

INTERNATIONAL PEACE BUREAU

Annual Seminar

**BOOKS OR BOMBS?
SUSTAINABLE DISARMAMENT FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Statement by Jayantha Dhanapala

DISARMAMENT AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am overwhelmed and humbled by this award of the Sean MacBride Prize from the International Peace Bureau. I begin by paying tribute to the memory of Sean MacBride – a great twentieth century figure who moved from being an Irish revolutionary onto the stage of international affairs, first as Foreign Minister of Ireland, and, later, as a senior United Nations official. He then helped set up many civil society organizations like Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists.

I must quote to you the words from his speech when he received the Nobel Peace Prize – words which are so relevant to those engaged in the so-called “war against terrorism” today – *“If those vested with authority and power practice injustice, resort to torture and killing, is it not inevitable that those who are the victims will react with similar methods? This does not condone savagery or inhuman conduct but it does provide part of the explanation for the increasing violence and brutality of our world.”*

I thank the IPB for the honour they have conferred on me and dedicate this award to the innocent civilians who are the helpless victims of conflicts throughout the world.

May I now move to my main presentation?

It is an honour and a pleasure to address such a distinguished audience at the Annual Seminar of the International Peace Bureau in this historic city of Alexandria – the Pearl of the Mediterranean. The International Peace Bureau is the world’s oldest and most comprehensive civil society coalition dedicated to the cause of peace and disarmament. It was founded in 1891 and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910. The fact that we meet in this ancient capital of Alexandria, founded in 331 B.C., and on the site of the famous library which has been known as a beacon of learning and

culture for the entire world, heightens the significance of this Seminar.

But antiquity and past laurels alone are not sufficient when we are confronted with the formidable challenges to humanity in today's world. It is vital, of course, that we draw lessons from past experience and the wisdom of our forbears in order to re-tool our skills and re-focus our energies on today's problems. The focus of today's Seminar is entirely appropriate – "Books or Bombs? Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development." For we are in fact addressing the primordial debate in human history on the trade-off between allocations of resources for guns and for butter. It is a reflection of the inherent dichotomy in human nature between the propensity for violence and war and the yearning for peace and stability. More recently, we have seen this debate in terms of the demands for disarmament, so that resources can be released for much needed development to usher in a safer and a better world. In the context of our Seminar, what I mean by "Sustainable Disarmament" is the total and verifiable elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and the regulation of conventional weapons to the lowest possible levels to ensure security.

Before we proceed further, let us look at the facts. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in its latest Year Book estimates that world military expenditure in 2006 reached \$ 1204 billion in current US dollars. This surpasses cold war military expenditure levels at a time when there are no antagonisms among the great powers of the world. This figure translates into \$ 184 per every man, woman and child on this earth. That is a shocking contrast to the fact that one billion people live under one dollar per day which is the accepted bench mark for absolute poverty in this world. Almost ten million children die every year before their fifth birth day from preventable causes. This will require a fraction of current global military expenditure to remedy. The entire set of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education - will entail an annual investment of \$ 40-60 billion to achieve by the target date of 2015. \$ 5.8 trillion was spent on the US nuclear programme from 1940 through 1996. The costs of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have gone into hundreds of billion of dollars. I would invite you to look at a website “www.nationalpriorities.org” which, even as you view it, shows the costs of the Iraq war escalating in nano seconds and compares it with what that expenditure can achieve in the US alone in public housing, public education, pre-schools, children’s health and college

scholarships. Extrapolate these figures on a global basis and you will see the opportunity costs of global military expenditure in terms of what we can do to reduce poverty, disease, mal-nutrition, bad sanitation and most other problems associated with underdevelopment.

While identifying the main sources of the problem of over armament and underdevelopment in the world is important, we must share a collective guilt. My own country – Sri Lanka – has had to increase its defence budget in order to combat the problem of terrorism. However, the incontrovertible fact is that of the global military expenditure of \$ 1204 billion, the share of the USA is 46%, the UK 5%, France 5%, China 4%, Japan 4%, with many other countries following. Viewed regionally, while North America accounts for 47% of military spending, Western Europe accounts for 22%, Asia 15% and the Middle East 6%. The arms sales of the hundred largest arms producing companies in the world reached an estimated \$ 290 billion in 2005. SIPRI's list of the twenty five biggest arms producing companies shows that they are all from the developed countries of the industrialized northern hemisphere. The ten largest exporters of major conventional weapons in the period 2002 to 2006 were USA with 30.2%, Russia with 28.9%, Germany 8.6%, France 8.3% followed by the UK, The Netherlands, Italy, China, Sweden and Israel. The

biggest importing countries of major conventional weapons in the same period were China and India. The trend in the volume of transfers in major conventional weapons during this period shows a 50% increase. The rising costs of developing large and sophisticated conventional weapon systems are making countries dependent on others for weapons and weapon technologies. This is placing a heavy strain on the economies of countries. At the same time non-state actors and terrorist groups are buying their arms from the arms producing companies either directly or through clandestine means.

The other important statistic that we must bear in mind is that conflicts in the world are increasingly intrastate and not interstate. In 2006, seventeen major armed conflicts raged in the world, none of which were interstate. This highlights the role of non-state actors and terrorist groups in armed conflict and compels us to look for the root causes of conflict - specially, as they affect developing countries. The concept of security has broadened today to embrace peace and security, development and human rights. It is this tripod that supports human security and sustainable development. Like in any tripod, every leg is vital and indispensable. Military expenditure corrodes every leg of the tripod – perpetuating poverty and fuelling conflict.

Despite this undeniable fact, international relations have become so specialized that we do not always keep this fundamental inter-relationship among the three components of security in focus. The community of disarmament experts talk to each other but seldom talk to the community of development experts. Likewise, the human rights experts and NGOs in that community operate in a closed circle, forgetting that the right to life and the right to development are also essential human rights. We do not therefore have a dialogue which transcends the artificial boundaries drawn among these subjects of disarmament, development and human rights. We have to mainstream human security by integrating the various aspects of security. The United Nations and other international and regional organizations suffer from the same problems of rigid compartmentalization – in their structures and in their functioning. My own ten year experience working within the UN made it clear that co-ordination was the most difficult objective to achieve. Perhaps, for the first time an attempt has begun with the Peace Building Commission where, finally, the UN has grasped the importance of an integrated approach to ensure that after the peace keepers have left, we can have a realistic chance of a durable peace with an integrated approach for post conflict recovery. Political, economic, human rights, disarmament, institution building and other aspects must go together in ensuring a durable peace, so that no

longer will we have past conflicts reviving in countries where they have taken place. That is the path we all need to take, if we are to make an impact in achieving sustainable peace.

Extensive research has been conducted on the relationship between conflicts and poverty, especially after the cold war and the proxy wars that were a pattern of that period. The intra-state conflicts that I spoke of earlier have stemmed from economic, ethnic and religious differences and have at worst assumed the forms of terrorism, warlordism and gangsterism. Four main causes emerge from the literature of scholars examining the causes of conflict today. They are: (1) Modernization – the reaction against rapid development that creates inequity and gaps between the rich and the poor threatening traditional ways of life, (2) Dependency – the reaction of some countries to a perception that global capitalism is being imposed on them, (3) Mobilization – where disaffected groups mobilize and resist oppressive state action, and (4) Stagnation – where poverty and deprivation force groups to fight against existing governments.

In all these instances, poverty contributes towards conflict and terrorism. It breeds despair and desperation compelling the poor, especially the youth, to be tempted or forced into violence.

The linkage between environment and development has long been recognized. There is a consensus today on sustainable development. We are now faced with a new problem and that is climate change. The climate projection models used by the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change (IPCC) and their reports, which earned them the Nobel Peace Prize of 2007, point to the fact that abnormalities and climatic disasters will become more intensive and frequent and that the poor of the world will have to bear the brunt of climate change in the future. The forthcoming 2007 Human Development Report, while describing climate change as the defining human development challenge of the 21st Century, states that “the poorest countries and the most vulnerable citizens will suffer the earliest and most damaging set backs, even though they have contributed least to the problem.” There is every likelihood that the impact of climate change, from which no country will be immune, will lead to increased competition for diminishing resources, and therefore to increased conflict. We have to act now to prevent that.

Thus the contemporary relationship between disarmament and development is far more complex than it has been in the past. What has the international community, and in particular the United Nations, done about this? I believe firmly that in our world of interdependence, global problems can only be solved by multi-lateral

diplomacy. The UN is at the apex of the multi-lateral diplomatic system. But it is also at the cross roads between realpolitik and the pursuit of aggressive national interest, and a norm based world order. Reconciling power-based realism with what is in the co-operative and collective global interest remains a central challenge. Thus, the UN has been no more successful in addressing the problem of mis-allocation of resources for arms in relation to development needs than in any other areas. The UN Charter, written after two of the bloodiest world wars human-kind has ever experienced, provides us with guidance with regard to what we must do. While providing for the inherent right of self-defence in Article 51 and the collective defence of international peace and security in Chapter 7, the Charter un-equivocally seeks the achievement of international peace and security *“with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.”* However, it was not until 1978 in the UN General Assembly’s First Special Session devoted to Disarmament (SSOD 1) that the world agreed on the relationship between arms expenditure and development in the following words: *“In a world of finite resources there is a close relationship between expenditure on armaments and economic and social development (arms expenditure) diverts to military purposes not only material but also technical and human resources which are*

urgently needed for development in all countries, particularly in the developing countries."

Almost a decade later, mainly on the initiative of the Non-Aligned Movement, an International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development was convened in 1987 in New York. It was attended by 150 countries with the conspicuous absence of the USA. The final document adopted by that Conference stated, and I quote, *"The world can either continue to pursue the arms race with characteristic vigour or move consciously and with deliberate speed towards a more stable and balanced social and economic development within a more sustainable international economic and political order; it cannot do both."*

Following that Conference, Resolutions were adopted every year at the UN General Assembly drawing the attention of Member States to the final document and urging the implementation of its conclusions. When I assumed charge of the re-established Department of Disarmament Affairs at the request of Kofi Annan in 1998, I resolved to bring the issue of disarmament and development to the fore-front from the back burner to which it had been relegated by the malign neglect of the international community and the complacency of

developing countries. A high level Steering Committee comprising the Administrator of UNDP, the Under Secretaries General of the Departments of Economic and Social Affairs, Peace Keeping Operations and Disarmament Affairs was established to co-ordinate initiatives. On the basis of the work of the Steering Committee, a UN General Assembly Resolution was adopted setting up a Group of Governmental Experts to re-appraise the relationship between disarmament and development and the Report of that Study was issued in 2004. It was important to take into account the international changes that had taken place since the 1987 Conference, especially with globalization, the end of the cold war, the proliferation of small arms and the problems of non-state actors. The Report has made an important contribution towards our understanding of how disarmament and development can contribute towards building a world free from want and fear. The changed international context was described and the opportunity for new initiatives was studied. The peace dividend that was anticipated after the cold war ended, was seen to have had little impact on the widening global poverty gap. Underdevelopment and poverty continued and the poor were becoming poorer. The need for funding to meet the Millennium Development Goals requires an increase of Official Development Assistance (ODA) by \$ 50 billion per year. The Report stated that *“Disarmament and development are two distinct, yet mutually re-*

inforcing, process that are linked by security in all its aspects both should be pursued regardless of the pace of progress in the other; one should not be made hostage to the other”. Clearly the objective is to maintain security at lower levels of armaments. Every country has legitimate security interests. But the regulation of armaments in relation to financial, human and physical resources needed for development should be a policy guideline. The policy choices of states depend on threat perceptions. Transparency in weapons holdings and a more secure and stable international system are therefore vital.

In its recommendations the study emphasized the importance of multi-lateral approaches, the central role of the UN and the implementation of multi-lateral arms control agreements and development commitments. While combating terrorism, the Member States of the UN were urged to incorporate disarmament and security concerns in their poverty reduction strategies. The contribution of disarmament to the implementation of MDGs was identified as an important policy objective. A series of other measures were also recommended to Member States in mainstreaming the disarmament-development relationship and raising awareness of it in the international community.

Since then, we have had the same Resolution adopted every year in the UN as before. In other words, it has been business as usual with the Resolution sponsored by the Non-Aligned Movement updating itself by reference to the Report of the Group of Governmental Experts inviting Members to provide information on the implementation of the recommendations and, almost ritualistically, requesting that the item be tabled in the agenda of the next General Assembly. So, that is the way in which the global community deals at the United Nations with the relationship between disarmament and development – not with a bang but with a whimper!

Ladies & Gentlemen, after a long career representing my government as a diplomat and working for the international community as an international civil servant, I am deeply convinced that it is civil society, and civil society alone, that can initiate change in the current global world order. It is a belief that Sean MacBride held and which he stated clearly in his Nobel Peace Prize Lecture. The banality of the most recent Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly's First Committee on the Relationship between disarmament and development indicates the limits of action that can be achieved by the nation states of this world. Some years ago, the New York Times described Civil Society as "the other Super Power". Indeed, it is a

Super Power that does not realize its capabilities. Jody Williams and the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBLM) used the e-mail to begin a groundswell that led ultimately to the Mine Ban Convention. It is organizations like the International Peace Bureau and the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, which I am now privileged to lead, that can mobilize international public opinion on the urgent issues of the day, such as, the need to eliminate nuclear weapons, to reduce military expenditure, to combat climate change and to reduce poverty and underdevelopment.

The Wall Street Journal of the 4th of January this year published an op-ed article written by George Schultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn which calls for US leadership to take the world “to a solid consensus for reversing reliance on nuclear weapons globally as a vital contribution to preventing their proliferation into potentially dangerous hands, and ultimately ending them as a threat to the world.” It went on to describe the doctrine of deterrence as obsolete and called for a world without nuclear weapons for which the leaders of nuclear weapons states must work together. This initiative was supported shortly thereafter by former President Gorbachev and later by the UK Foreign Secretary. A Conference held in Stanford at the end of last month has followed up on this initiative and there is a real prospect that we may have the

work of this influential group impact on the policy of the new Administration elected in the USA in November 2008. We, as civil society, have also to prepare for the changes of political leadership that will take place next year in the US and Russia, while persuading the new leaders in other key countries to take action on disarmament and development. We cannot afford to wait until leaders retire from positions of power and prestige to experience their personal epiphanies and changes of heart. We have to demand that those now holding power – and especially those who are elected by the people – must respond to the issues of all the peoples of the world for substantial reductions in military expenditures which contribute to conflicts and to their diversion for economic and social development.

It is not enough for this Seminar to end with pious exhortations and homilies. Earlier this year, we celebrated the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery which at one stage of human history seemed a permanent institution in global affairs. But the work of William Wilberforce and his supporters changed that ugly aspect of international affairs. Likewise, we have seen the elimination of colonialism and apartheid. This was achieved through the work of conscientious groups of individuals who mobilized public opinion.

We, in the IPB can achieve the same results with regard to persuading policy makers to engage in policies of sustainable disarmament for sustainable development. But we can do more than this. I propose that we target the 25 biggest arms producing companies in the world, identified in the SIPRI Year Book of 2007, for a systematic and sustained boycott in the same way as the anti-apartheid movement boycotted the then minority white racist government of South Africa helping to bring about the transition to a non-racial democracy led by Nelson Mandela. Shareholders, investors and employees – and especially the scientists - of these 25 companies must feel the pressure of international public opinion. It may take 5 years; it may take 10 years - but it has to be done for the greatest good of the greatest number. I give you the list of these arms producing companies and the arm sales they made in 2005. This organized and sustained boycott will make a practical contribution towards ensuring that the companies accept a sense of corporate social responsibility to the rest of the world and make their contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We will need a coalition of like minded civil society groups to study, plan and implement the boycott. But let us make a start here and now. Civil society activism is a vital factor in today's international relations. We are following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and others.

Here are the 25 companies:-

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| 1. | Boeing (USA) | \$ 28, 050 m. |
| 2. | Northrop Grumman (USA) | \$ 27, 590 m. |
| 3. | Lockheed Martin (USA) | \$ 26, 460 m. |
| 4. | BAE Systems (UK) | \$ 23, 230 m. |
| 5. | Raytheon (USA) | \$ 19, 800 m. |
| 6. | General Dynamics (USA) | \$ 16, 570 m. |
| 7. | Finmeccanica (Italy) | \$ 9, 800 m. |
| 8. | EADS (Europe) | \$ 9, 580 m. |
| 9. | L-3 Communications (USA) | \$ 8, 970 m. |
| 10. | Thales (France) | \$ 8, 940 m. |
| 11. | United Technologies Corp. (USA) | \$ 6, 840 m. |
| 12. | SAIC (USA) | \$ 5, 060 m. |
| 13. | DCN (France) | \$ 3, 520 m. |
| 14. | Rolls Royce (UK) | \$ 3, 470 m. |
| 15. | Computer Sciences Corp. (USA) | \$ 3, 400 m. |
| 16. | ITT Industries (USA) | \$ 3, 190 m. |
| 17. | General Electric (USA) | \$ 3, 000 m. |
| 18. | Honeywell International (USA) | \$ 2, 940 m. |
| 19. | Halliburton (USA) | \$ 2, 720 m. |
| 20. | SAFRAN (France) | \$ 2, 630 m. |

21. Dassault Aviation Groupe (France) \$ 2, 210 m.
22. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (Japan) \$ 2, 190 m.
23. Saab (Sweden) \$ 2, 110 m.
24. Alliant Techsystems (USA) \$ 2, 060 m.
25. Harris (USA) \$ 1, 870 m.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Sir Isaac Newton once said – “If I have seen a little further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”. Here in this historic city and in this historic Bibliotheca Alexandrina, let us attempt to develop a vision of a better world, building on the accumulated wisdom of the past.

I thank you.

(Jayantha Dhanapala is a former UN Under-Secretary General and a former Ambassador of Sri Lanka. He is currently Chairman of the UN University Council and President of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. The views expressed here are personal to him.)