

The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century

The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century has emerged from an intensive democratic process of consultation among the members of the Hague Appeal for Peace Organizing and Coordinating Committees, and the hundreds of organizations and individuals that have actively participated in the Hague Appeal process. The Agenda represents what these civil society organizations and citizens consider to be some of the most important challenges facing humankind as it embarks upon a new millennium.

The Agenda reflects the four major strands of the Hague Appeal:

1. Root Causes of War/Culture of Peace
2. International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law and Institutions
3. Prevention, Resolution and Transformation of Violent Conflict
4. Disarmament and Human Security

Preamble

The world is emerging from the bloodiest, most war-ridden century in history. On the eve of the new century, it is time to create the conditions in which the primary aim of the United Nations, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", can be realized. This is the goal of The Hague Appeal for Peace.

Skeptics will say that it cannot be done. The Hague Appeal challenges this assumption. This century has seen unimagined changes. Society now has the means to cure disease and eliminate poverty and starvation. The twentieth century has also seen the creation of a set of universal norms which, if implemented, would go a long way toward making war unnecessary and impossible. We have witnessed inspiring and successful experiments with active nonviolence in struggles for independence and civil rights by unarmed peoples' movements. And this century has seen the replacement of authoritarian forms of government by democratic governance and the increasing role of civil society in the affairs of humanity.

Recent years have seen outbreaks of genocide in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Kosovo, brutal attacks against civilians and the spread of horrendous weapons of mass destruction capable of ending life on much or all of the planet. Indigenous populations continue to be denied their rights to self determination. In a great many cases, the world's governments have manifestly failed to fulfill their responsibility to prevent conflict, protect civilians, end war, eradicate colonialism, guarantee human rights and create the conditions of permanent peace.

Therefore, this historic mission and responsibility cannot be entrusted solely to governments. The Hague Appeal proposes a citizens' Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century. This will entail a fundamentally new approach, building on the recent model of New Diplomacy in which citizen advocates, progressive governments and international organizations have worked together for common goals. We will embrace the moral imagination and courage necessary to create a 21st century culture of peace and to develop national and supranational institutions which ultimately must be the guarantors of peace and justice in this world.

There is already much to choose from. Civil society has flourished since the end of the Cold War and launched campaigns aimed at eradicating landmines, reducing the traffic in small arms, alleviating third world debt, ending violence against women, abolishing nuclear weapons, protecting the rights of children, stopping the use of child soldiers and building an independent International Criminal Court. These grassroots efforts are having a major impact. They are succeeding because they mobilize ordinary people, because they integrate different sectors (human rights, the environment, humanitarian assistance, disarmament, sustainable development, etc.) and because they invite the full participation of women, youth, indigenous peoples, minorities, the disabled and other affected groups.

These campaigns have generated unity and cohesion and demonstrate what can be done when people are listened to instead of talked at. The Hague Appeal for Peace intends to listen, learn and then to build. Out of this process will emerge a new citizens' Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century. It is a vital and realizable goal.

Components of the Hague Appeal, from the conference program to the campaigns, are motivated by the following main themes:

Traditional Failure

Traditional approaches to preventing war and building peace have by and large failed disastrously. This is evidenced by the growing brutality of warfare, and the callous disregard for civilian life in such conflicts as the Congo, Sierra Leone and Kosovo. Impunity for ethnic cleansing and for crimes against humanity is not compatible with international law. Big-power bullying tactics are not diplomacy. Sanctions that starve the poor are not solidarity. Fire brigade peacekeeping efforts are no substitute for sophisticated early warning and conflict prevention.

Human Security

It is time to redefine security in terms of human and ecological needs instead of national sovereignty and national borders. Redirecting funding from armaments to human security and sustainable development will establish new priorities leading to the construction of a new social order which ensures the equal participation of marginalized groups, including women and indigenous people, restricts use of military force, and moves towards collective global security.

Soft Power

We are profoundly encouraged that civil society and progressive governments are choosing 'soft power' paths, utilising negotiation, coalition building and new diplomacy methods of settling disputes, while rejecting the 'hard power' dictates of major powers, militaries and economic conglomerates.

All Human Rights for All

The violation of human rights is one of the root causes of war. These violations include the denial of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as political and civil rights. The artificial distinction between these two sets of rights can no longer be tolerated. We affirm the universality and indivisibility of human rights and call for stronger mechanisms to implement and enforce human rights treaties and to afford redress to victims for the violation of their rights.

Replacing the Law of Force with the Force of Law

The rule of law has been contemptuously ignored in contemporary conflicts. The Hague Appeal seeks to develop and promote universal adherence to and implementing of international law. It also seeks to invigorate existing institutions of international law like the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Knowledge of and recourse to international law must also be made more accessible to individuals.

Taking the Initiative

It is time for people to assert their commitment to peace and- if necessary- to wrest peace-making away from the exclusive control of politicians and military establishments. Too often, peace initiatives are proposed as a last resort, with negotiations restricted to the warmongers, and imposed on those most affected, particularly women and children. Those who have suffered the most must have a place at the table when peace agreements are drawn up, with equal representation for women. If necessary, civil society should also convene peace initiatives before crises get out of control and lives are lost. This can help to turn early warning from a slogan into a reality.

Bottom-Up Globalisation

The alarming concentration of economic power and the irresponsible imposition of neo-liberal, macro-economic policies are destroying the environment, generating poverty and desperation, widening divisions and fomenting war. The Hague Appeal encourages efforts to challenge this destructive model of globalisation through community-based coalitions such as the Jubilee 2000 call for debt forgiveness and through campaigns to eradicate poverty and economically empower women.

Democratic International Decision-Making

The United Nations system and other multilateral institutions have the capacity to be a unique and universal force for peace. Too often, however, they have been treated with cynicism, politicised, and under-funded. The international system must

be revived, democratised and provided with resources if it is realise its potential in peace-building. In particular, we call for a Security Council that can serve human security rather than Great Power interests, and for a radical reorientation of international financial institutions to make them more transparent and accountable and to serve human rather than corporate needs.

Humanitarian Interventions

The Hague Appeal demands the speedy and effective intervention of humanitarian forces, subject to the prescriptions of the United Nations Charter, when civilians are threatened by genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and extreme natural disasters. It is extraordinary that so little attention has been paid to the idea of establishing a standing intervention force. Civil society should consider new forms of civilian intervention as a matter of urgency.

Finding the Money for Peace and Starving the Funds for War

The allocation of resources is seriously distorted. Many of today's conflicts are fuelled by economic greed and the grab for raw materials, while billions are spent on the arms trade and other forms of militarisation. At the same time, many worthwhile peace initiatives and programs for human security suffer from a lack of funds even though governments have adopted an extraordinary series of global action plans at the historic world conferences convened during the last decade of the 20th century. These priorities must be reversed. In addition to eliminating weapons of mass destruction and drastically curbing the arms trade, military budgets must be progressively reduced.