

INTERNATIONAL PEACE BUREAU
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Books or Bombs
Seminar at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina
In cooperation with the Library and The Institute for Peace Studies

INTRODUCTION
By Tomas Magnusson
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Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends

Here we are, at the conference: **“books or bombs”**.
It seems that the International Peace Bureau has a special prejudice for word-games, often contradictions - often drastic lines like **god or bad, right or wrong, war or peace** and now: **“books or bombs”**.
Also - in the same tradition: IPB:s own most resent book is called **“Warfare or welfare”**.

Let me tell to those who don't know IPB before that we are an international umbrella organisation with 280 member organisations in 70 countries, plus individual members. It is an old organisation, more than 100 year old, and we are proud of our tradition, we got the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910 and a small part of that money is still with us. It is not enough for our work, but at least it enable us to start our work every week in good faith, before we go out fundraising!.

Most of the total work we are doing in the IPB is under the umbrella of another game with words: A program which we call **“disarmament for development”** which is not our own formula from the beginning, but rather ideas we have inherited from the UN, from our distinguished speaker at this conference Jayanta Dhanaphala, from Inga Thorsson, the Swedish ambassador for disarmament, from Ruth Sevard and others.

The idea is that the ongoing wars, the ongoing rearmament and maintenance of armies is a hinder for real and sustainable development.
The idea is that we can reach no real development in the world without using the vast resources from the military in all countries of the world.

All of you are aware of the millennium goals, to reach before 2015 a decent life for children, women and everybody, freedom from hunger, freedom from diseases, the right to school education for children etc., but the millennium goals will not be reached if we are not ready for a global re-thinking on the priorities of the world, **give people food, not arms; give them books, not bombs; give them future, not failure**, not yet other wars and conflicts.

Your excellencies, distinguished guests: on behalf of IPB, its staff, its board of directors, I would like to welcome you all, for fruitful discussions and to enjoy the hospitality of an IPB conference.

As we are all aware, the world is in a bad shape, and we have a huge task in front of us. During the previous week the International Peace Bureau has issued two statements on

deteriorated political situations in the world

We have a policy of being careful and cautious in public statements, and to the best of my memory two statements in one week has not happened before.

One of the statements was about the situation in **Pakistan**, where we in addition to the daily news reports also got calls from our member organisation in the country, the Human rights group "Human Friends Organisation". They are fearing that Pakistan is heading towards a civil war. Let me quote from their call for support:

"In his speech President Musharraf said that the emergency in Pakistan is being imposed to curb extremism and terrorism. Instead of cracking down on the extremist forces, he cracked down on the judiciary, lawyers, media, civil society organizations and political workers.

...The emergency was promulgated against extremism and terrorism, but up till now, no action has been initiated against the militants at all.

...We strongly condemn this action and urge Musharraf to restore the constitution and democracy in the country. International pressure is required for a just cause, as basic human rights have been suspended and Pakistani people are being deprived of information through media."

Friends, we need to do whatever we can to support the tiny bits of democracy in Pakistan, we need to increase our contact with those courageous people defending democracy and human rights, and we need to call for a stop to sending all and any weapons and military aid and funding to Pakistan from any government including the United States.

The Pakistan regime is a cornerstone in the so called "war on terror", but there is no way to support democracy and human rights through war, "war on terror" is a contradiction and the "war on terror" must end!

And let it be replaced by "democracy against terror", "books instead of bombs", "disarmament and development against terror".

If no other proofs exists of the mischief done by the "war on terror" - the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan is proof. During last week the worst suicide bomb attack occurred in Afghanistan, killed 15 parliamentarians and many civilians - and it happened far away from the area usually identified as being in hands of Talibans and terrorists.

The "war on terror" is not only damaging regimes and political leaders, but also ordinary citizens, recruited to be suicide bombers and terrorist.

This is wrong, and it is common sense, it is the believe by ordinary people that this is wrong.

Truth is different. And has always been: Let me read for you what the Chinese philosophe and religious leader Kon-Fu-Tse wrote in his "Advise to a king" already 500 years before our chronology:

"Get rid of your army, use the money that you now spend on your troops to educate your people and to improve the agriculture, and the people in the south will drive away their king and submit to you without war."

This quotation could very well be the motto for the IPB program "Disarmament for Development", maybe an old fashion and forgotten way of speaking, but absolutely fresh and useful as inspiration.

I visited recently the Horn of Africa, by some called the Horn of Agony.

Few places more than Somalia are in need of "Disarmament for Development". I can witness

to you - after more than 20 years of civil war in Somalia there are no shortage of war victims, there are no shortage of fatherless children, and there are absolutely no shortage of weapons. Many organisations have been doing food for weapon-exchange programs in Somalia. It is always a success, people brings lot of weapons and get the food they need - but that does not bring any change - why, because every private army, every warring clan has much more weapon than they will ever need to continue the civil war forever, so they can easily give from their surplus of weapons. New weapons are coming from abroad.

In Somalia, in Eritrea, in Ethiopia the problem is the small arms, the so called conventional weapons, the machine-guns, the Kalashnikovs,

In the streets of New York, New Mexico or Johannesburg, the problem is the hand-guns.

In global terms, the problem is the Nuclear weapons, the ongoing existence of close to 27.000 war heads, an unbelievable amount of nuclear explosives, stockpiled by United States, Russia, England, France, China, India, Pakistan and Israel.

The existence of nuclear weapons is a threat in itself, a threat against humanity and all human beings, a threat that those weapons can be used, but also a threat because of the enormous amount of money for maintaining those weapons, and keeping them on alert.

Nuclear weapons is not history from Hiroshima and Nagasaki 60 years ago, but today's headline: We know that by listening to the hostile language between United States and Iran over the nuclear weapon plans of Iran.

We must prevent new countries acquiring nuclear weapons. To reach that goal, states that already possess nuclear weapons themselves must renounce their claim that these weapons are indispensable for their security, and commit themselves to making real progress towards nuclear disarmament, as they are legally bound to do by international treaties.

This is said in the other public statement from International Peace Bureau issued last week, which I mentioned before.

In the statement it also says: The Iranian people must be convinced that they are safe from attack, contrary to what the partisans of the clash of civilizations and those who favour a confrontation at any price might say. The whole region of the Middle East must commit itself to disarmament. The end of the occupation of Iraq, and the resolution of the Israel_Palestinian conflict, will help to ease the tensions felt by the peoples of this region who have suffered so much from war.

The title of this conference indicates that there is an "either - or", books or bombs, we have to chose. Disarmament for development, is a two track goal:

Disarmament is needed, of obvious reasons, if we look at the many external and internal wars, and threat of wars, threat of nuclear war,

Sustainable development is needed, of obvious reasons, if we look at the many needs in the worlds, summarized in the millennium goals: education, health, food...

And that is why military spending is one of the core lines in our work for disarmament and development, and will be more important during the years to come. World military expenditure in the year 2006 have reached 1 204 billion dollar, an increase of 3.5 percent during one year.

This enormous resources are badly needed elsewhere! We must tackle the business of

weapon and war! That is the way forward!

Let me finish by mentioning the one book in my private library that best depicts the slogan “books or bombs” - it is the book *“The Crazy Ape”*, by the Hungarian-American bio-chemist Albert Szent-Györgyi, who was a soldier in the first world war, became a refugee away from Nazism and Stalinism, and Nobel laureate in medicine 1937.

In the book, *“The Crazy Ape”* Albert Szent-Györgyi writes:

“When I received the Nobel Prize, the only big lump sum of money I have ever seen, I had to do something with it. The easiest way to drop this hot potato was to invest it, to buy shares. I knew World War II was coming and I was afraid that if I had shares which rise in case of war, I would wish for war. So I asked my agent to buy shares which go down in the event of war. This he did. I lost my money and saved my soul”

Thank you, Institute of Peace Studies and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina for co-sponsoring this conference, and for giving me the opportunity to speak. And thank you, all, for listening!

TOMAS MAGNUSSON