

Statement Network Free Future Counter Summit for Peace and Economic Justice
Chicago, Illinois, USA
May 18 & 19, 2012

A New Global Peace and Justice Movement is Rising

The NATO-Free Future gathering in Chicago coincides with a rising global movement against war, militarism, inequality and poverty. We represent the pro-peace and justice majority, the global 99%.

We heed the wisdom of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s call to challenge the "triple evils" of poverty, racial inequality and militarism.

The rising global peace and justice movement works from the premise that poverty, inequality and militarism are forms of violence that constitute an endless cycle that can and must be broken for the survival of humanity. Each feeds off the other, and all must be challenged.

These "triple evils" are embodied in the NATO military alliance and its relationship to the actions of many of the wealthiest countries. We are convinced that to overcome these evils we must oppose wars, embrace peace, and demand that the drive for empire be replaced by an understanding of our global interdependence and a flowering of genuine democracy. And that democracy, in turn will foster greater inclusion, equity and justice for all.

We will pursue an alternative vision of a more peaceful world, which is inextricably linked to economic, social and environmental justice.

Militarism sustains and enforces unjust national and international economic systems and poses a major obstacle to addressing the world's most pressing problems.

NATO, never an entirely defensive alliance, has invaded countries distant from its members such as Afghanistan and Libya to disastrous effect, has expanded to Russia's borders, provoking prospects for a new nuclear arms race, and is reaching even further afield to Africa, east Asia and the Pacific. Since the United States is the main NATO force, Latin America also is threatened by the alliance. NATO's continued reliance on nuclear weapons threatens the future of humanity and the ecosphere.

Supersized military budgets and wars along with G8 policies of austerity, funneling of wealth and resources to the 1%, and privatization and downgrading of public services drive increased unemployment and shrink critical human services.

For example, the decade of NATO's war on Afghanistan has cost the U.S. alone \$530 billion, money that could and should have funded the salaries of school teachers and firefighters, paid healthcare costs for children, adults and veterans, or funded the conversion of tens of millions of homes to solar and wind energy.

Militarism bolsters corporate globalization in a drive to control natural resources, land and markets, and subverts democracy and human rights. It drives migration of workers in search of a better life. It generates huge profits selling weapons to all sides.

Another world -- a great change of course, is necessary. We support the United Nations Charter's call on all nations to resolve international conflicts based on dialogue, diplomacy and international law, and "to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources."

We insist that all foreign military forces and their weapons be returned to their nations of origin and the bases turned over to the host countries. We call for national economic and tax policies to be reoriented to ensure sustainable economic development and the environmental health of the people, not the privileges and power of a relative few.

We envision a world where systemic inequalities are addressed to promote equity and full inclusion of communities of color and immigrants.

A future is possible where youth are prized and their rights and access to free and unmilitarized education respected and supported as an investment in the nation's future.

We work to build a civilization where nonviolent struggle for peace and justice has created security, the world's resources are equitably shared and all enjoy prosperity.

In the near term, we will press for the withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO forces, including military contractors, from Afghanistan now, not a dozen years hence, and will work to prevent new wars.

We demand the abolition of all nuclear weapons. We demand an end to NATO's "nuclear sharing," whereby U.S. nuclear weapons are stationed in ostensibly non-nuclear countries, as an important step toward the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

We will join with the many movements in our respective countries and internationally - for workers rights, immigrants rights, women's rights and the right to peace - to build a politically empowered rising tide for peace and justice.

We will support the campaign to move the money from wars and weapons to fund human needs and guarantee environmental justice. We will build a truly global movement for peace and justice.

In 1966, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "There is nothing more tragic than to sleep through a revolution." Join the new global peace and justice movement.