

**Remarks by Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala  
to DPI/NGO Conference, 11 September:  
Session on “Demobilizing the War Machines: Making Peace Last”**

“Demobilizing war machines” is another name for the well-established field of defence conversion. Whether undertaken after the end of specific armed conflicts, implemented as a result of international agreement, or practised as a unilateral national policy -- the basic idea is the same: to shift precious human, economic, and technological resources away from weapons into more peaceful and productive uses. The twin goals are to make better use of people, money, and technology, and to reduce threats to international peace and security irreversibly. The benefits of this process of defence conversion are open to all societies that have spent vast sums on building up their war-waging capacities -- especially those that have acquired vast stockpiles of arms far in excess of what is reasonably needed to defend national frontiers or to maintain domestic law and order.

So what exactly is a “war machine?” Former US President Dwight Eisenhower -- himself a military man turned politician -- offered one of the most famous allusions to this subject, when he warned in 1961 of the dangers of the “unwarranted influences” of what he called the “military-industrial complex” -- including the dangers it poses for national “liberties and democratic processes.” A war machine is essentially a cluster of vested interests -- industrial, bureaucratic, and legislative in nature -- that acts together to control key national policy decisions to increase the production of armaments, or to rationalize continued production. President Eisenhower’s statement later in this speech that “Disarmament, with mutual honor and confidence, is a continuing imperative” -- not only underscores his awareness of the economic

and security benefits from reduced reliance on weapons, but it also a powerful and durable alternative means of pursuing security interests.

The war machine requires not just the production of arms, but also their use -- a practice that helps to demonstrate weapons capabilities, to identify new areas requiring further research, and to promote their eventual sale. Picasso's famous painting "Guernica" -- a tapestry of which now adorns the wall outside the UN Security Council -- depicts well the human effects of the war machine in a small village during the Spanish Civil War. The war machine is sustained both by vested organizational interests and by the ideas they espouse -- including the notion that weapons are the primary or most reliable means of enhancing security. In some cases, these ideas are propagated also by the media, the entertainment industry, educators, even religious leaders. All across the globe -- except for Costa Rica, Iceland, and a few other states that have given up their militaries all together -- countries have their own national experiences in dealing with their own war machines. Some machines direct their weapons at neighbouring states, while (more commonly these days) others focus mainly on internal wars. Unfortunately, even in the decade after the Cold War, innocent civilians have remained the victims of various war machines around the world.

Many NGOs now work in this field -- and many more should, given the extraordinary benefits that defence conversion offers all societies, from the richest to the poorest. The goal here is not to put people in the defence business out of work, but to give them more productive and meaningful jobs for society, while continuing to enable States to practice their legitimate right of self-defence. The powerful message of defence conversion is this: disarmament pays.

The Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA) contributes to these efforts in many ways.

First, we are doing all we can to promote universal membership in (and compliance with) treaties that eliminate weapons of mass destruction -- specifically, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Biological Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention. Achieving these goals would not only virtually eliminate the risk these weapons pose to innocent civilians worldwide, but it would also free up substantial resources that countries can use for more productive uses. The Brookings Institution published a study a few years ago estimating that the US alone has spent a total of some \$5.6 trillion on nuclear weapons over the last five decades -- and this does not even include all the additional sums spent by the four other nuclear-weapon states and the three other states that now have a nuclear-weapons capability. Imagine what that kind of investment could have accomplished if it had been placed into public health, education, renewable energy technologies, and foreign assistance for sustainable development.

Second, DDA is confronting a variety of problems relating to conventional weapons.

- We are responsible for maintaining the UN Register on Conventional Arms and the Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures -- these are two very important means by which the UN gathers information about the scope of ongoing production and trade in conventional arms, and the overall national defence investments. These transparency measures contribute to confidence-building -- the more countries

participate in using these instruments, the more robust our various databases will become, and the greater will be their cumulative effect on reducing mutual suspicions. In recent years, we have succeeded in expanding significantly international use of both instruments, and are continuing our efforts in this area by holding workshops and providing information and advice to encourage more countries to participate.

- We helped organize last year's major United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which conferred upon DDA specific new responsibilities to monitor the implementation of the conference's Programme of Action. With respect to our subject today, curbing the illicit trade in small arms amounts to working at dismantling numerous *illicit* war machines -- operated by both governments and private entrepreneurs around the world -- that seek to profit from the sale of arms that have destroyed so many innocent civilians and shattered whole national economies.
- With respect to landmines, the Secretary-General has stated the following: "these abominable weapons lie buried in silence and in their millions, waiting to kill or maim innocent women and children; but the presence or even the fear of the presence of a single landmine can prevent the cultivation of an entire field, rob a whole village of its livelihood, place yet another obstacle on a country's road to reconstruction and development." Although no comprehensive data is available, it is estimated that the number of victims of landmines in 70 affected countries is in the thousands each year. Confronting such challenges, we support efforts by the UN Mine Action Service to eliminate landmines worldwide, and encourage universal participation both in the Mine-Ban Convention and Protocol II of the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention. These weapons have killed or maimed countless innocent civilians worldwide; they are

indiscriminate in their effects; and they have set back social and economic development for years, if not generations. Produced in the millions, even more investments are now needed to eliminate them. They are one of the most flagrant examples of the fruits of a war machine that has operated beyond all the constraints of basic humanity. This is an issue that clearly requires close cooperation between States, international organizations and NGOs -- each of which brings its own expertise on mine clearance and stockpile destruction issues and in approaching the issue of victim assistance in its physiological, psychological and socio-economic aspects.

- Working with the UN Development Programme and other components of the UN system, we help local communities to recover from armed conflicts by participating in “disarmament, demobilization, and re-integration” (DDR) programmes and by supporting “practical disarmament measures.” Our efforts achieved some successful results in Gramsch, Albania, where we inaugurated a “weapons for development” project, under which local communities exchanged their excess arms for cooperative infrastructure development assistance. The project resulted in the collection of thousands of arms and rounds of ammunition, and registered a noticeable decline in armed conflict and other armed violence in the district. We are now exploring various possibilities of providing such assistance in other regions, including Latin America, Africa, and in Asia.
- DDA is also continuing its efforts in the field of disarmament and development, another topic relating directly to war machines -- a subject that the UN has worked on for decades. On 29 November, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (without a vote) urging the international community “to devote part of the resources made available by the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements to economic and

social development, with a view to reducing the ever-widening gap between developed and developing countries.” DDA held a public symposium on this subject earlier this year and we will continue to convert the burdensome costs of swords into the prosperity that only ploughshares can provide.

Demobilizing the war machine is an especially important topic for the NGO community to address. War machines do not exist in a vacuum. They are created, maintained, and expand as a result of human decisions. They rest on a foundation of economic and political support that depends in good measure upon public opinion, which the machines persistently seek to influence any way they can. It follows, then, that the best way to *demobilize* the war machine is to *mobilize* public opinion to support goals of peace, community, and prosperity. When machines are denied lubricants -- here in the form of generous annual budgets -- and when they are not used: they are prone to rust and obsolescence. A similar problem exists with the global disarmament community, for it too requires funding support and practical application to avoid similar problems.

To some extent, enlightened national leaders can tame this monster through their own policies and regulations -- yet they are most able to accomplish this when they have strong, deep, and widespread support of their respective publics. Here is where the NGO community has its greatest potential for achieving practical results in demobilizing the war machine. The NGO community understands the importance of winning the hearts and minds of the general public. It understands that diverse societies require diverse approaches to achieve this goal -- in particular, this community recognizes the need for networks among often quite different kinds of groups.

These networks include legislators, academics, religious leaders, retired public officials (both military and governmental), the media, politicians at all levels of government, and innumerable affiliated interest groups throughout society. Together, these networks -- through their potential ability to shape public agendas and to mobilize resources -- provide both the “grease” and foundation to sustain a genuine “disarmament complex” -- the ultimate organizational antidote to the war machine.

I wish you well in your work to harness the war machine, for though you will confront enormous obstacles, your ultimate victories will be all the more rewarding.