

## **Message for the Article 9 and Article 12 Conference Puntarenas, Costa Rica**

**Colin Archer, Secretary-General of the International Peace Bureau**

July 16, 2009,

Let me begin by telling you a little about myself. It's always good to know where the speaker is coming from.

I was brought up in the 1950s in England, in the shadow of World War 2. It was an ambiguous message that I absorbed: on the one hand that war was the most terrible thing one could imagine; and yet that sometimes it was necessary, to prevent invasion by a fascist dictatorship. But in the 1960s and early 70s, when I learned my politics at university and in a large number of NGO campaigns, the perspective was different. The context was the seemingly endless Cold War division of the world and the great fear was of nuclear destruction. My first active involvement with the peace movement was in 1971 when I began university studies. At the same time the North-South division of the world became more and more evident, especially to me after 15 months living and travelling in the Caribbean and Latin America. This was in 1973-4, the year of the military coup in Chile against Salvador Allende. I didn't get to Costa Rica but I did learn a lot from my travels around Guatemala and Mexico. Back in the UK, my first employment after graduation was as Coordinator of a Third World Centre in the University of Manchester. This led to many political and educational campaigns. Later I spent 10 years in adult education, but returned to my peace movement roots in the mid-80s. So when I was asked to take over the running of the International Peace Bureau in 1990 I was more than ready!

It is hard work, but I also regard it as a special privilege to be able to cooperate with so many wonderful and dedicated peace activists on all continents and in many different sectors and professions.

I've known Peace Boat for well over 10 years now, we have collaborated on many projects and I've undertaken a couple of trips on the ship in the Mediterranean. I think what attracts me most is that the organization manages to combine a deep commitment to world peace with practical forms of solidarity. I know that the Peace Boat experience has influenced in a very positive way many thousands of younger and older Japanese, as well as people from other countries. So thank you Peace Boat! for organizing this conference, and for inviting me; and of course a special thanks too to Prof Carlos Vargas, to Marisa Loves and their team of helpers here in Costa Rica. Their hospitality has been wonderful, and I know they have put in a huge amount of work to make this event possible.

Let me say a few things to introduce the International Peace Bureau. As some of you know, the IPB has a long history, going back to 1891, when the peace movements of different countries decided they needed a permanent office to coordinate their work. Since that time we have been through

many ups and downs, and a large number of wars. You know that peace movements always do well out of wars! Our membership always goes up...Well now we have 300 member organizations (including Peace Boat and IALANA, I am happy to say) in 70 countries.

The main focus of our work is **Disarmament for Development**, which is a long term programme covering 3 main areas:

1. Military vs. social (or development) spending;
2. The effects of weapons on development, and campaigns against them;
3. Issues used to justify military investments, and the use of weapons, such as “terrorism”, national security, and conflicts over natural resources such as oil, gas, water, and minerals.

Now let us look around the world scene for a moment. What is the most important news? Last week you could have thought from the mass media that it was the death of Michael Jackson! But we've also had the Iran election, the N.Korean missile tests, the Obama-Medvedev talks, upheaval and repression in China. Here in Central America the big issue has been the crisis in Honduras and I am sure we are all hoping that President Oscar Arias will be successful in his mediation efforts.

But the backdrop to all these dramas is the ongoing economic crisis, which is affecting the developing world especially severely. The G8 don't seem to have come up with any very immediate or hopeful solutions (\$20 billion for agriculture seems frankly a rather feeble gesture), and indeed the criticism made by President Lula and others – to the effect that the G20 has far more legitimacy than the G8, given the way the multi-polar world is developing – seems rather accurate.

In its latest forecast published at the end of June, the World Bank estimates that the total amount of net private inflows of capital to poor countries, which had already almost halved from 2007 to 2008, is likely to drop again this year to just 363bn. Compare this with 1.3 trillion two years ago. We know that the effects are already dramatic, especially for those working in sectors dependent on exports.

But this financial crisis is having many other effects too; and one of them is that attention is being brought to bear on public spending, which includes the military budgets. However while there is some talk of cutting back expenditure on weapons, and there are now some disarmament talks getting under way in the nuclear field, in most countries it would appear that it is still a protected sector. My own country the UK, for example, continues to follow the American lead in Afghanistan and is now spending over \$50 bn a year on its defence sector. Japan, while it has managed to limit spending to 1% of GDP, is still at the level of \$42.75 bn according to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute. And just to get things in perspective, the US figures are \$607 bn or 4% of GDP. (and that doesn't include the extra costs of the Afghan and Iraq wars themselves).

So we are dealing with a massive industry spending large amounts of taxpayers' money, one whose direct results mainly consist of death, destruction and increase in fear. But the indirect results are equally negative: I am talking about what are called opportunity costs, all the social and

environmental programmes that are NOT funded because of the priority given to the military. Everyone is crying out for example, for money to fund reductions in carbon emissions and for scientific brainpower to develop green technology: well, the resources are there! Fundamentally it is a kind of collective addiction to the use of violence, organized through large bureaucratic institutions. And worse still, these institutions (as we have seen again just recently) have a tendency to undermine democratic processes.

We have a mighty and complex challenge on our hands if we want to follow the Costa Rican model and demilitarize our societies. I don't have time to go into all the aspects right now, but I'm sure other contributors will examine different dimensions. I have written an article on the links between Article 9 and Article 26 of the UN Charter and this also available for you to read. My position is that while the constitutional models that are emerging in Latin America (Costa Rica, Ecuador, Bolivia...) are important, they reflect political shifts that are specific to those states and might not be exportable wholesale. In general what is necessary to create is a far stronger peace community in each country, and especially an alliance with organisations working for social justice and sustainable development. I was encouraged to learn for example that the World Confederation of Trade Unions has just agreed to campaign for a treaty banning nuclear weapons. This is a very positive step. If that kind of collaboration can be developed at the national level, then we may be able to have some effect on the level of militarism in each country – and especially to reduce the level of state investment in the armed forces.

IPB's efforts are mainly devoted to the national level, although there are a number of developments we would like to see at the UN – for example, an annual review of steps taken by each state to implement Art 26. There is also important work to be done at the regional level, for example the NGO-led effort to establish a North East Asia Nuclear Free Zone, which is now being combined with a campaign to reduce conventional military spending in the region. A large part of the military spending by small and military size states is related to tensions with their neighbours or with rebels and non state actors within their own borders. To solve these conflicts requires a whole range of policies that address the causes, rather than inflated military force.

However in the case of the big powers, militarism is a reflection of their desires to play major roles on the world stage, and to their determination to secure so called 'vital interests', such as access to oil and gas and the protection of shipping lanes. In my view we need to find ways, not only to ban armed force (which I call negative law), but also to reduce the need for force by assuring states that their interests will be respected through permanent legal agreements (positive law). The model I have in mind here is the UN Law of the Sea, which has set up a global framework to regulate the use of maritime resources.

That is a short summary of our thinking about these issues. Now for action: the activities that IPB promotes fall under several headings:

- ✓ **Conferences**, both our own and those run by others. This year we shall run a workshop in Mexico City in Sept, at the DPI/NGO conference, and in November we shall hold our annual meeting in Washington DC. You are all most welcome to join us in Obama-land !
- ✓ We are developing a major **media campaign** together with an advertising agency, to be launched next year, which is the centenary of IPB's Nobel Peace Prize!
- ✓ We have put out several **publications** on the D for D theme, including *Warfare or Welfare?* (which analyses the issues), and *Whose Priorities ?* (which reports on the actions being undertaken by various groups). The Spanish edition by the way is a combined edition with elements of both books. The latest book is *Nuclear Weapons: At What Cost?* by Ben Cramer, which is coming off the press this week. For outreach purposes however, the most important document is the *Call for Action*, which is now available in 7 languages, and has been endorsed by over 80 organisations.
- ✓ We are also developing some **peace education materials** which we hope will help in engaging young people in these issues.

Please remember that IPB is a worldwide membership organization - for both groups and individuals - and you can always sign up to receive our newsletter in order to get regular updates.

So I encourage you to get involved in this effort wherever you are based and whatever your background is - everyone can do something! Rolling back militarism (which is the title of our Washington conference) is long term work. In today's world we all suffer from many distractions - but I believe we should let ourselves be inspired by the Costa Rican example, and work to transform our societies into communities guided by nonviolence and social justice. Dare I say it? Yes we can !