

press release for the
HUMAN SECURITY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
appeal

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Contacts:

Vanda Proskova (Czech Republic) +420 728 407 661 vanda@pnnd.org

Jennifer Blemur (USA) jblemur@wand.org

Miriam Petersen (Germany) +49 178 101 8019 miriam.petersen@worldfuturecouncil.org

24 May 2020. Governments need to cut military expenditure, and increase their focus and budgets on human security and global cooperation, in order to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, address climate change and ensure a sustainable future, according to an international women's appeal released today by [Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament](#) (PNND), [Women Legislators' Lobby](#) (WiLL) and [World Future Council](#) (WFC).

The appeal, ***Human security for public health, peace and sustainable development***, endorsed by 237 women legislators, religious leaders and civil society leaders from more than 40 countries* was released to coincide with International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament on May 24, 2020. It also supports, in particular, United Nations' initiatives for peace and disarmament including the global ceasefire initiative and the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament.

"The pandemic has undeniably demonstrated that key issues of human security cannot be resolved through military means, or independently by nations, but require global cooperation, diplomacy and peace. The United Nations, and its agencies like the World Health Organisation, and UN Environment Programme are vital for building such cooperation and peace. They must be better supported" says Alexandra Wandel, Executive Director, World Future Council.

"Our priorities are clear--It's time to stop lining defense contractors' pockets and spending vital taxpayer dollars on nuclear weapons. Instead, we must use the resources to support economic recovery from the pandemic. We will need global cooperation to rebuild our nations. Women legislators, religious leaders, and civil society organizations are championing the call for human security," clarifies Jennifer Blemur, director, Women Legislators' Lobby.

Nuclear weapons production destroys our planet, universal happiness nurtures our world" says an endorser of the appeal Ela Gandhi. *"This is why we must also support the UN initiative for a global ceasefire,"* explains Vanda Proskova, Coordinator for PNND Czech Republic and one of the appeal's organizers. *"Women around the world know that armed conflict in their communities intensifies the impact of the COVID-19 on public health and human suffering, and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to manage. And ceasefires should be transformed into lasting peace agreements, with the full participation of women in the negotiations and implementation of peace agreements. Including women in these peace processes has been demonstrated to assist to reach peace agreements and to ensure that they are sustainable."*

The appeal is also commemorating the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, which was established to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'. *"The UN has an array of mechanisms through*

which nations can resolve conflicts, negotiate disarmament and address humanitarian issues and achieve security through diplomacy, not war,” agree the coordinators of the appeal. “We urge all governments to make better use of these mechanisms, including to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice for international conflicts (74 countries have already done so), and to replace nuclear deterrence and provocative arms races with reliance on common security.”

„The world became more united to combat the Coronavirus pandemic. Let us build on that unity and be torchbearers for a better world embracing human security for our common future,” the signatories call.

* The appeal is endorsed by women legislators, religious leaders and civil society leaders from Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cameroon, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ghana, France, Ireland, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lichtenstein, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Togolese Republic, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, United Kingdom and the United States.

Quotes from some of the endorsers:

“Nuclear weapons production destroys our planet, universal happiness nurtures our world.”

Ela Gandhi (South Africa). Former Co-President of Religions for Peace. Grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi.

“Now is the time to create closer bonds to our brothers and sisters to be more at one with nature, to pull down walls of division and separation and to discard the them and us mentality which fuels the arms race. Poverty and pandemics cannot be eradicated with nuclear weapons and war. We all must cooperate to ensure we co-exist and survive as the human species at one with ourselves, nature and a new earth.”

Mairead Maguire (Northern Ireland). Nobel Peace Laureate (1976).

“Women are not only victims of armed conflict and violence but they can and should be leading the efforts in peace building, peace-making and conflict resolution. We need more women in peace and security.”

Maria Fernanda Espinosa (Ecuador). President of the 73rd UN General Assembly. Former Foreign Minister of Ecuador.

“Countries like Canada with a long tradition of multilateralism and UN engagement whilst also holding membership in NATO, a nuclear-armed alliance, have a special responsibility”, says former Canadian disarmament Ambassador Peggy Mason. “It is long past time for a shift to sustainable peace and common security, as envisaged by the UN Charter, and Canada must help make that happen.”

Peggy Mason (Canada), President, L’Institut Rideau Institute. Former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament to the UN.

“We welcome Securing Our Common Future, the Disarmament Agenda launched by United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) in 2018, and we call for warring parties around the world to agree to the UNSG’s appeal of March 2020 for a global ceasefire to help combat the Coronavirus pandemic. It should be

accompanied with significant cuts in the production and trade of conventional weapons and small arms, with the goal of achieving sustainable world peace and reducing violence."

Hon. Daisy Lilián Tourné Valdez (Uruguay), President, Parliamentary Forum Small Arms and Light Weapons.

"The current pandemic has once again exposed the gross inequalities in our health infrastructure with women and girls, along with other vulnerable sections of civil society bearing the brunt of its impact. It's time that we stopped this profligate wastage of resources on WMDs, arms and ammunition under the mistaken pretext of security. Instead, we need policies that encourage access to education and healthcare, that boost disaster resilience and replace this fear psychosis with a desire for peace."

Kehkashan Basu (United Arab Emirates/Canada), World Future Council Youth Ambassador. Winner 2016 International Children's Peace Prize. Named one of Canada's most 25 influential women of 2018.

'In this 75th anniversary year of the United Nations, and on International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament, it is my privilege to join other women parliamentarians, mayors and civil society leaders in reaffirming our collective commitment to the founding goals of the United Nations. We must continue to maintain world peace and strive to make the world a better place for people all over the world through cooperation and a shared commitment to the SDGs. And we must support women human rights champions, and those who are being persecuted for promoting peace and equality for all. It is only through our sustained collective action that we can help build a peaceful, secure, sustainable, and just world where all diversity is embraced and we include all citizens as equal human beings.'

Louisa Wall MP (Aotearoa-New Zealand), Deputy Chair of PNND New Zealand and Co-Chair Cross Party Women Parliamentarians. Women's Rugby World Cup champion.

"Even to speak in terms of "waging war with a virus" reveals our romance with weapons and war frameworks. We are unprepared to meet a global health emergency because we chose to invest in guns and global destruction over genuine human security. The paradox inherent in this moment is that even as we grieve the losses resulting from this current pandemic, we can make better choices for our future. We can answer the 75-year old call to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, investing our resources instead in our common future. With our bold actions taken now, we can write a better letter to future generations and call forth a world built on peace, respect, sustainable development, and justice."

Rev. Emma Jordan-Simpson (USA), Executive Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation Brooklyn, USA.

"It is hard to believe that an incredible high amount of money is still being spent on nuclear armament. At a time, when money is urgently needed for health, education and science. It is hard to believe that there are still armed conflicts when the only way to combat global threats such as pandemics and climate change is cooperation."

Christine Muttonen (Austria), Former President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

"Nuclear weapons are liabilities, not assets. They do nothing to keep us safe against the pandemic we now face, or the rising threat of climate change, or other threats to our national security. Today, we celebrate the opportunity at hand to redefine our future. This is our chance to redefine what human security truly means so that we can achieve a more peaceful, inclusive and just world."

Elizabeth Warner (USA), Managing Director, Ploughshares Fund and the Women's Initiative.

"UN SC resolution 1325 stresses the essential role of women in peace making and conflict resolution. COVID19 has exposed our vulnerabilities as nation states. Global security is not achievable by war and

military might. It requires global cooperation and mutual trust. Women parliamentarians call for multilateralism to replace conflict and for spending on arms to be redirected to building strong responses to health and climate disasters. We are stronger together.”

Hon. Hedy Fry, P.C., MP. (Canada). Special Representative on Gender Issues for the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

“As the international community faces a resurgence of the threat posed by nuclear weapons, bold, creative, and cooperative diplomatic action to eliminate these dangerous and destabilizing weapons is imperative. As global citizens we must demand that leaders take concrete steps to end the arms race, eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, and verifiably dismantle nuclear arsenals, because there is no place for nuclear weapons in a just and sustainable peace.”

Kelsey Davenport (USA), Director for Non-proliferation Policy, Arms Control Association.

“I appeal to all world leaders to immediately start working for ceasefires, demining, disarmament and peace processes. The global military budget of \$1,700 billion (\$100 billion alone on nuclear weapons!) is insane and must urgently be converted to support climate protection, public health, countries most in need and the Sustainable Development Goals!”

Margareta Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), Former Chair of OSCEPA-Committee on Democracy, human rights and humanitarian questions. Board Member of Peace Women Across the Globe (PWAG).

“I’m proud to count myself as an active member of the Women Legislators’ Lobby. This is a group that understands just how important each issue is in relation to the next. COVID-19 has made us realize just how small and interconnected the world is. Nuclear armament did not stop this virus and it won’t help us to eliminate it. We must reject the rule that tells us that only weapons make us strong. We can no longer ignore the responsibility we have to reimagine our diplomatic place on the international stage. I stand with the Women Legislators’ Lobby today and every day as we work to redefine what power is and to simply make this world a better place to be.”

Rep. Carol Ammons (USA). Member, Illinois State Assembly and the Women Legislators’ Lobby.

„Women perspective and their role are crucial for tackling the local and global problems we face today. This current crisis has shown even more this need. We need public policies that brings to centre stage life, cares, peace and cooperation. Gender equality should be an integral part of the solution to address the major challenges of our time, as the Beijing Declaration states, adopted twenty-five years ago in the UN IVth World Women’s Conference, which has the full backing of 189 countries. Today we should demand once again that we do not want and need more weapons and military budget but new approaches to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way. I am convinced that most women are on the right path and for this global paradigm shift. We are willing to take the leadership towards a safer, fairer, more peaceful and inclusive world. Only in that way we will be able to achieve a genuine sustainable development.”

Alba Barnusell i Ortuño, (Spain) Deputy Mayor for Strategic planning and Governance of the Granollers City Council and Deputy Delegate for Gender Equality Policies of the Barcelona Provincial Council.