

NEIGHBOURS AS FRIENDS, NOT ENEMIES

STATEMENT FROM PEACE SEMINAR IN OSLO 12th – 14th November, 2021

A most fruitful and inspiring Nordic - Russian seminar/webinar was organised in Oslo 12th -14th November, 2021, with participants and speakers from Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and Åland, sharing concerns and perspectives, and looking for solutions.

The event was organised by three Norwegian peace organisations: The Norwegian Peace Alliance, Grandmothers for Peace and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

The objective of the seminar was to elaborate on the overall theme. "Neighbours as friends - not enemies", by strengthening contact and cooperation between Nordic and Russian peace organisations and activists. During the three days more than 50 participants in Oslo and 30 on-line discussed: Safe Storing of Nuclear Waste, Rethinking Security and Strategies for Peace, Demilitarization of the Baltic Sea, Specific challenges regarding the Arctic and How the Nordic Council and Russia can promote peace.

Most major world leaders continue to act as if military force is the answer to the challenges of the day, emerged in the old Roman motto: If you want peace, you must prepare for war, Si vis pacem, para bellum. This thinking is dangerous and obsolete. Building on the UN, research and profound human experience, we propose a paradigm shift, not preparing for the worst but preparing for the best in each other. We need to address the root causes of conflicts, not only the symptoms, and discuss how to promote peace, disarmament and a healthy environment. Continuing strategic forward-looking practical initiatives and solution oriented dialogues is a must.

We want to safeguard and strengthen peaceful developments between the Nordic countries and Russia, not least in the Baltic Sea region and in the Arctic, work against enemy perceptions, promote a culture of peace and human security, integrating gender equality. The governments around the Baltic Sea and the Arctic should enable and encourage people-to-people contact for meaningful and peaceful dialogue, giving particular attention to ensuring indigenous rights and empowerment of people. We consider it important to broaden the knowledge of each other's culture and creativity.

We are alarmed by, and reject, growing suspicion, disinformation and accusations against the peace movements in the "west", accused of being carriers of Russian disinformation, also the peace and environmental voices in Russia being labelled as "foreign agents". Independent voices for peace need encouragement and protection.

There is a need to strengthen strategies for overcoming militarisation, the establishment of foreign bases, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and environmental destruction. A Nordic-Russian conference on handling nuclear waste, decommissioning and stopping nuclear plants is being planned. Ultimately we strive for a Nordic/Arctic Nuclear Weapons free zone. The cooperation between environmental and peace organizations in the Nordic countries and Russia is crucial.

COP26 in Glasgow was important, but military pollution and excessive energy consumption need to be addressed both in national plans and international climate agreements. This necessitates a clear decision to disarm and substantially reduce arms production and trade.

The peace organisations in the Nordic countries encourage the Nordic Council to take a more active part in the work for peace and justice in the Baltic Sea region and in the Arctic, and suggest, for example, the establishment of a subcommittee on peace, disarmament and human security.

We support the initiative of the President of Finland to organise a new OSCE conference in 2025 in the spirit of the original Helsinki OSCE-conference.

We will continue to promote interpersonal exchange, dialogue and mutual understanding all over the region.