Quaker Peace Testimony

The Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), represents Friends in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Madagascar, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This meeting is concerned for peace and development in these countries, in Angola and Mozambique as well as in Africa as a whole.

Quakers have a long tradition in working for peace. We believe that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the gospel of Christ. The governments of the world at the United Nations General Assembly have declared the years 2001–2010 a ‘Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World’.

We commit ourselves, and call on all citizens and governments, to initiate programmes that will bring this culture into being.

There are more wars in Africa than in any other part of the world.

We commit ourselves and call on all citizens and governments to:

- Work towards the abolition of war in Africa
- Build peace by non-military means
- Demilitarise and reduce expenditure on arms
- Convert arms industries to socially useful production and, in the interim, to ensure transparent and accurate reporting of all subsidies, direct and indirect, to the arms industry and related activities
- Consider voluntary or national youth non-military service as a means of building peace and development
- Consider state funded ‘Institutes for Peace’ to research non-military means to ensure the security of the state against strategic threats as well as research the experience in peacemaking that has been developed on the African continent.

Nobel laureates have proposed a code of conduct for the transfer of small arms. Africa is awash with arms, particularly small arms, which have not contributed to stability and have diverted scarce resources away from peace and development.

We commit ourselves and call on all citizens and governments to:

- Work towards a moratorium on the import to, and manufacture of arms in, Africa and, in the interim, legislate and implement rigorous controls on arms transfers
- Ensure effective gun control legislation as well as its effective implementation
- Recover and destroy 1) Illegal arms
2) Arms left over after cessation of hostilities
3) Arms surplus to police and military requirements.

Peace is not brought about by preparation for war. Peace is achieved by ensuring democracy, good governance, and justice, and upholding the rule of law and human rights. It is achieved by addressing the basic needs of people such as provision of adequate health care, fighting the scourge of HIV/AIDS, eliminating inequality and poverty and providing education including early childhood education, adult literacy and peace education. We commit ourselves and call on all citizens and governments to:

- Work towards democracy, good governance, human rights, equality and meeting the basic needs of all people in the region.

Economic inequality is a major cause of war, instability and lack of security. Our security is not ensured by arming ourselves, employing armed response and building high walls with razor wire, but by economic justice and building strong communities. 

We commit ourselves and call on all people to:
- Contribute by way of wealth, talent or effort to the promotion of peace, reconciliation and economic justice.

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We we call on governments to ensure that their policies create a more equitable distribution of wealth. Leaders of government have committed their armed forces to war in foreign countries as well as inviting foreign armies to their territories without informing their citizens or getting a mandate from their citizens by a decision of parliament.

We commit ourselves and call on all citizens and governments of the region to:

- Work for the abolition of armed forces and in the interim
- Ensure transparency and accountability when military decisions are made.

Women are major victims of war and potentially major contributors to peace, but are seldom consulted when decisions are made which result in war or when peace treaties are negotiated.

We commit ourselves and call on all citizens and governments to:

- Ensure that peace and peacemaking are enhanced by equal participation of women and men.

Conflicts in the region are fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources from which only a few individuals benefit. The majority of citizens suffer the effects of war and are not organised so as to be able to bring an end to the conflict.

We commit ourselves and call on all people and governments to:

- Identify and expose those who benefit from conflicts in the region
- Support civil society movements working for peace.
South Africa destroyed its nuclear weapons that had been built by the apartheid regime without the knowledge of its citizens.

_We commit ourselves and call on all citizens and governments to:_

- Ensure that never again are nuclear weapons manufactured in Africa
- Ensure that nuclear weapons are never transferred to any African country
- Ensure that nuclear weapons never enter the territorial waters of any African country on a foreign naval vessel nor that they ever be flown over any African air space
- Ensure that nuclear weapons are never targeted at any African country
- Ensure that Africa remains a nuclear weapon-free zone.

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We would like to draw attention to the fact that The Coalition Against Military Spending in South Africa has called on organisations and individuals in South Africa to sign their Charter:

- Declaring their opposition to the recent and the prospective increases in military spending
- Demanding a substantially increased allocation of resources to poverty eradication and development
- Demanding transparency and honesty of the government on defence spending and its economic implications
- Committing them to building real security in the Southern African region. We commend this charter to all people and governments in the region. We call on people in South Africa and its government to support this charter. We call on citizens and governments of the other countries in the region to work towards initiating similar charters and coalitions within their own countries.

Quakers have witnessed to their opposition to war and preparations for war by conscientious objection and by refusal to support war financially.

_We commit ourselves and call on all people in the region to work for legislation allowing:_

1. 1) Taxpayers to indicate that their taxes are not to be used for military expenditure
2. 2) For conscientious objection to military service.

_Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting Modderpoort, South Africa 2000_