

12. An Historic Religious Commitment and Renewed Call to Disarmament, Security and Peace

Speaker and Convenor: Robert F. Smylie, Religions for Peace

THE AFFIRMATIONS

For more than thirty years the interfaith community has come together in various configurations to advocate for both an end to war and an end to the production of the weapons and systems with which wars are fought. Ever more powerful weapons escalate the risks and dangers, and increase the temptations to settle conflict by violent methods, whether by states or non-state parties. The majority of religious leaders have always promoted disarmament, peace, and policies that promote human security. The religions of the world embody in their core texts and traditions a set of affirmations that have provided the staying power and the basis of common commitments for religious people of all traditions and in all countries. Statements from the periodic assemblies of the World Conference of Religious for Peace* have set forth the following affirmations:

1. A shared conviction of the fundamental unity of the human family, and the equality and dignity of all human beings;
2. A profound sense of the sacredness of the individual person and his or her conscience;
3. A commitment to the preservation of the value of life manifest in human community;
4. A realization that might does not make right; and that human power is neither self-sufficient nor absolute;
5. A belief that the spirit of love, compassion, selflessness, and the force of inner truthfulness ultimately have greater power than hate, enmity, and self-interest, and that these provide the capacity to transcend all ideological and political barriers; and
6. A sense of obligation to support and protect the poor and the oppressed, those made marginal by system or circumstance in our world, or victimized by violence.

These affirmations provide the basis for concern about all aspects of human life in community, human rights and justice, sustainable development and environment, and the viability of international instruments of governance and order. Yet no right seems more fundamental than the right to peace and security, conditions without which, ultimately, all other rights have little meaning. Thus, the quest for arms control and disarmament including, specifically, the abolition of nuclear weapons and the end of militarism and militarization, and the cessation of the use of war as an instrument for resolving conflict have been central to the mission of religions that work for peace.

AN AGENDA FOR ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT

Religious traditions seeking to achieve meaningful and effective arms control and disarmament based on a renunciation of war have been consistent, and cumulative. General and complete disarmament is the end goal toward which immediate and continuous steps must be taken. The ultimate goal of eliminating all weapons - conventional, nuclear, chemical and biological - clearly reflects an understanding that peace and security cannot be found in the weapons themselves. Therefore, religions that work for peace have regularly affirmed calls for:

1. An end to nuclear proliferation - both vertical and horizontal, the goal embodied in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty;
2. Abolition of all nuclear weapons with steps to include an end to the deployment of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons; dismantling and destruction of all their components; and an end to further testing, research, manufacture, spread and deployment;
3. Cessation of all nuclear testing in all environments, the goal embodied in Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty;
4. An end to the production of fissionable materials for weapons purposes, safeguarding existing stocks with adequate verification methods, and conversion of existing stockpiles into peaceful uses;
5. Commitment by nuclear weapons powers to provide non-use assurances pending the

- final elimination of nuclear weapons as a means of curbing proliferation;
6. Negotiation of workable and working treaty agreements between the United States of America and the Russian Federation for the purpose of controlling and reducing nuclear arsenals;
 7. Support of existing regional Nuclear Weapons Free Zones and creation of new ones in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Northeast Asia;
 8. Termination of research, production and development of new weapons and their delivery systems, coupled with redirection of resources (human, material and economic) toward the lifting of living standards for all peoples;
 9. Reduction of military expenses by all countries, and the redirection of the resources toward social welfare needs and intentional conversion strategies;
 10. Cessation of military sales, transfers and trafficking between countries, particularly those from the wealthy and powerful countries that create dependency of developing countries or that reinforce repressive governments, and those sales that are made to end trade imbalances or domestic unemployment, regardless of the consequences;
 11. Establishment of adequate verification methods in all areas of arms control and disarmament [political and technical means];
 12. Designation of the production, sale, use of weapons of mass destruction as crimes against humanity with judicial mechanisms for holding offenders accountable; and
 13. Prohibition of the placing or use of weapons in space.

We call on governments and intergovernmental bodies at all levels to pursue conflict resolution by non-violent means, and to renew their commitments to the quest for peace through justice. Only through such commitment can hope be restored for the new millennium. Thank you

* Participation of religious communities has included Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity (Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox), Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shinto, Traditionalist/Indigenous, Unitarianism, and Zoroastrianism.