role is confined to that of peace wishers rather than peace makers.

The Millennium Declaration in itself was a confession by the 191 member states that so far they had utterly failed to fulfill the same pledge made 50 years earlier. Rather, since 1945 the danger resulting from weapons of mass destruction has multiplied:

28 000 nuclear warheads are currently counted worldwide, sufficient to destroy life on Earth many times over.

Apart from this biggest threat, the actual death toll of conventionally fought wars and conflicts since the end of World War II is devastating enough.

Since 1945, **80 million** people are estimated to have been victims to mass killings worldwide, whether in politically, ideologically, religiously or culturally motivated so called purges, in genocides, in eliminating dissidents, in civil or in interstate wars.

Between 1945 and 1997 alone, 201 wars have been counted (AKUF, Hamburger Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kriegsursachenforschung, also source of the following data). Out of those, two thirds were inner state conflicts, while only a fourth was interstate; out of the 29 wars going on in 2002, even 27 were internal!

Wars do not only cause death but all sorts of upheaval, among them floods of refugees. In the mid nineties, 18 million refugees were counted as a consequence of war, plus another 24 million displaced in their own country.

Wars rarely pay for the attacker,

Only one fifth of the wars waged between 1945 and 1997 ended in the victory of the attacker.

In one third of these wars, the attacked party could hold its ground.

One tenth simply ended in the suspension of military action, another tenth in an armistice or an agreement of compromise.

More than two thirds of the interstate conflicts ended in the *status quo ante* - nothing gained but many lives lost.

Though most wars are triggered by selfish motives, yet wars seldom pay for the attacker.

The number of civilian victims is many times higher than that of military casualties - that trend is increasing and is not reversed by so called precision weapons.

REASONS FOR VIOLENT CONFLICT

In a great number of the violent conflicts and wars of the past sixty years, religion and quasi-religious ideologies have played a crucial role. It is generally known that all the major religions command non-violence, tolerance and love, and it is as well known that a third if not even more of all the wars fought in the world even today are partly or entirely inspired and supported by religions.

All Religions teach the Golden Rule according to which we should treat others as we wish to be treated by them. All religions likewise proclaim the struggle between good and evil on the soul's passage from darkness to light. Often, this has been misunderstood as the struggle between so-called believers and nonbelievers and has served to justify bloodshed in the name of religion and of God.

Though the sacred scriptures are testimonies of that eternal, unending Path to Enlightenment – the Eternal Divine Law – those scriptures can only convey to the reader what the reader is able to comprehend. While some derive from them overwhelming spiritual motivation others read the same texts only to misquote them to excuse their own hatred, violence and war. In

fact, there is hardly any wrong, evil or crime that has not been justified by some holy verses ready at hand. As long as the approach is emotional and intellectual the interpretation will vary with each and every individual. Therefore, codes of ethics, however well meant, will in themselves be of no consequence if pronounced by people lacking actual experience of revelation.

God or the Supreme Being is perfect, almighty and beyond time and space, hence everything emerging from Him must reflect the same qualities (Psalm 19, 7: *The law of the Lord is perfect*). What is perfect is in no need of change, but everlasting and valid for all mankind. No religion can claim sole representation of that law because the true, unchanging God has been conveying the same message from the beginning to the end. It can be ascertained in meditation alone because “God is spirit and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (check quote)

It may be helpful to concede that every faith tradition comprises a human element as well: The social and cultural expressions of any given faith are outside the mystical realm; they involve material elements because cult and rite, collective prayer and hymns depend on physical acts on the part of the worshipper; on material houses of worship, on cities or lands deemed holy; on material objects or means of worship, on special times for prayer and worship, on books. Likewise, the organization of any human society belongs to the earthly realm which is confined by time and space. Since all matter is subject to change, those things are, too. Hence, eternal claims for anything involving matter are against the divine law of nature. Such claims to this day have been causing untold suffering to human beings who find themselves oppressed by rigid rules and regulations devoid of divine love and mercy.

In all times, God has worked on Earth through his enlightened messengers. Since they all have been deriving their enlightenment from the same Supreme Lord it is only natural that their message should be one and the same in essence. **Direct inner revelation is the only means to attain understanding of the Law of God.** From this safe perspective, diverse religious culture and tradition does not lend itself to be exploited for political power, segregation and discrimination. Rather, it is a cause for shared joy and mutual enrichment, comparable to the diversity of flowers enhancing the beauty of a garden. **Those aspects of religious cults which are in discrepancy with the ethical norms of another will not be disputed: Amicable dialogue is the way to common understanding.**

Religious leaders have certain advantages over political institutions in generating initiatives for peace. The world religions define themselves as universal, implying that their ministers ideally should be above all partiality and group interest. No politician, except perhaps a handful of those working in global institutions can afford to show this type of disinterest since their obligations are toward the political institutions they are answerable to. Any politician acting against national interests will be suspected of failing their country. They cannot publicly advocate what they personally find just in the wider interest of mankind if those interests seem to conflict with the national ones they represent.

Ministers or people of religion ideally feel answerable only to the Supreme Being according to the ancient codes laid down in their respective scriptures. It follows that they should render their services to the whole Creation.

THE REASONS FOR LACK OF PEACE: A SPIRITUAL ANALYSIS

1. **Perversion of Religion.** All religions teach the Golden Rule, according to which we should treat others as we wish to be treated by them. All religions likewise proclaim the eternal struggle between good and evil on the soul's passage from darkness to Light. Often, the latter has been misunderstood to denote a struggle between so called believers and non-believers and has served to justify bloodshed in the name of God.
2. **The United Nations: A Unique Instrument for Peace Diminished to a Toothless Tiger.** According to the Charter and the Millennium Declaration, the United Nations has been invested with the clear global mandate to end war. In reality, however, the nation states have proved very reluctant to resign some of their power in the interest of a genuinely collective, empowered and effective global defense system. Its notorious underfunding, with only 1, 5 % of the world's military spending, is a telltale sign. Further, the very structure of the Security Council reflects the unwillingness of the powerful founding nations to renounce their privileged position in the interest of global balance. Thus, the lack of representation, the two class system of permanent seats as against rotation as well as the veto power and other privileges of the five have from the outset carried the ancient system of national predominance and spheres of influence into the new system, eroding the original vision.
3. **Lust for Power.** Much of the 20th century has been dominated by the strife for superpowerdom. While for 35 years the balance between the USA and the Soviet Union held the world in the grip of the Cold War, new powers will rise to contend with the one remaining superpower. In the future, the USA may face challenges from the fast developing China and India or from a religiously united phalanx of Middle Eastern states.
4. **Fear of Insecurity.** It is easy to convince a nation that it is under attack. That done, it is even easier to convince the same nation that a preemptive strike is an effective and necessary step to be taken. Most wars of aggression have been justified as unavoidable measure of defense.
5. **Economic Selfishness.** There is no denying the fact that war is a highly lucrative business for the arms industry and trade which have a vital interest to fuel wars to create markets. Similarly, the demand of energy in industrialized countries has led to a merciless struggle for oil. Some countries will not hesitate to wage wars to safeguard its supply.
6. **Social Injustice / The Suffering of The Poor.** As predictably as a law of nature, the poor will not resign to being at the losing end of the social scale. 800 million going hungry every day, 1, 1 billion suffering from extreme poverty, another 1, 4 billion living in moderate poverty will not beg but demand their most fundamental human right for survival and decent living conditions.

It Is Five Minutes to Twelve

"Never was the danger as great as today. An atomic war draws nearer if we do not start thinking about a new international control system ... I worry that the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is beginning to fade. I worry that atomic weapons will fall into the hands of dictators or terrorists. I worry also about the nuclear arsenal of democratic states, because as long as these weapons exist there is no absolute guarantee against the catastrophic consequences of theft, sabotage or an accident.", says Mohamed El Baradei, nobel/prize winning head of IAEA.

One thing is sure: We cannot wait for another fifty years and another UN anniversary declaration. The coming years may be crucial for survival. **We have to change things now.**

Or, as Albert Einstein said,

“I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.”

SOLUTIONS

I. A FORUM FOR THE OF THE UNBIASSED STUDY OF SACRED SCRIPTURES OF THE WORLD RELIGIONS

Perversion of Religion will be checked by probing into the core of the real messages underlying the sacred scriptures. The teachings of all the world religions are based on holy scriptures, which are founded on revelation and, hence, are one in essence. Therefore we propose:

A. Unbiased Comparative Study of the sacred scriptures: Since the sacred scriptures of the world religions are testimonies of revealed knowledge interfaith

dialogue is proposed to focus on them to explore common spiritual ground. Whatever emerges as a common treasure will flow into religious education worldwide while discrepancies will be respected and taken up one by one in an effort to probe into deeper meanings. Such dialogue can even be conducted through the internet. For this purpose, ACWR offers a website on which contributions from members of different faith traditions are collected and further invited to explore common ground: www.centreworldreligions.org.

B. Meditation. What we receive from God inside we will reflect in our words and actions, “A man speaks from the abundance of his heart.” We propose that every meeting begin with silent meditation. In a spirit of experiment, teachers may be invited to compare their methods and the results.

Meditation infuses guidance from inside, which is perfect because it comes from God. Unbiased study of sacred scriptures and the practice of meditation will therefore revive religion in a way that it will prove a strong force in overcoming hatred and violence and instead will spread love – the only purpose of religion.

As Mahatma Gandhi has proved only decades ago, even a single person can by peaceful means carry victory over a highly armed nation if his or her actions are directly guided by the Supreme Power through inversion or meditation. It was that overwhelming motivating power and not his mere knowledge of Gita and Bible that turned this frail man into a moral giant! Therefore, mere proclamation of ethical norms will not do.

Such a shift to the motivating force at the heart of religious practice is desperately needed. Revelations that are received inside in meditation will cause a change strong enough to prevail in the most critical circumstances.

As God has never failed us in the past He never will, now and in future. Belief derived from that source can move mountains.

Lust for Power has its root in the human ego which all religions diagnose as a hindrance on the Path of Enlightenment. The Path that the mystics teach is for the meek or humble and in itself helps overcome arrogance.

II. AN EMPOWERED UNITED NATIONS

Fear of Insecurity. Wherever spiritual awareness dawns the fear of threat from other human beings will decrease since they will be recognized as members of the same human family, God residing in every heart.

Preamble: It may be pointed out that the foundation of NATO and its successful peacemaking over the years is proof enough that regional defense mechanisms work more effectively than a single global body. Similar existing regional or continental interstate organizations and alliances – foremost the European Union and the African Union, but

also ASEAN as well as cooperation agreements between states with major influence in their region – e. g. between China, India and Russia in Asia - will increasingly serve as a basis for effective peacemaking and arbitration in their respective sphere of influence. Statistically speaking, peace efforts from a third, neutral party have proved to be highly successful. They can be expected to be the more acceptable the more they combine the neutrality of a body of states with a „local approach“, i. e. arbitration within a given continent, without interference from outside. Intimate knowledge of the cultural, social and political background and mentality of the conflicting parties on the one hand and collective, charter-adhering decision-making on the other will prove a powerful mechanism.

It is time to revive the original vision: Franklin D. Roosevelt attached to the foundation of the United Nations a bold vision of a new era of peace:

... the end of a system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliances, the spheres of influence, the balances of power, and all the other expedients that have been tried for centuries / and have always failed. We propose to substitute for all these, a universal organization in which all peace/loving nations will finally have a chance to join.

In his concept, the nation states give the full mandate to safeguard interstate peace and international security to the United Nations where it is handled collectively and therefore more wisely and disinterestedly than by individual governments.

We obviously need a solution to the problem of superpowerdom – the desire of one or more nations to dominate others, to challenge their sovereignty and to pose a risk to international peace. It may be remembered that with the change of time this threat, too, may shift from one nation to another; what may concern the USA now may be true of China or India in the future, unless the international community finds a solid, sustainable solution.

- 1) Such a solution depends on the United Nations being an empowered, representative and democratic organization in all its parts. Since the Security Council is the central instrument for international peace these principles must apply to it more than to any other body within the UN. It must be based on the equal status of each member state.
- 2) We therefore propose to decentralize the Security Council and to turn it into four Continental Security Councils, each with a mandate to maintain peace on its respective continent. We further propose a one vote, one country system: **There shall be no veto power, no discrepancy between permanent and non-permanent membership.** Each member state sends its representative.
- 3) The mandate of the Continental Security Councils will be
 - **to stop war and violence**
 - to bring about and coordinate disarmament
 - to maintain peace
 - to provide the means to eradicate poverty and establish social justice through the fund flow from disarmament and thus to allay one of the crucial motivating forces behind rebellion and war.

Each CSC must have a clear mandate to take every action to stop war, border violation, killing and bloodshed. Therefore, its collective decisions must be binding on its member states.

- 4) The borders of nation states shall be well defined and their status quo registered with the respective CSC. Any disputes, whether old or new, should likewise be brought before the CSC for an amicable solution. Until a decision is reached, the status quo will prevail. Violent action to obtain territorial changes will be regarded as a breach of international law and will thus be punished.

Border security will be maintained by the nation states; each state will defend its borders against violation from outside. Any violation will be closely observed by the respective CSC. The CSC will fine the aggressor to compensate for all losses of life as well as material damage on the part of the attacked country. For that purpose, each CSC will be complemented by a court for international law. Military assistance will be granted by the CSC only on request from the attacked country and in cases where a conflict cannot be solved bilaterally. Military action will serve the sole purpose of stopping violence and war.

Without such a request, the CSC will interfere only after due observation and lapse of time, again with the sole purpose of ending violent action. The CSC will ensure that no third nation state will interfere directly or indirectly in the border disputes of its member states. Troops of mixed national origin (“blue helmets”) will be supplied in the above cases for the sole purpose of ending violent action.

- 5) Internal security and peace will remain to be an internal affair. Only in cases where a (religiously, ethnically or otherwise defined) group of the population feels collectively threatened; where mass killings are committed or to be feared, that group can seek help from the respective CSC. The CSC will involve all parties concerned in negotiating a peaceful solution; any CSC military action will follow the above principles and serve the sole purpose of ending and checking further outbreaks of violence. Such interference may also involve disarmament of paramilitary groups (militia).
- 6) The CSCs will by all means refrain from interfering in each others’ jurisdiction. In this way, intercontinental conflicts will be completely ruled out.
- 7) The proposed security system depends on the reliability of mutual assistance in compliance with CSC decisions. In the same way as the respective CSC will be obliged to grant military assistance as outlined the member states will be obliged to supply troops and armament in compliance with CSC resolutions, **for the sole purpose and to the extent of stopping an armed conflict.**
- 8) The member states will be called upon to make any changes in their national constitutions necessary to comply with their military obligations toward the respective CSC, which will be strictly confined to peace missions.

III: DISARMAMENT

Since the security of each member state will be multiplied by the obligatory assistance of all other CSC member states in compliance with CSC resolutions

an optimum in security can be expected with a military spending cut by 50 %.

According to the Grimmet Report 2005, arms procurement amounts to 20 – 30 % of an average military budget. With the decentralization of the security council system in place and inter-continental conflicts ruled out, what remains will be border or internal conflicts, which can be contained with conventional weapons.

It is recommended that 50 % of the remaining military personnel deal with tasks of homeland security and disaster management while the other half serve national or border security.

Franklin D. Roosevelt in his famous speech on the four freedoms that he regarded as basic human rights had a radical vision about disarmament:

“The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that

no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor --anywhere in the world."

IV. EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF ARMS PRODUCTION AND PROLIFERATION

Economic Selfishness reveals greed. Greed perpetuates itself. It will never lead to satisfaction or saturation but fuel the desire for more. Therefore, those dynamics have to be stopped. If the attention is instead trained to turn inside this will expand the heart and inspire to turn to means of income that are honest, constructive and beneficial for the society.

Arms Development, Production and Proliferation:

Without strict and effective control of the arms development, production and proliferation, there is no hope for a successful global disarmament project.

We therefore propose that the states united in the UN invest the Continental Security Councils with the exclusive authority to control the entire production and delivery of military weapons in excess of the contingents of conventional weapons needed for national border security and to ban under penalty all trade with other recipients. Since the CSCs will not present a threat to each other and will therefore see no need to continue sophisticating military machinery, funds for the development of new arms technologies can be deflected to more constructive and gainful technologies.

Such a global defense system will offer the basic framework for eliminating atomic warheads, biological, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction once and for all. Their systematic dispensation and a strict ban on any further research, development and production will be one of the major goals of this disarmament proposal.

Following the principle that the danger of military aggression will only be completely ruled out when no state has the ability to attack another, further savings in defense budgets will have to be made which may equally flow into development.

V. PEACE AND SECURITY THROUGH DEVELOPMENT

A WORLD DIVIDED INTO RICH AND POOR

The UN Charter obliges the member states “to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom”.

This obligation has been confirmed by all 191 member states in the **Millennium Declaration** of 2000 and in the „Millennium Development Goals“ pledge to halve extreme poverty by 2015.

The very need for such a pledge 55 years after the foundation of the UN confirms the fact that the gap between rich and poor in the world has been widening to a dramatic extent instead of being closed:

1.1 billion, i. e. one sixth, of the global population suffers from extreme poverty (World Bank index: income of less than one dollar per capita per day). They are trapped in a vicious circle from which only generous, accountable and long-term assistance will offer a way out to enable them to develop a capital stock and supply their families with more than just the most basic, insufficient food for their own daily consumption.

Another 1.4 billion worldwide suffer from „moderate poverty“, i. e. lack of clean drinking water, sanitary facilities, basic health care, decent shelter, education. If we add up both groups

40 % OF MANKIND ARE POOR!

While in the developing countries in Asia, particularly in China and India, the economic boom is beginning to show positive effects on the rate of extreme poverty (although one third of the respective populations are still estimated to live on an income below 1 \$), Africa is still the forgotten continent. Unfortunately, its economic situation on the whole has been steadily deteriorating.

Every day, about 15 000 Africans die from neglect. They die from malnutrition, malaria, AIDS, tuberculosis and other infections that all have their roots in extreme poverty.

Assistance that Africa has so far received from the North has been totally inadequate. While back **in 1970** (and repeatedly confirmed) the **rich countries pledged to give 0.7 % of their GNP as development assistance** (*UN General Assembly Resolution 2626 (XXV), October 24, 1970, para. 43*), the **actual official assistance**, with few exceptions, is no more than approximately **0, 2 % (US: 0,145 %)**. Out of that amount, a considerable percentage flows directly into emergency aid such as famine relief, i. e. with no sustainable effect.

Countries with an extremely modest tax income (a great percentage of their population unable to contribute any tax at all) depend on help from outside. (This analysis is largely based on Jeffrey D. Sachs, *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*)

Though the reasons for this sad situation are manifold, one thing is clear: This earth yields enough food for all and humanity is to blame for every human being that dies of hunger.

The most obvious and greatest waste of all, we suggest, lies in the excessive military expenses worldwide, especially in the ongoing race for new weapons – those of mass destruction and conventional ones alike. It seems we have not learnt from what President Eisenhower said in 1953:

" Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children... This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron. "

A few examples may suffice to illustrate the

direct connection between basic want and expenses for costly armament within one and the same country:

CHINA – purchased 26 combat aircraft from Russia in a deal whose total cost could have provided safe water for one year to 1450 million people now without safe water.

INDIA – ordered 20 MiG 29-fighter aircraft from Russia at a cost that could have provided basic education to all 15 million girls out of school.

IRAN – bought two submarines from Russia at a cost that could have provided essential medicines to the country several times over – 13 percent of Iran's population has no access to health care.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA – ordered 28 missiles from America for an amount that could have immunised all the unimmunised 120,000 children and provided safe water for three years to 3.5 million people.

MALAYSIA – ordered two warships from the UK at a cost that could have provided safe water for 25 years to its people.

The mere production and trading of arms increases the likelihood of wars being kindled to create more demand in more expensive, sophisticated technologies – an endless spiral in demand and supply. Wars, in turn, leave destruction and new levels of poverty behind.

SOLUTION

Social Injustice: The Suffering of the Poor. Though the Golden Rule is firmly rooted in all faith traditions it remains mere theory as long as the impulse to care for one another does not come from inside. Spirituality infuses love for all, and that love will lead to caring and sharing.

If excessive military spending constitutes **theft** from the poor, it follows that whatever reductions are made in defense budgets to fund poverty relief will not be a matter of charity but justice!

We suggest to realize the Charter goal and the Millennium pledge as follows:

The world military expenditure in 2005 has been estimated to amount to 1 trillion dollar – 1 000 000 000 000, 00 \$.

According to research of the **Earth Institute** and the **Millennium Project**, an average

70 dollars per capita per year are needed for about ten years

to help the extremely poor to rise to the lowest step of the social ladder from which they can reach the next higher levels on their own.

To give an example: Etheopia with its population of 70 Million needs 5 billion to overcome extreme poverty as against de facto 1 billion = 14 Dollar per capita per year. (cf. Sachs)

Success depends on a well coordinated, securely funded programme that takes care of

- **food**
- **healthcare**
- **infrastructure**, such as roads (to markets)
- **electric light, clean drinking water, irrigation, fertilizers, high quality seeds**
- **basic free education for all girls and boys** plus minimum training for paramedics to teach village population in

The disgraceful 35 year struggle over adequate official development assistance while extreme poverty demands its daily death toll and the similarly notorious underfunding of the United Nations, with only 1, 5 % of the world military budget, suggest an alternative approach:

THE FUND FLOW AND WHAT IT CAN ACHIEVE

\$ 70, 00 per capita per year, for a period of at least ten years will be needed to eradicate extreme poverty.

1,1 billion extremely poor worldwide will hence need \$ 77 billion per year. Extreme poverty will be a matter of the past if from a worldwide military budget of approximately \$ 1 trillion only a thirteenth is saved!

If such a tiny fraction of global military spending is enough to save one sixth of mankind from desperate living conditions and an early death we may well consider the other 1.4 billion as well who by definition live in „moderate poverty“.

Together, these two groups are 2,5 billion or about **40 % of humanity**. This huge group will need \$ 175 billion per annum, which amounts to **25 % savings from worldwide military expenditure**.

If, however, we save 50 %, a total 500 billion will be available for development and social care worldwide so that an extra

250 billion dollars per annum are spare and can flow into large-scale projects of creating infrastructure in the developing countries.

We propose that the greater part of the funds saved through disarmament flow into development and social care programmes in the country that makes the saving, while the transfer from richer to poorer countries is second. This will have one crucial advantage: The developing countries will be the first to take care of their own poor by saving on military expenses as suggested. They will set a good example and thus be entitled to receive assistance from outside in addition to their own efforts. They will be trusted to use foreign funds wisely.

Also, in the rich countries, sharing with the poor South will be accepted if relative poverty in the northern countries themselves is addressed first. They, too, we suggest, use a considerable part of their military savings for social programmes in favour of their own citizens.

Before the rich countries of the North can be expected to considerably increase their transfer to the South the latter will have to put into practice **proportionately** the same cuts in military expenditure as the rich nations and invest them in development for the benefit of their own population. Particularly in the case of threshold countries, social benefits will include

- pensions
- unemployment benefits
- healthcare programmes.

Roosevelt wished to eliminate military weapons to an extent that states were no longer able to use military force on each other. Our proposal is modest in comparison: While the figures of the Millennium Development Project go by the premise that it will take about ten years to eradicate extreme poverty, this proposal would enable us not only to grant decent living conditions to all 2.5 billion poor but it would precipitate the process in a way that a short time could show incredible changes.

Once the international community sees the positive effects of such a scheme it may well consider further cuts in an effort to establish a world order in which no state is able to pose a military threat to another!

FAIR MARKET ACCESS AND FREE TRADE

The principle of justice versus charity is an important one because the freedom from want is a basic human right. Development assistance is designed to help the poor rise to the first step on the ladder of economic growth and independence. The next steps will depend on fair trading conditions for all: Independent of the proposed “swords into ploughshares” project, the poorest countries would be much relieved if rich nations were to discard protectionism, thus granting the poor fair access to the world market and a share in foreign exchange.

Economic protectionism is exerted in two ways: first, in the shape of deliberately imposed **barriers to trade**, such as **tariffs** and **quotas**. Second, in the shape of domestic and external producer support, primarily in the form of **subsidies**. In high-income countries, the average tariff rate on agriculture is almost double the tariff for manufactures.

Every cow in Europe gets \$2 a day in subsidies. This is more money than half the world's population get to live on each day.

It would be unacceptable to launch a global development project while continuing to bar the developing economies from fair access to the global market. Therefore, a free market, restricted only regarding standards of quality both of working conditions and products (cf. the demands of the fair trade movement) is the prerequisite for just economic opportunity. Therefore, the governments, especially of the rich nations, are asked to ensure that consumer goods from foreign countries may be imported at fair market prices in a free exchange.

It should further be mentioned that in poor countries only about 10 % of state subsidies reach the deserving while the rest flows into corruption! Therefore, such funds should be diverted to direct poverty relief.

Agriculture

In many developing countries, agriculture employs a large proportion of the labour force, whilst food consumption accounts for a large share of household income. UNCTAD notes that this means that “even small changes in agricultural employment opportunities, or prices, can have major socio-economic effects in developing countries”. Thus the role of agriculture will often be crucial. Therefore, the rich countries should in this field take special care to avoid subsidising surplus production that goes to waste.

We conclude:

FAIR TRADE CONDITIONS REFLECT THE PRINCIPLES OF RESPECT AND ACCEPTANCE AND ARE INDISPENSABLE IN A RELATIONSHIP OF SHARING AND CARING.

CONCLUSIONS.

In 2003, General Secretary Kofi Annan spoke these memorable words of admonition:

We have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded... I believe the time is ripe for a hard look at fundamental issues, and at the structural changes that may be needed in order to strengthen (the Organisation). History is a harsh judge: it will not forgive us if we let this moment pass. (BBC News 2003)

The original vision was a UN endowed with the mandate and authority to prevent war and to ensure decent living conditions worldwide. We should return to that vision.

It demands

- that the family of the world religions overcome strife, hatred and violence through
comparative study of their sacred scriptures, the testimonies of a common,
timeless spiritual essence,
and through meditation in order to tap the same source of revelation that their
preceptors derived their perfect wisdom from;
- that the UN be empowered through a representative and truly democratic Security
Council system that functions in a decentralized, i. e. continentwise, manner to ensure
regional self-determination, effective and collective peace-making and thus acceptance
as a powerful instrument of security;
- that an initiative for massive disarmament be launched worldwide with the aim that
the nation states are no longer able to attack each-other and
- that the funds thus released be used to eradicate poverty through development to
realise the vision of social justice and peace.
