

8TH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM 3-4 FEBRUARY 2007

Key Messages: WAR, Militarism, and Environment

Civil society points out the breach of human and ecosystem security due to negative impacts of war, armed conflict and military activities on the environment.

War, armed conflict and militarism run counter to the principles of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 and to the principles found in the civil society Alternative Treaty 45 on Militarism, the Environment and Development, adopted at the NGO Global Forum 1-15, June 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit.

In light of large expenditures of military budgets, the three pillars of sustainable development - environmental, social, and economic - either are destroyed or suffer harm due to military impact on the environment. Wars and forced occupation are imposed on some areas of the world to compete on and possess natural resources, mainly water, land and energy sources. West Asia region has, and continues to be, heavily affected by wars and conflicts. Most Palestinians are denied their historical and ancestral right to safe potable water; their available drinking water is below WHO criteria. Studies by UN and other research centers have shown very high cancer rate and birth defects among children and newborns in Iraq.

Forced migration of environmental refugees, human and/or other species, is created due to war.

Stress is placed on human and ecosystem health due to militarism, unforeseen consequences of militarism, such as killing and permanently disabling living human and other species, the accidental shifting of land mines and other unexploded ordnance by the East Asian tsunami, where populations are already marginalized and vulnerable. Due to landmines, cluster bombs, and unexploded ordinances, agricultural lands are deserted and socioeconomic livelihoods are lost.

"Peacetime" also presents serious issues, including public exposure to hazardous wastes left by military activities and ongoing public exposure to air, water, soil, and noise pollution. Whether the actors are native or foreign forces, or contracted, there appears to be room for critical improvements in the way these actors share risk information with the public and prevent community impacts.

Military activities are exempted from compliance to environmental laws, even in powerful industrialized countries.

We urge the ED of UNEP to:

- To be cognizant of the issues of pro- poor governance of local resources, in light of the agreement his predecessor signed with UNESCO, to mainstream such issues into the formal and informal education aspects of the UN Decade for Sustainable Development Education.
- Examine the links between the trans-boundary transportation of pollution due to military production and the UNEP Regional Seas Programme.
- Survey globally the state of the environmental consequence from military activities during times of armed conflicts and "peacetime" with its member States, Civil Society Organizations and other relevant entities and individuals.
- Fully Implements the program on "Military activities and the environment" which is Section 20 of the Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law for the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century (Montevideo Programme III).

We urge governments to impede any use for "massive" destruction weapons during wars, ban the use of depleted uranium (DU), and to redirect investments allocated to weapon production, sale, or purchase, towards other areas such as sustainable development initiatives and programs.

Finally, sustainable industries can be created and supported from fractions of the financial resources that would be reallocated from present military budgets.

Prepared by the War, Militarism, and Environment Working Group during the 8th Global Civil Society Forum. The following attempts to represent the outcomes of discussions among the major groups present although this is may not be considered explicitly endorsed by all attendees.