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NO to War – NO to NATO

Christine Hoffmann, pax christi Germany

First of all I would like to take the opportunity to thank *pagan* for their invitation to speak here today. And I would also like to thank the citizens of Lisbon for the warm and heartfelt welcome they have given to me as a delegate at the Counter Summit.

What a great time to give NATO a new strategic concept, but *what* a missed opportunity to put global zero back on the world's agenda. This course would have found the support of the majority of the world's population. But what does NATO do? NATO insists on nuclear weapons. NATO even adheres to its first-strike policy. The people of the world want a future, but NATO is holding on to the past with its cold war-deterrence philosophy. NATO is pursuing a policy of confrontation with the peoples of the world. But what we want is disarmament – both nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament.

Instead however, NATO is increasing the role of nuclear weapons. These are intended not only as a deterrent, but will also be used in the fight against international terrorism. Apart from the fact that I really cannot imagine how arms of mass destruction could be used to fight terrorist groups, not only to hang onto nuclear weapons but also to and assign them a key role in NATO's new strategic concept is, in effect, an infringement of international law. All NATO member states have signed the non-proliferation treaty and are therefore committed to nuclear disarmament. But assigning new roles to nuclear weapons is precisely the opposite. As citizens of NATO member states we call upon the NATO to uphold international laws!

Speaking as a German citizen, I am enraged that NATO is disregarding the momentum brought about by the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Europe. After a long period of

campaigning the German government finally spoke out in favor of withdrawing the remaining [atomic warheads](#) from German soil. But there are also other voices in Europe. France, for example, has forced through its own nuclear policy. Monsieur Sarkozy! Hear my words! The French peace movement has support from all over Europe and the world. We **will** achieve a future nuclear-free European Zone. We **will not** stop campaigning. And we **will** succeed in the end!

From my personal point of view as a Christian and representative of the German section of the international Catholic peace movement Pax Christi, this insistence on the maintenance, even modernization, of nuclear weapons is tantamount to a policy of threats, deterrence and the militarization of international affairs characteristic of former times. Instead, we should be working towards creating a world that is characterized by trust and cooperation.

Secretary General Rasmussen claims that NATO is acting in the name of peace. As a catholic, my criterion is to examine whether the steps and methods chosen by NATO are consistent with the Christian idea of a just peace. Speaking in trust and acting within the context of interstate dialog is essential on the path to a just peace. Dependability alone could set off a process of reconciliation. Does this new NATO strategic concept promote a trustworthy dialog, for example, the likelihood of a partnership with Russia? [I don't think so!] Yet NATO's unnecessary continued existence after the end of the Cold War also helps maintain the former blocks. As to the partnership to Russia, NATO takes one step forward, only to take three steps back by adopting US plans for a missile shield.

The development and deployment of a Missile Defense System will have wide-reaching and grave consequences for any bilateral or multilateral disarmament initiatives. I find it a cause for (immense) alarm that the German government has suddenly agreed to the development of missile defense. Staff at the German Foreign Office are playing down this policy reversal in an attempt to justify it. But whichever shape the missile defense system takes, it will almost certainly undermine all existing efforts to build the confidence and trust required for disarmament.

In addition to this the idea of missile defense is not new but, as we all know, goes back to America's SDI-plans in the early eighties. At that time this 'Star Wars' was directed at Russia and this policy is still exerting a strong influence on the new plans. It is impossible to attain peace by claiming that missile defense could one day be a joint NATO-Russian venture. This claim ignores the historical facts and undermines the attempt to come to terms with the past, a process that is of vital importance not only for politicians, but also for an entire generation. Deploying a missile shield will not lead to reconciliation, not between Russia and NATO, and (certainly) not between the new eastern NATO member states and Russia.

The question is still unanswered, what exactly is the target? Iran appears to be the only remaining so-called potential adversary. But, from the information available, Iran is far from being able to build weapons capable of reaching intercontinental targets. The arguments for setting up a missile shield are therefore apparently unfounded. In short: the sole purpose of missile defense is to increase the profit margins of the armament industry. By resuming missile defense, NATO will fuel the arms race. But who will be paying for this? A new arms race will indirectly lead to increased poverty in third world countries, and it will increase cutbacks in the welfare state in Europe. This means NATO is also jeopardizing the social harmony.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals describe the most urgent problems that have to be dealt with in building and sustaining a just peace. To justify their strategic concept NATO points to some of the greatest challenges facing the world today. They name, on one hand, climatic disasters, hunger, poverty and the armed conflicts that are forcing people to leave their homes. And on the other, the dependence of the industrial countries on oil and other dwindling resources. But NATO's approach to the problems is to sustain the interests of the NATO states, instead of seeking the solutions in solidarity and mutual security. Quite the contrary: on the basis of the confrontations between east and west, NATO is now

applying the same methods and instruments of threat and military power to sustain the dominant role of its member states in today's world.

The Christian idea of a just peace involves more than the simple absence of war. A just peace includes social justice, worldwide solidarity, and access to food, clean drinking water and health care for all human beings. It also means the integrity of creation, means the empowerment of women, means dialog, reconciliation and non-violence. A just peace therefore requires the respectful and ethical use of resources requires equitable economic structures throughout the world, and it requires the willingness of individuals and nations to act in solidarity and to communicate truthfully and trustingly. A just peace requires political systems that enable people to participate fully in society. NATO's new strategic concept is most certainly not a good guide to how to pursue this path.

NATO generates obstacles to democratic processes. Last week's discussions on the new strategic concept presented a clear of NATO understanding of democracy: all discussions were held behind locked doors! The parliaments of the NATO member states were barred from these discussions, as was the general public.

This lack of a democratic process was no exception. NATO is an alliance of states with decision-making processes that systematically avoid all forms of democratic control. Neither the parliaments of the NATO states, nor the general public are involved in the debates on the new strategic concept. Moreover, in the aftermath of the NATO operation in Kosovo a further issue was made blatantly clear: no instrument was in place for bringing this [illegal] attack before the international courts, despite the fact that it was a blatant breach of international law. There was no way of unmasking those responsible and bringing them to justice. NATO did not have to account for its actions then, and is still not required to do so now. The new strategic concept fails to confine NATO to operations that are carried out solely under the mandate of the United Nations

This military alliance claims to promote democracy in Afghanistan, but has, in fact, suspended the rules of democracy there. This leads me to my last comment. So far I have

not mentioned the war in Afghanistan and NATO's goal of emerging from it victorious. I have only one thing to say on this situation: The military operation in Afghanistan has failed – the consequence can only be to cease all combat operations immediately, to negotiate a ceasefire in all regions and to begin pulling out the international forces now!