

The Beijing Declaration

IPPNW 16th WORLD CONGRESS
September 17-19, 2004

We, physicians and students from more than 40 countries, have met in China, a country rich in history and culture, to address pressing global threats to human security. They include the continued existence of nuclear weapons, terrorism and an increasing reliance on military force.

Nuclear war remains a real possibility. This risk is increased by the development of new generations of nuclear weapons, policies which explicitly allow the use of such weapons in a wider set of circumstances, the renewed development of missile defences and the likely weaponisation of outer space, the continued retention of thousands of nuclear weapons on high alert status and by the degradation of command and control systems. These factors render the risk of nuclear war greater than at the end of the Cold War.

At the Congress, we were honoured by the presence of Mayor Tadatashi Akiba, Mayor of Hiroshima and President of the Emergency Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons. IPPNW strongly and actively endorses the campaign.

From our vantage point here in Beijing, we are particularly concerned about the growing proliferation threat on the Korean peninsula. The role of the Chinese government in advocating the resumption of six-party talks to resolve the crisis is a very positive development, and provides a constructive example. Similar political and diplomatic efforts — not pre-emptive military interventions — should also be applied to the conflicts in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia, and elsewhere.

In addition, the dark cloud of terrorism, in all its forms, looms over humanity, providing impetus to policies based on fear, repression and further violence. The prospect of nuclear terrorism remains real for as long as nuclear weapons remain. It is imperative to ensure that the nuclear weapon states finally honor their commitments to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and that all fissile materials are secured under effective international control.

Undermining the rule of law undermines the security of all people. In particular, the notion of pre-emptive war must be rejected. We share the grave concerns of most of the international community, including UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, that the war against Iraq was illegal. We further believe that the continued occupation of Iraq and the daily violence and bloodshed resulting from this war must be resolved by the establishment of real sovereignty for the Iraqi people.

The decades-long,, tragic conflict in the Middle East must be brought to a just and non-violent resolution. We call for an immediate renewal of peace negotiations between the government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority and we stand ready to support this process through the development of IPPNW's own "Medical Road Map to Peace." IPPNW condemns the acts of violence on both sides of the conflict, and demands the cessation of all activities that incite violence.

While global military expenditures are once again increasing, the ancient enemies of humankind — hunger, disease and poverty — claim millions of lives unnecessarily each year, including a disproportionately large number of children. Moreover, economic policies made in the developed world increase rather than reduce the growing gap between rich and poor nations. We call for substantial reductions in military expenditures and a transfer of these squandered funds toward investments in health and human welfare, consonant with the goal of the World Health Organization, "Health for All".

We affirm our commitment to the abolition of all nuclear weapons, to the prevention of war, and to justice and equity for all people. We reject not only terrorism, but also violent responses to terrorism. We call on all physicians, medical students, and other health workers to join IPPNW in our medical mission to prevent nuclear holocaust and to pursue peaceful, non-violent resolutions to conflict. The need to do so is as urgent as ever before.