

The Gothenburg Process

The Bogota Process

THE ARMS CONTROL TO PROMOTE CITIZEN SECURITY AND POVERTY REDUCTION

**Inter-religious theological reflection as a recommendation to the
XLI General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS)**

Convened by the Bogota Process Coordinating Committee, the Members of the Executive Committee of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace* issue this document, infused with our consideration that the defense of life is the central element of the divine kingdom, from which emerge the principles that guide our social ethics: preserving human dignity, and promoting social justice, solidarity and responsibility of governments to the individual.

We emphasize the option for the vulnerable and marginalized people, which implies a constant defense of the victims of violations and marginalization, and the consequent denounce of social exclusion as a focus of violence. We consider the social proliferation of weapons as an effective threat to everyone, that affect also the social fabric of solidarity for which we work.

We profess different faiths that join into the consideration that in every man and woman is seen the living image of Divinity itself. To this human being, that received from the Creator an incomparable and inalienable dignity, we offer the highest and unique service, constantly reminding his highest calling. We reaffirm the social function of religions in our region, and, therefore, we assume our responsibility to build a better world for future generations through the advance of peace and promotion of the community of nations.

We believe that all social, scientific and cultural programs need to be chaired by the conscience of the primate of human being. The public authority should watch carefully in order not to let generate situations that harm the dignity of any person and must ensure the effective exercise of human rights for all. Those who are invested of politic, legal or professional responsibility towards others must be vigilant conscience of society, and be the first builders of a civil life together worthy of human being.

We note that there is a direct relationship between violence and inequality. Social exclusion exposes to many, especially young people, to be actors and victims of violence. The extreme poverty in which our peoples live not only needs charity practices but, adobe all, the primacy of justice.

We find that violence scenarios require the arms trade. Unfortunately, they are considered as a good exchanged in the global market, regardless of the legal and ethical implications of their manufacture, possession and trade, and especially in the oblivion of pain and death that are

causing in our peoples. The production and proliferation of weapons are the source of most human rights violations in the world. An action at international level is required to eradicate this evil and weaken its effects.

We consider arms control as an ethical necessity derived from the core mandate of the defense of life, which is a common mandate to the doctrines of the Latin American and Caribbean religions. Such monitoring should watch both the non-proliferation as the necessary proportion between social investment and military spending, in the perspective of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We understand that a key challenge for the MDGs is to achieve the reduction of citizen insecurity, due to their costs to achieve the development and protection of human rights. We promote a sense of security that recognizes it as a collective and comprehensive good, and involves as its basis the promotion of human dignity.

We support the concept and practice of security based on the pillars of human dignity. This requires the understanding of the destruction caused by the trafficking and proliferation of weapons, as well as to promote a culture of peace based on tolerance, understanding and friendship among people in all its diversity.

We understand that security can be achieved if each person understands the security concerns of the others. To achieve this solidarity, we must overcome the spiritual poverty that has come to accept the possession and trade of weapons such as a regrettable fact but necessary of the life, and the militarization of public security as a realistic approach for the solutions of problems. The common wisdom of communities of faith teaches that human security cannot be the result of the accumulation of weapons, but only the result of security understood in its comprehensively approach, for how to speak up when prevail fear and weapons?

We believe that political participation is the ideal path for the promotion of security understood as comprehensive. Therefore, we seek for active political participation in government and civil bodies, where the question of proliferation and use of weapons is discussed and decided. We seek to impact positively on the paths of true just peace, to overcome the conflicts in all their manifestations.

We reflect about that the development of our Latin American and Caribbean countries has as a necessary condition the access to technologies and production of advances of cutting edge, but due that many of the technological advances of the world today are produced in the field of defense industry, it is necessary that, along with the reduction of trafficking and proliferation of weapons, regional mechanisms of promotion of technological innovation for civilian purposes are implemented.

We recognize the significant progress made by the Organization of American States in the sense of building a comprehensive notion of security. We emphasize specially their advances in the understanding of security as a multidimensional problem, contained in the *Declaration on*

Security in the Americas. We also commend its premise of the protection of human beings as security purpose, formulated in the *Declaration of Nuevo Leon*.

We also share on its criteria concerning the strengthening of the institutional capacities established in the *Commitments to Public Security in the Americas*, and the fulfillment of the law proposed in the *Draft Declaration and Action Plan on Citizen Security in the Americas* that will be considered by the XLI OAS General Assembly.

We call the American States gathered at the OAS to continue with their efforts to build a prosperous and peaceful continent, through the implementation of speeches and practices of the security understood as comprehensive, and the design of mechanisms to reduce the traffic and proliferation of weapons in the region.

We call on all faith communities to raise awareness about the necessity of reducing the trafficking and proliferation of weapons, as a central ethical mandate of our doctrines of faith. We trust that the Creator will illuminate our minds and hearts, and will make justice, dignity and peace shine forever in the Americas, and the entire world.

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* The Latin American and Caribbean Council of Religious Leaders, that gathers the representatives of major religious communities in the region, is one of five regional inter-religious councils of the global network of Religions for Peace, whose mission is to promote common action for peace. Its moderator is H. E. Cardinal Francisco Robles, Archbishop of Monterrey.