



IPB offers condolences to Norway and urges greater commitment to peace work

Geneva, July 26, 2011. Observers all over the world were deeply moved to see the dignified grief expressed by the Norwegian people yesterday in the wake of Friday's atrocities. The huge, spontaneous demonstrations in Oslo and in many other communities – with flowers held aloft – spoke volumes about the country's firm commitment to solidarity and democracy.

The International Peace Bureau, its officers, staff and members, offer deep condolences to the Norwegian people and their leaders. We share their sorrow at these truly appalling atrocities, committed against so many young people – future leaders of the Labour Party - and even the government itself.

While we struggle to understand the mindset which could justify and coldly plan such attacks, we fervently hope that Norwegian society and its democratic representatives will find ways to reinforce the country's well-known commitment to openness and tolerance, rather than the reverse. The post-atrocity policy debates will undoubtedly reveal a wide range of opinions on issues from immigration to policing and surveillance of extremist groups. It will be a testing period for all those who wish to maintain Norway's traditional openness, both to the outside world and in terms of domestic practices, especially the close links between politicians and people. In this sense there is an important connection between democracy and peace-making.

It seems only yesterday that we were together with our colleagues and friends in Oslo at IPB's Nobel-centenary conference (Sept. 2010). Atrocities such as those that took place four days ago reinforce the need for peace work, in all its meanings and in all countries. This tragedy is a product of a culture that is, in part, aggressive and militarized. Breivik's criminal massacre, and other similar ones around the world, have been made possible through the availability of highly efficient weaponry - ostensibly produced to assure the security of the population – and encouraged by images from a violent entertainment culture.

The response cannot be a society with more security controls, armaments and police power. Instead, we need to find new ways to foster a global culture of peace and non-violence. True security can only be built on justice, co-operation and compassion for fellow humans, across all borders and religious/ethnic/political divides. Norway possesses enormous resources that could be used to promote global peace through global law and institutions, a project that Alfred Nobel wished to promote through his prize for the champions of peace.

We call on peace workers around the world to stand with our Norwegian colleagues as they struggle to come to terms with these tragic events; and to intensify their own efforts to bring about a world of tolerance and social justice, where there is a place for all and none need fear being suddenly struck down. As one young survivor from the summer camp said: "When we see how much damage one man can do out of hatred, imagine how much we, together, can do by love".
