

Basel Peace Office – 2018 / 19 Presidents Report

A. Nidecker

Once again the past year of action of the Basel Peace Office (BPO) was characterized by extensive travel activities of the BPO Director Alyn Ware. Important Symposia and Meetings he attended took place in Seoul South Korea, New York City, Washington DC, Dublin, Vienna Luxembourg, London and Edinbourg, Prague and Belgrade. In Switzerland meetings were held in Geneva and Basel. Please refer to the BPO directors report for links and details and to the BPO Website.

BPO again participated at the Basel Peace Forum on January 14 and 15. Again the event was organized by swisspeace and held for its 3rd time- As our action in the public space, a Pavilion was build, which served two purposes: to show on a big posterwall the Standard Development Goals (SDG's) on one hand, and on the other hand it allowed our group of interns and other members of the BPO to publically count 27 billion Euros in form of specially prepared 1 Mio. Euro Notes (by gracious support of the Druckerei Dietrich Kleinhüningen/Basel). 27 billion Euros per year is the amount all European countries export military goods to a large number of countries. This action was intended to call attention to the magnitude of the military spending in the European Union. Participants were invited to also contribute by counting with us and then were asked to indicate, in lieu of military spending for which one of the SDGs they would rather invest.

Furthermore, on January 15th a meeting with member of the Parliamentarians for Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament (PNND), representatives of the Organisation “Mayors for Peace “ (M4P) and experts was held on the topic of „Nuclear disarmament and Divestment“. The opening event took place in the Rathaussaal and Mr. Lukas Ott, the head of Basel City planning opened the first session, as Ms. Ackermann the Mayor for Peace of Basel was required to take part in an other meeting in Berne. The discussion on nuclear disarmament initiatives and divestment from nuclear weapons producing companies has increasingly become important in the last years, as some countries in fact spend obscene billion dollar amounts every year on modernizing the nuclear arms.

The International Conference in April (12/13): “Move the Nuclear Weapons Money” in Basel, expertly organized by the BPO interns Thies Kätow from Germany, Marzhan Nurzhan from Kazachstan and Yira Godoy from Fribourg, focused again on divestment and other actions by cities, universities, parliaments and religious institutions, to reverse the nuclear arms race and protect the climate. In fact, BPO has joined with other partners in launching *Move the Nuclear Weapons Money* (read also below), a global initiative to cut nuclear weapons budgets and investments, and reinvest these in climate protection, peace and key areas of a sustainable economy, such as education, renewable energy, health, job creation and sustainable development. The conference was opened by Lukas Ott, who welcomed the participants. The event brought together legislators (mayors, city councillors and parliamentarians), financial managers, experts in disarmament and climate change, aswell as university students and antinuclear campaigners from Europe and North America. Special interest was on successful divestment policies in Switzerland, Germany and France, in ordert to support their expansion and replication.

In the opinion of many participants in this event, the discussions were fruitful and a few new concepts and initiatives were mentioned, which may become important in the future. One proposal by **K. Suter**, Member of the Club of Rome, was the idea to form a „Peace-Industrial Complex“ in order to balance the influence of the Military-Industrial complex. Suter considered it important to increase their dialogue with business leaders in order to engage them in the transition from military-based economy to a peace-based one. Norwegian **M. Nybaack** talked about the significant Divestments by the Norwegian Pension fund Global, which already took place in 2006. Meanwhile also pension funds in Switzerland also start with divestment. In this regard this Basel based **R. Rechsteiner**, President of the Swiss Ethos Foundation, considers Divestment not as activism, but rather as fiduciary duty.

N. Malapatti, Financial adviser for Blackrock USA, discussed efforts in the USA to move universities to divest from nuclear weapons. He noted that if one key university adopts nuclear divestment policy, it is likely that many others will follow suit. **L. Goetschel**, Executive Director of Swisspeace spoke about impact investment, the other side of the Socially Responsible Investment coin (as compared to divestment) Impact investment could support sustainable development and investors can benefit from stable returns as well as the satisfaction that their investment funds are being used for the improvement of human lives and the environment. **S. Stroobants**, Director of European Operations for the Inst. for Economics and Peace discussed the economic value of peace outlining statistical indicators that identify levels of positive peace, and which make up the [Global Peace Index rankings](#). He reported on research by the institute on peace and its economic value versus the global cost of violence. He highlighted the direct connections between the level of peace and GDP, business potential and investment levels. For further details consult the directors report on this highly interesting symposium.

In September a Commemoration event for the International Day Against Nuclear Tests at the Palais de Nations in Geneva was co-organized by the BPO, including a roundtable event with diplomats on the role of Nuclear Weapon Free Zones.

From October 24 – 30 the director of the BPO was instrumental to organize in New York City “Count the Nuclear Weapons Money”, the 2nd much larger public money counting event this year. As for the Basel “money counting event” this time a much larger sum of 542 billion USDs was counted by different groups in different locations and symbolically reallocated this to peace, climate protection, poverty alleviation and the Sustainable Development Goals. As we are told, this action also was quite successful and raised the attention of many people to the link between military spending and global armament.

Swisspeace moving from Berne to Basel: And finally the very good news are the fact, that swisspeace, the former Swiss Peace Institute in September has been moving half of its staff from Berne to Basel, with the 2nd half being moved in 2020. For the BPO this will mean new premises and a change of address, which will be communicated as soon it will have happened.