

## NECESSITY TO MOVE FROM THE CULT OF WAR TO A CULTURE OF PEACE

Posted by Joan Russow  
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Since its inception, the United Nations has been the international hope for "preventing the scourge of war". Yet rather than prevent the scourge of war the member states have continually increased military budgets and the production of arms.

Rather than act on the commitment from the 1972 United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Environment and Humans, to prevent the production of weapons of mass destruction, the Security Council has maintained the veto of the countries that have been most responsible for producing weapons of mass destruction.

For over fifty years through international agreements, the member states of the United Nations have drafted the blueprint for attaining the Culture of Peace. Member states of the UN, in addition, to incurring obligations through conventions, treaties, and covenants to prevent the scourge of war, have created expectations through General Assembly resolutions and have made commitments through UN conference action plans to address the issue of the necessity of reducing military budgets.

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For years the member states of the United Nations incurred obligations through international instruments to reduce their military budgets and to transfer the savings into furthering the Public Trust.

In, 1981 through the General Assembly resolution entitled Reduction of Military Budgets, the member states reaffirmed the urgent need to reinforce the endeavours of all States to undertake international action ... to reduce military budgets

and in the same 1981 resolution, member states reiterated the appeal to all States, in particular the most heavily armed States, (pending the conclusion of agreements on the reduction of military expenditures), to exercise self-restraint in their military expenditures with a view to reallocating the funds thus saved to economic and social development, particularly for the benefit of developing countries.

In 1993, through the General Assembly resolution ,entitled Relationship between Disarmament and Development the member states expressed deep concern about the arms buildup and trends in military expenditures, about the consequent waste of human and economic resources and about the resulting risks for world peace and security.

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And in the same 1993 UN resolution, member states affirmed that " the magnitude of military expenditures is now such that the various implications [of military expenditures] can no longer be ignored in the efforts pursued in the international community to secure the recovery of the world economy and the establishment of a new international economic order ."

### MEMBER STATES ALSO MADE COMMITMENTS THROUGH CONFERENCE ACTIONS PLANS

In the 1985 Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the aAvancement of Women, the member states of the United Nations affirmed that:

"The threat to peace resulting from continuing international tensions and violations of the United Nations Charter, resulting in the build up of arms, the unabated arms race, in particular in the nuclear field the proliferation of civil nuclear technology, which can be applied to military use, as well as wars, armed conflicts, external domination, foreign occupation, acquisition of land by force, aggression imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, apartheid, gross violations of human rights, terrorism, repression, the disappearance of persons and discrimination on the basis of sex, and the destruction and deterioration of the environment are major obstacles to human progress, specifically to the advancement of women."

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In 1994, through the International Conference on Population and Development nation states made a commitment ..... none of the actions required—nor all of them combined— is expensive in the context of either current global development or military expenditures.

In the 1995 Plan of Action, for the World Summit for Social Development, member states called for "the reallocation of military spending to ensure a greater pocket of resources to expand public services."

Yet, even though the developed countries made a commitment in Agenda 21, to transfer .7 %, to the developing countries, in the current discussion of the "Outcomes" of the Platform of Action, the developed countries will not undertake more that "to strive to reach that limit"

While developed countries may even spend as much as 50% of the their budget on the military.

Even the UN data show that 30% of the annual military budget of 800 billion could solve many of the problems in the world. Now, as we enter the decade dedicated to moving from the cult of war to the culture of peace, the global community must act immediately to reduce the military budget by at least 50%, significantly reduce arms production and eliminate the production of weapons of mass destruction. If we are to achieve a culture of peace a significant proportion of the military budget must be transferred into furthering the public trust:

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1. to Promote and fully guarantee respect for human rights including women's human rights, labour rights, the human right to unadulterated food, to safe drinking water, to housing, to quality education and training and to universally accessible publicly funded health care and other social services: 2. to Enable socially equitable and environmentally sound development, and social justice; 3. to Achieve a state of peace, justice and security; 4. to Create a global structure that respects the rule of law; including the recognition of the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice coupled with the establishment of an International Court of Compliance where citizens can take evidence of state and corporate non compliance with Public Trust international law: 5. to Ensure the preservation and protection of the environment, to respect the inherent worth of nature beyond human purpose, to reduce the ecological footprint and to move away from the current model of over-consumptive development

Citizens had hoped that, at the coinciding of the UN Beijing World Conference for Women and the 50th Anniversary of the UN, that the veto privileges granted to the five nuclear powers in the Security Council would have been removed, that there would have been a time-bound program for conversion of military structures and that the global military budget would have been substantially reduced and transferred into solving, not contributing to, global problems

There was again hope in 1999 that, at the culmination of the decade devoted to the furtherance of International Law that the member states of the United Nations would discharge obligations to conventions, act on commitments made through conference action plans, and fulfill expectations created through General Assembly resolutions.

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There was hope again when the United Nations dedicated the first decade of the millennium to the development of a Culture of Peace.

It is time to follow the lead of the G77 in their recent call to remove the veto, and to strengthen the role of the General Assembly.

It is time to reduce the military budget by at least 50% and transfer the savings into promoting the Public Trust.

The international blueprint for the Culture of Peace has been clearly articulated through numerous UN instruments but the international political will for implementation is absent.