

National Consultation in preparation of 10th World Assembly Religions for Peace
Utrecht, May 11, 2019

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Report with highlights and Recommendations National Consultation: Closing Session

Moderator Hafsa Chair

“Did you make weapons today, or what?”, is the openings question of the moderator.

It’s like the wake-up call we hope and urge RfP to start with at the 10th World Assembly. The world is in danger without really realizing it. This was much discussed in the Sessions about Peace and (Dis)armament. **THE COMPLETE WORLD CAN BE DESTROYED SEVERAL TIMES.**

This is the destructive nuclear power that is present these days. Add to this that enormous investments are being made in modernizing these nuclear weapons, this very moment.

May be YOUR BANK invests your money in it. Read:

https://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2019_HOS_web.pdf

Next to that, the investments in other weapons, increase. Drones, for instance, are ready to kill people from long distance right in the head. “We only kill the bad guy!” is the euphemistic argument. We all know that we might differ from opinion about who is the good guy and who the bad. There is one thing we all share: Caring for each other and for our common future. Without violence.

We, as Religions for Peace from all over this planet, are urged to take care of the planet, nature and all human beings. That’s the reason of our existence. And we are asked by religious messages and philosophies to show, to live one important message: TAKE GOOD CARE. All messengers showed that life is not about becoming wealthy and powerful and suppress others. NO, they were an example of WISDOM, LOVE AND CARE FOR LIFE.

That’s why we ask RfP, as organizer of the Assembly, to spend time at the opening for this important subject.

In the closing plenary of May 11, the circle talks in the sessions were shared, after which we discussed some subjects together. Here we add some over-all views from the remarks in and before the meeting.

1. In the sessions of **Peace and (Dis)armament**, great concern was expressed about the (power of the) weapon industry, and especially about nuclear weapons. Lindau is seen as possibility to express this worldwide concern and should stress this in her final statement, together with concrete actions (see Recommendations). RfP can join the calls from various worldwide organizations like ICAN, Red Cross, PAX for Peace, UNODA (United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs), RfP Statement A Nuclear-Weapon-Free-World, August 5, 2017, RfP Japan together with Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Japan, on April 25, 2019, ECRL statement of October 2010, WCC, Pugwash, The Pope, Mayors for Peace, World Medical Association, WMA, IPPNW, IALANA, Tribunaal voor Vrede, NVMP, Nuclear Weapons Ban Monitor - Norwegian People’s Aid, October 2018, Med. War Resisters International (WRI) etc. ‘Weapons are not the way to peace’, are conclusions shared by attendees as well by messages of people who couldn’t be present on May 11. One added: “Cross

border religions can make the difference, if one seeks the resemblance instead of the contradiction, and if reconciliation, redemption, compassion, charity and even humbleness become keywords.” “Remember that people in leading positions sometimes make the difference!”

2. Our second theme was **Peace and Education**, needed because of wars, injustice and poverty. We can't change the world or the other, but we can change our own, personal attitude.
3. We have to learn and teach in life how to become a blessing to society. Religions are inviting us to care for one another.

Why didn't the world become more peaceful and sustainable despite all good intentions after the disastrous World War II ('Never Again') and 'The limits to Growth' of The Club of Rome 1968? Is it because, with our increasing wealth, we let our greed rule and choose economical gain and more individual wealth above the wellbeing of the community and the planet? Not seldom via exploiting, suppression or war. The endless sky was the limit. For some. Poverty and unjustness are very present these days in our societies. Young students suffer from depressions because of the struggle to survive.

So, if we want a real change, needed for a more just and harmonious society, let's wonder what this demands from us? How can I contribute to peace? How to act just and communicate in a non-violent way? How to connect with others and turn my fear into trust? How can education contribute to peace? Consider these questions, since we have an endless possibility to change our self and grow. We have to learn and teach that good leadership takes responsibility for all. Remember Ubuntu, with the philosophy that 'I exist because of we.'

4. The third theme was **Sustainability** in broad perspective, where reflections of deep concern were expressed about our 'economic', our materialistic way of thinking and acting. This economic 'structure' we did not actively create, but it developed in our minds when our wealth increased. One of the experts gave great information in very understandable language about all questions and answers concerning sustainability and we decided to make a film in which he can share his sustainability's ideas with the spectators.
Next to that we received reflective, critical questions about the SDG agenda and we add them to this report in order to consider them in the SDG commission in Lindau.

For all three sessions there are separate reports with recommendations.

Some (more) remarks from the plenary:

- Support the small local organizations in society, like peace-tables, and encourage those meetings.
- We need ethics and philosophy again to help us think right and act just, in society and in business. These topics should return to our education institutes.
- New psychological insights are forcing a review of management thinking more and more these days. Let's try to become leaders who act from love. Power needs love to act fruitful.
- Let's create ways to change societal structures, especially those of power.
- The University of Utrecht has recently appointed a chair for business ethics.
- In Breda is a "Yellow vest" group, entirely formed by company directors.
- It is very important to keep an open mind. Encounters with people with various views and outlooks can be very enriching.
- 'Let Fear and Economical gain don't be stronger than the striving for peace and the reduction of number of weapons', was the wisdom, one of the absent people sent us to share.
- We need to find ways to tackle the elephant together. Focussing on what we can do instead of what we can't. Addressing parts, we can encompass in a hope filled way.
- Intergenerational meetings in circle sessions, can be very valuable. See Session 2 report.

Recommendations

1. Our first commitment as world religions and philosophies of life, united in Lindau and aimed at our stewardship on earth, should be the safeguarding of mankind now and tomorrow and the protection of the planet with all living creatures by active nuclear disarmament and a strong NO to the renewed arms race. The humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons are incompatible with religion or whatever human philosophy.
2. We should present a powerful call for a radical change in thinking about freedom and safety in this nuclear era. The classical adage: 'If you want peace, prepare for war!' is outdated. For the survival of humanity is now needed: '*If you want peace, prepare actually for peace.*' 'Ci vis pacem, para pacem.'
3. The present direction of increasing armament involves unacceptable risks. The control of the apocalyptic destructive power is not in the least secured (complexity, control-command, artificial intelligence). 'Prepare for peace' doesn't only include the prevention of military conflicts, but also the need of a common approach of the large world-problems, like poverty, clean water, lack of safe and healthy food, huge inequality...
4. Safety can no longer be realized at the expense of others. Today applies: '*I can only be safe if you don't feel threatened by me.*' This is mutual. It's about Mutual Assured Security: 'MAS instead of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction)'. This is an intermediate step to the global concept of common security.
5. The excessive high global military expenses didn't contribute to a greater safety, but to the opposite: more unsafety. Moreover, they use up vital resources which otherwise can be used for the solution of urgent world problems.
6. Therefore, out of our deep concern we insist on signing and implementing the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons of 2017 by the countries that did not do so yet.
7. We urge RfP to use all their means to approach the USA and Russia to revive the INF-treaty between the two countries.
8. Withdraw all sub-strategic American nuclear weapons from Europe, before modernizing becomes inevitable.
9. We urge RfP to propose and insist on installment of a new UN Commission like the Brundtland and Palme Commissions of 1987 and 1982 in which nuclear and nuclear-free states participated and who, on a high level, searched for possibilities to divert the nuclear threat and to end the nuclear arms race.
10. As religions and philosophies of life we have treasures in our Holy Books for self-reflection and needed social behavior, like acting truthful, with compassion, with care for others. We'd better propagate these values, that we share with each other from different believes, a bit louder. They'll help to create better promoters of peace.
11. Everything that happens on worldwide scale is comparable to our small-scale daily life. The only difference is the scale. So, if we want to walk the path of peace, we have to start with ourselves: our (self)confidence, our thoughts, our words, our deeds. Work on those to become the best role model one can wish.

12. Let's detox ourselves from negative thoughts, harsh words, judgements, prejudices and open our hearts, arms and hands to the other, who has a similar longing for peace as we do and let's cooperate for reducing the above-mentioned problems. We can do this, worldwide in our communities.
13. Life-philosophy lessons (with teachings about life-philosophy and religions) should be compulsory in all levels of education after primary school.
14. Create awareness that 'religions' are not equal to 'religious people', or to people who declare they act in the name of the Highest.
15. Stimulate meetings in general for people from different backgrounds, like Peace Tables or 'Houses of Peace', 'Street Pastorate' activities or intergenerational meetings.
To stimulate listening to each other, circle-sessions are very valuable. These are sessions where people sit in a circle and where the participants direct their words to the center of the circle and where listening and understanding is the main purpose.
16. We would like to challenge filmmakers and game-developers to develop more joyful and positive films and games with enough 'excitement' to balance the games variety better.
17. Celebrate May 16, the International Day of Living Together in Peace.

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Enclosed:

The UN Sustainable Developments Goals, Peace and the Churches, by Kees Nieuwert