

## IPB message to the Bangalore Conference

### *Warfare or Welfare? Disarmament for Peace, Human Security & Development in 21<sup>st</sup> Century India*

10-12 February 2009

Dear Friends of Peace,

We are delighted you are holding this conference, and even more so that you have chosen the topic "*Warfare or Welfare?*" which is also the title of the first book published by International Peace Bureau on the theme of Disarmament for Development. Whereas the peoples of the world want increased welfare, most governments still seem to be focusing on warfare!

Others will talk about the arms trade but rising military expenditure should also be addressed. The problem of excessive military spending is closely linked to development: firstly as it diverts precious human and economic resources that could be more efficiently used in the civil sector; and secondly as it fuels violent conflicts that impact negatively on the poorest communities and their environment.

It is not a problem faced by India alone. We are all aware that the USA is by far the largest military economy, and we see how this plays out in places where strategic interests are at stake, notably where there are scarce resources to be controlled. But militarism is a worldwide scourge, and we need a worldwide movement to tackle it.

#### **India's rank in terms of military expenditure**

Let us have a closer look at the Indian case. Over the past decade its military spending has increased by \$10 billion (or 41%), to reach \$ 24.25 billion in 2007. In that same year, India was the world's 10<sup>th</sup> largest military spender, but it ranked 4 when considering the purchasing power parity (2005 figures). Again, India is not alone following this path; there are signs of an arms race in the whole region, but history teaches us that such races lead nowhere. Many would assert that as India is developing into a major economic player, it also needs to assert itself as a military superpower. But the Soviet example reminds us that a massive military build-up requires enormous economic sacrifices, and that it risks open warfare, in other words the sacrifice of innumerable human lives!

It could be argued that spending annually over 1 trillion rupees on its defence means that India will be able to ensure more security for its people. The country's relations with its neighbours are however increasingly tense, and the recent dramatic events in Mumbai have reminded us that India is not immune to terrorist attack. Will it be necessary to waste even more resources, before people realise the failure of increasing militarisation to reduce the real threats to their daily security? Aren't poverty problems threatening the lives of most Indians much more than war with Pakistan or China?

#### **Contradictions with development needs**

It is no secret that, despite the tremendous economic growth India is experiencing, vast numbers of its people are still threatened by poverty. While struggling with enormous development challenges, India is investing in the most advanced, but also

the deadliest, military technology. The land of Gandhi has still not found the way to feed, heal and educate all its people, but it has already the capacity to destroy entire populations with its nuclear weapons!

If India could engage the same level of material resources and highly-trained brainpower in the welfare field as it does in preparing for warfare, it would certainly be better placed to claim a global leadership role. But the same argument applies to all the big economies. 'Priorities shift' is the message that the International Peace Bureau is trying to bring into the world's debates. If less money was spent globally on the military, more resources would be available for tackling poverty -- and also for climate change mitigation. We wouldn't be speaking of the Millennium Development Goals as "unreachable targets"...after all, perhaps 10% of what we call 'global military treasure' -- say \$130 billion -- would go a long, long way.

So a radical change in the investment priorities of governments (and let's not forget, those of the private sector too), is urgently needed. But nothing proves so far that any current government -- not even, or maybe especially not, the new U.S. administration -- is ready for this particular change, so it has to be initiated by civil society.

The current economic crisis, though devastating in its effects, does offer us an opportunity. The sandstorm of media reports on the crisis is now reminding us how precious and also how fleeting financial resources are. So let us not waste them through further investment in the machinery of war, when development needs are crying out to be met !

### **How can we make change happen ?**

India has a large and vibrant network of civil society organisations, and there lies the hope. In IPB's view, various approaches can be followed simultaneously at the national level, which is where budget priorities are decided. They range from education campaigns targeting the wider public, to dialoguing with key groupings that directly influence policies. More comprehensive policy transformation is usually achieved through a change of government. Unfortunately such reforms can be reversed by subsequent administrations. This is why public education and a wholesale shift in values are so important.

Pressure at the international level is crucial as well. We need to encourage:

1. initiatives by **regional structures** such as SAARC in favour of mutual security and cooperation;
2. multilateral disarmament negotiations at the **United Nations** – including on Art. 26 of the UN Charter which seeks to limit the diversion of economic resources for military purposes; and
3. increasing dialogue on the military question with the numerous **international agencies** that specialise in development, environment and security issues: UNDP, UNEP, DDA and so on.

Progress at all these levels will certainly be necessary to bring about a climate of improved confidence – which is what most governments insist on before even considering appeals for lowering their so-called 'defence preparedness'.

### **What IPB is doing**

IPB is a very old-established non-government organisation with a long experience, especially in disarmament issues. Our 300 member organisations in 70 countries, plus individual members, form a global network which brings together expertise and campaigning experience in a common cause. Our main programme, which centres on *Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development*, was launched in 2005. We launched it because we saw that this link between two vitally important sectors was not being made, not even by peace and development movements.

In the last few years we have tried to establish the basis for a long-term worldwide campaign, focussing especially on the spending question, but also looking at the effects of weapons on development, and on related issues such as resource conflicts, privatisation of the military, militarisation of aid programmes and so forth.

We recently issued a *Call for Action* on spending which has attracted some 70 endorsing organisations so far – but we are hoping for 700! So if your own organisation supports our basic proposition on spending priorities, please send us a message to include your name on the list. This list will form the basis of our expanding campaign network.

We are also engaging in dialogue on the objectives of the programme with NGOs, governments and experts of various types; we encourage national and international coalitions and lobbying programmes; we are reaching out to partners in developing countries and helping them establish programmes within the frame of DFD; we have an ambitious plan for a media campaign linked to a web-based photo-gallery, and we are setting in motion other educational efforts supporting the campaign messages.

In all of this we work closely with many other groups –such as the Global Article 9 campaign and others working on peace constitutions; the Disarmament to Combat Poverty campaign; coalitions on cluster munitions, small arms and landmines; and finally Abolition 2000 and others working on nuclear disarmament, especially since there are now growing calls for moves towards complete worldwide nuclear weapons elimination, the so-called Global Zero target.

This is an ambitious and noble cause. We wish you good fortune in your conference and in your campaign work. Let's do it together !

*Colin Archer*  
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*Geneva*  
*5 February 2009*