INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE FOR DEPARTMENTS OF PEACE

March 2006
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Why a Department of Peace/Ministry for Peace Within Governments?

- To create peace as a primary organizational principle in society both domestically and globally;
- To direct government policy towards non-violent resolution of conflict and to seek peace by peaceful means in all conflict areas;
- To promote justice and democratic principles to expand human rights and the security of persons and their communities, consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other related UN treaties, conventions and the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace(1999);
- To promote disarmament and strengthen non-military means of peacemaking and peacebuilding;
- To develop new approaches to non-violent intervention, and utilize constructive dialogue, mediation and the peaceful resolution of conflict at home and abroad;
- To address matters of concern both domestic and international in scope
- To encourage the development of peace initiatives from local communities, faith groups, NGOs and the formation of civilian nonviolent peace forces;
- To facilitate the development of peace and reconciliation summits to promote non-violent communication and mutually-beneficial solutions;
- To act as a resource for the creation and the gathering of best practices documents, lessons learned, and peace impact assessments;
- To provide for the training of all military and civilian personnel who administer post-war reconstruction and demobilization in war-torn societies; and
- To fund the development of curriculum materials for use at all educational levels and to support university-level peace studies.

The International People's Initiative for Departments of Peace was launched at the First People's Summit for Departments of Peace, held in London October 18-19, 2005, with the intention of supporting national-level campaigns to establish departments of peace/ministries for peace in governments throughout the world. This document package provides background information on the International People's Initiative for Departments of Peace.
"Violence has become an accepted way of life
and this is no longer acceptable"

First peace Summit for Departments of Peace – London, October 2005

Preamble

The last decade has seen the committed growth and development of resources and capacities for conflict transformation and peacebuilding at local, national, regional and global levels, and increasing recognition and commitment by citizens and governments to develop tools, methods and resources for the effective transformation of conflicts and the prevention of war and violence. To enhance these efforts and further the work within communities, countries and globally to build a worldwide culture of peace and the effective infrastructure, resources and capacities required for peacebuilding and conflict transformation by peaceful means.

We announce today the launch of an international initiative for the creation of Departments for Peace.

Purpose

We call for Departments of Peace in all nations around the world

Key objectives

1. To campaign for Cabinet level Departments of Peace

2. To support the research, lessons-learned, promotion and distribution of effective peace building and conflict transformation methods, resources and capacities at local, regional, national and international levels.

3. To encourage the development of and support for peace building infrastructure to deal with conflicts effectively at local, regional, national and international levels.

4. To provide government funding for civil peace building initiatives.

Functions

1. To provide a voice at Cabinet level of Government to offer effective and practical options for international conflict resolution by peaceful means

2. To research, articulate and implement effective actions, programs and strategies to overcome violence within countries, including domestic violence, abuse and community-based conflicts

3. To provide peace education and conflict transformation and peacebuilding training throughout the school system, from children to adults.

4. To provide recommendations on how policies increase or diminish violence and the prospect of human security and practical policy proposals for governments and citizens.
REPORT FROM LONDON:
THE FIRST PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR DEPARTMENTS OF PEACE
October 18-19, 2005

The first international People's Summit for Departments of Peace took place in London, UK, preceded by a two-day training in the latest developments on the expanding frontier of knowledge and practice in peacebuilding and conflict transformation around the world.

Forty people from twelve countries took time from their busy lives and invested their energy and resources to attend. The countries represented included Australia, Canada, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Netherlands, Palestine, Romania, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States of America. In addition, written support was received from political leaders in Australia, Nepal, Nigeria, Japan, and Uganda, including:

- Senator Lyn Allison, Leader of the Australian Democrats
- Senator Natasha Stott Despoja, Foreign Affairs Spokesperson for the Australian Democrats
- Hon. Dr. Arthur Chesterfield-Evans MP, MLC State Leader of the Australian Democrats
- Hon. Oryem Henry Okello, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs/International Affairs of Uganda
- Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor, City of Hiroshima, Japan
- Homrajdahal, former MP and President, Center for Conflict Resolution, Peace, and Development, Nepal
- Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada

Presently, five of these countries have working groups conducting campaigns for ministries or departments of peace: Australia, Canada, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States.

On the final day of the Summit, the participants launched an on-going partnership for global action, called the international People's Initiative for Departments of Peace. The London Summit then concluded with a public meeting in the Grand Committee Room in the Houses of Parliament, hosted by John McDonnell MP and emceed by Diana Basterfield, co-founder of UK ministry for peace. The event opened with video greetings from U.S. Congressman Dennis Kucinich (author of the current legislation in Congress) and Marianne Williamson, and Dot Maver, executive director of The Peace Alliance, spoke on behalf of the U.S. campaign. Canada's representative, Saul Arbess, shared the Canadian working group's perspective. John McDonnell MP then articulated clearly the urgent need for departments and ministries of peace in order to provide a governmental infrastructure -- an institutional space -- for dialogue on peaceful resolution of conflict to take place.

Dot Maver answered some highly pointed questions from the audience about various aspects of U.S. policy by acknowledging the pain expressed and offering hope by saying that many people in the United States and around the world share that pain and sense of urgency, and reframing the situation in relation to the need to create infrastructures for
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peace based on the peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts and resources already underway and available around the world.

Other speakers included Yumi Kikuchi from Japan, Kai Brand-Jacobsen from Transcend in Romania (who provided the training and facilitated the Summit), Paul van Tongeren from the Netherlands, and Jo Berry, who has been a spokesperson for forgiveness and reconciliation ever since her father (a former Tory MP) was killed by IRA terrorists 20 years ago.

Summit participants representing each country stood in the front of the room, and Zoughbi Zoughbi from Palestine and Shiri Barr from Israel stood side by side and spoke on behalf of the international initiative, both asking us to not give up hope and expressing their gratitude and joy to be standing together calling for peace. Dot read aloud the Summit’s Declaration (see below) launching the People’s Initiative for Departments of Peace and presented it to John McDonnell MP, who then said he would read it into the official record of the House of Commons at the earliest opportunity.

This event marks the beginning of a new, expanding movement throughout the world for governments to organize around principles of nonviolent conflict transformation. The next Summit will be in June 2006 in Victoria, Canada, preceding the first World Peace Forum in Vancouver, where the International People’s Initiative for Departments of Peace will be on the program.

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Declaration of the
FIRST PEOPLE'S SUMMIT FOR DEPARTMENTS OF PEACE
London, 19 October 2005

Today, we announce the launch of an international initiative for the creation of Departments of Peace in governments throughout the world.

Violence of all kinds is increasing.

There is an urgent need to find responsible solutions, expanding on past and present peace-building successes.

This international initiative will both provide resources and support for existing national Department of Peace campaigns, and assist new ones as they appear in other countries.

While the exact role of the department will differ in each country, its basic functions will be the same:

▪ To foster a culture of peace;
▪ To research, articulate and help bring about non-violent solutions to conflicts at all levels; and
▪ To provide resources for training in peace-building and conflict transformation to people everywhere.

We, the undersigned, joyfully vow to support and encourage each other, to share information, to enrich each other's experience, to listen to one another and to celebrate our commonalities and differences in our journey together towards a culture of peace.

▪ Department of Peace, Australia
▪ Working Group for a Federal Department of Peace, Canada
▪ ministry for peace, United Kingdom
▪ The Peace Alliance, Campaigning for a US Department of Peace, United States of America
▪ Delegation from Israel
▪ Binnie D'egli Innocenti, WWGHM, Italy
▪ Federation of Damanhur, Italy
▪ Global Peace Campaign, Working for a Ministry of Peace in Japan
▪ Ank Mesritz, House of Peace, Netherlands
▪ Paul van Tongeren, European Centre for Conflict Prevention, Netherlands
▪ Zoughbi Zoughbi, WI'AM, Palestinian Conflict Resolution Centre, Palestine
▪ Romanian Department of Peace Initiative
▪ Jo Berry, Building Bridges for Peace, United Kingdom
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Here is a brief description of this unique citizens’ peace initiative. We are proposing a one year massive, worldwide call to all governments to use only proven conflict prevention/transformation methods to resolve this crisis. We hope that this call will strike a chord with thousands, hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people around the world via the internet. We hope that you and they will all want to join us in choosing this non-violent approach.

Let’s create a positive, speed of light internet virus – tell everyone we know and they tell everyone they know and so on, to organise petitions, letters to governments, letters in the press, phone ins on radio shows, etc saying that we, the citizens of the world demand that this looming conflict between Iran, the US, the UK etc be settled only using proven non-violent conflict resolution processes.

We have created a new website for this Negotiate Peace campaign with:

- The Statement from the Peoples’ Initiative for Departments of Peace - please print it off and send to your MP, to Tony Blair, to local newspapers
- On-line petition – please ask all your networks to circulate the url - www.negotiate-peace.org and go along and sign online.
- A downloadable petition – please print off and take it to all the local places that allow petitions, health food shops, libraries, your workplace, friends and family
- There are lists of other activities you could consider
- There are stories about successful conflict prevention for those people who don’t believe conflict prevention is possible
- There are daily stories from the alternative press about the Iran/US situation
- There will shortly be a Persian (Farsi) section because we want to reach out to Iranians in the Diaspora and in Iran and show them that we support a peaceful resolution of this crisis

I mentioned the People’s Initiative for Departments of Peace. The call to governments by citizens for a non-violent solution to this current crisis is the first step in this international campaign in relation to this threat of war.

The second step will be to commission a high level delegation, including, if possible, the founder of conflict prevention studies, Johan Galtung, to visit Iran, the US and other western governments to put this non-violent conflict prevention strategy into action.

Early in April members of the Steering Committee will be meeting Johan Galtung, the father of conflict transformation and the founder of Transcend to discuss this delegation.

Other Negotiate Peace activities

- Second ministry for peace meeting on the Iran situation on 26th April in the Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House starting at 7pm.

  This meeting will bring us all up-to-date on crisis in the first hour, with lots of time for questions from the floor. In the second hour Kai Brand-Jacobsen from Transcend will show how conflict transformation methods have successfully prevented international conflicts elsewhere and how these can be applied to the Iran situation. Again, with time for questions from the floor.

- Building a Negotiate Peace coalition.

We want to reach out to other organisations to build a broad coalition for this campaign. We need your help to bring together the hundreds of organisations it will require if Negotiate
Peace is to be taken seriously by government. If you can help with this please contact diana.basterfield@ministryforpeace.org This email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it or ring 07795 217701.

If you are a member of an organisation, would you be willing to put a small banner on your site with a click through to the Negotiate Peace site for people to sign the online petition and join the campaign? We would email you the html for the banner.

Would you be willing to send an invitation to like-minded people to send this email out to their lists?

- Local groups

Just imagine if, working together, we could enable a local Negotiate Peace group to be set up in every constituency around the country willing to begin a regular dialogue with the local MP on how conflict transformation methods can be successfully applied to this and future conflicts. We can provide materials for these discussions.

- Training on conflict transformation methods

For those of you interested in deepening your knowledge about how proven conflict transformation methods can prevent wars, we plan to organise some training courses. To get an idea of the numbers of people likely to be interested it would be helpful if you could indicate your interest by emailing diana.basterfield@ministryforpeace.org. This email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it. Say whether you would be interested in a 1 or 2 day course.

These are the plans so far, many more activities will take place during the Negotiate Peace year. If you would like to take an active part in working on this campaign either at a national or a local level we would love to hear from you.

Just imagine, if this citizens' initiative - working worldwide - is able to prevent this war, how could governments ever go to war with one another again? We would have proved to them and to the world that non-violent conflict prevention is possible, that it resolves conflicts more cheaply than war - without the death, suffering and destruction - and is, of course, morally superior to war; in short, that it is the only rational answer to international conflict.

This is an opportunity to change the course of history. Join us.
A FRESH APPROACH TO RESOLVING INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

The International People's Initiative for Departments of Peace calls urgently for the non-violent resolution of the growing conflict involving China, France, Germany, Iran, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States of America.

As Earth's climate warms up at an alarming rate, threatening widespread global devastation, humanity faces the biggest challenge to its survival in history. For our children, our children's children and the planet, we must now avoid wasting our precious resources engaging in costly, destructive wars and instead employ well-tried, non-violent methods of resolving conflicts around the world. We can then focus our energy, creativity, wisdom, and prudence on providing for a sustainable, and thus safe and secure, future.

While recognising the efforts of all parties to resolve this dispute through negotiation, we are also aware that frustration at the lack of agreement can lead to increasing polarisation, harsh language and even the extreme violence of military action. As with past conflicts, this is likely to produce a similar result – war, chaos and suffering. It is therefore time for all of us – private citizens, civil society organisations, and governments – to call for a change in the manner in which conflict is dealt with so as to meet the fundamental needs of all humanity for security, mutual respect and justice.

The good news: non-violent conflict resolution is possible and already happening. Indeed, we have within the human family many men and women experienced in successfully facilitating the non-violent resolution of conflict within and between nations and states. We call on all governments involved to seek immediately their input and action.

We can all help bring about this change and we encourage everyone to take action now. Please talk with your friends, family and community members, and encourage everyone to call on political leaders to settle for nothing less than a non-violent resolution to this conflict. Suggestions as to specific actions you can take are listed at http://www.peoplesinitiativefordepartmentsofpeace.org/documents/ActionSteps.pdf.

It is time to create a world in which we all pursue the non-violent resolution of conflict. The stakes are too high for any other course of action.

For further information, please contact info@peoplesinitiativefordepartmentsofpeace.org.

*The International People's Initiative is working towards the formation of ministries and departments of peace in all governments so that national ministers of peace may meet on a regular basis, especially during crises, with a mandate to seek and maintain an ongoing focus on reaching peace by peaceful means.*
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Ministry for Peace in UK

Hello, everyone. Here is the transcript of the speech given by John McDonnell, British Member of Parliament, during the closing session of our London People's Summit for Departments of Peace. Inspired by the Dept of Peace legislation introduced in the U.S. by Dennis Kucinich, he has spearheaded similar legislation in the House of Commons and the national campaign in the UK to support it. Very powerful statement, particularly as a profound response to the militarism of his own party's government the past few years, his frustration with which he clearly expresses in his remarks here. We are not alone!

John McDonnell, MP, in the Grand Committee Room Houses of Parliament, London Wednesday, October 19, 2005

"Some of you will know that we have been meeting in this hall now for what seems like forever. I thought some of you might have moved in, some of you obviously did. The staff think that as well! We have been having discussions about how we promote the concept of a Ministry for Peace within the United Kingdom. We have focused on the concept and role of a Ministry for Peace and how it could impact on the development of government policies to promote peace. It is an attempt to transform the mechanism of government, to achieve a transformation of the role of government. We were originally inspired by Dennis Kucinich's work. Then we discovered that there were others also working on this concept in different countries around the world. Someone suggested that what we should do is to have an international meeting, an international summit, and that is what has taken place here in London in the last couple of days. Tonight is a culmination – to receive a report back on the work that has gone on and then to discuss how we go forward.

We will be launching a program tonight for work that we will be doing internationally in what is now this global campaign for Ministries and Departments of Peace. Let me briefly explain where we are at in terms of the UK campaign and where we need to be. I'll exemplify what the challenge is by using the current example of what the British Government is proposing to do to replace Trident. I am a Labour MP. Within the Parliamentary Labour Party at the moment, a Member of Parliament has had the temerity to simply put up a resolution to be debated internally within the Parliamentary Labour Party that Parliament should decide whether or not the Government adopts Trident. The MP is Gordon Prentice, a hard working Member of Parliament and not necessarily a revolutionary by any means. The Parliamentary leadership met on Monday to prevent the debate even happening within the Parliamentary Labour Party let alone on the House of Commons floor. That's where we have got to. That's the challenge that we have. Within the UK Government at the moment it is perfectly possible for the Government to commission a weapon of mass destruction that will tie us into weapons of mass destruction on a scale not seen before for the next century without any Parliamentary debate, without any Parliamentary vote and a decision by the Prime Minister on the Royal Prerogative. That is what almost happened with regard to the Iraq war. Eventually we did have a debate in the House of Commons but, as you know, that was informed by the inaccuracy of the military intelligence and various dossiers that were produced and the debate resulted in one of the most illegal and immoral wars that has ever been launched in our history. That is the challenge we have.

Without a Ministry for Peace, without a mechanism in Government, we not only have a lack of openness and transparency, we have a lack of even entrée into decision-making at all when it
comes down to issues of peace and war in this country. That’s why we have focused on this structural change in government to reflect what we hope will reinforce and nourish what we hope will be, and is occurring already, a cultural change within this country. I think the Iraq war educated a large number of people about decision-making processes in Government but also about the implications of war and the ramifications for those that suffered the Iraqi invasion and also for those that launched the invasion and how terrorism then becomes an exacted price against countries like Britain that participated in it. I think we have got to use that new spirit, the need to go forward, the need to find different routes to peace. We have got to use that and say that we have to change government structures to do that. That’s the decision we came to in this room some time ago, to campaign for the concept of a Ministry for Peace. That’s where we came from. Where we are going to now is that we are in the process of permeating virtually every structure of civil society to put pressure on the political structures of this country to change. That work goes on apace. It started of course, and this is the point about the direct route, the hardest route, it started by an in-your-face challenge to Government by the presentation of the Ten Minute Rule Bill to get on the Parliamentary record what we felt were the reforms that were needed. It was a healthy debate and it meant that MPs could not go away from this place without knowing that this was an issue they had to address. What we have been doing in recent months is refining our ideas, engaging in the debate, talking within the peace movement, of course, then going outside it as well.

Over the last period of time we have had a number of political parties, some minor, others of size able proportions within their own nationalities, adopting this concept of a Ministry for Peace as something they want to explore and in some instances, implement. Within my own political party, the Labour Representation Committee - a rank and file organization within the Labour Party - included it in its own program for government before the General Election. Every Campaign Group member that stood on that program actually gained a higher number of votes than any New Labour candidate in that election. I’m not saying that it is all down to the Ministry for Peace but it is part of an endorsement of a program of policies that people respect and therefore support and traditional Labour voters will vote for. What we are finding now is bit by bit with the work of Plaid Cymru in Wales, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Scottish Nationalist Party, the work within the Labour Party, within the Trade Unions, within the religious groups and within the peace movement itself that we are permeating society with this idea. Eventually it will produce the structural change required.

The key issue for us, and this has been the case all the way through, is to be incredibly pragmatic, to be incredibly practical and to be incredibly professional in our approach. To have all the answers and more; to be as creative as possible and to do things that people don’t expect us to do. To actually engage them in ways they wouldn’t expect us to. So when the British Medical Association meets at some stage we would want them to be talking about it. Where there are various magazines that reflect different cultural groups within our society, we want them to talk about it. We want to permeate every structure and every conversation that’s going on about the future of our community and our society and that’s the work we are doing at the moment. It is a long haul, it is a long process of convincing people but the one opportunity we have got at the moment is that even Tony Blair now knows the process of war does not work, the process of invasion does not work and the process of ignoring international law and international institutions does not work. They are looking for a route out and our work is to provide them with that route out in as constructive and passionate a way we possibly can.

(Appause)
Negotiate Peace – A Unique Citizens’ Peace Initiative

A conflict is developing between the international community and Iran. What is to be done? A military intervention would have disastrous effects both on Iran and its people and on human security worldwide.

Negotiate Peace (www.negotiate-peace.org) has been set up by ministry for peace in the UK and was launched at the ministry for peace meeting in Parliament on March 1st 2006 in response to the call from the People’s Initiative for Departments of Peace for governments to use proven non-violent conflict transformation methods to resolve this situation. This website offers resources to individuals and organisations wishing to call on governments to adopt this non-violent strategy.

Why Negotiate Peace?

Like us, you are probably noticing similarities between early 2003 and early 2006 on the international scene, except that this time the country in the frame is Iran.

Like you, we joined millions of people worldwide on February 15th, 2003 to march against going to war in Iraq. That war went ahead.

Like you and many others we went on the march on 18th March against going to war over Iran. That war must not go ahead. Marches are necessary and let’s add a new strategy to stop wars and build peace.

Alarmed by what we have been hearing and reading about the situation over Iran/US, ministry for peace has been talking via conference calls with the other organisations around the world working for Ministries for Peace/Departments of Peace on this. We set up the People’s Initiative for Departments of Peace last October at the First People’s Summit for Departments of Peace here in London. They are also gravely concerned about the situation.

We signed up to the Statement produced by the People’s Initiative for Departments of Peace on 2nd March 2006.

In response to the call in this Statement for people to take action, ministry for peace hastily organised a meeting on the Iranian situation in Parliament on March 1st. We had three excellent speakers, two Iranian women - Dr. Elaheh Rostami-Povey from the School of Oriental and African Studies (London University), and Roya Kashefi from Iranian Researchers International - who talked about the situation in Iran, and Paul Ingram from the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) who looked at the international situation.

At the end of the meeting we launched a "unique citizens’ peace initiative - Negotiate Peace. We want this campaign to be the 2006 version of Make Poverty History using the Internet to spread the message around the world that we, the citizens, demand that our governments use proven non-violent conflict transformation methods to resolve this and all future international conflicts.

There were about 80 people at the meeting and after we had outlined the reason for this campaign, and read them the Statement, we asked who would support this new campaign. All the hands shot up!
The Steering Committee

The members of the steering group for The International People's Initiative for Departments of Peace are:

- Diana Basterfield of UK,
- Yumi Kikuchi of Japan,
- Penny Joy of Canada, and
- Dot Mavor of the U.S.A.
- Bianca Pace of Australia,

The Secretariat

The International Secretary for the International People's Initiative for Departments of Peace is Corina Simon, based at the Romanian Peace Institute (PATRIR). Contact: info@peoplesinitiativefordepartmentsofpeace.org.

The Website

The International People's Initiative for Departments of Peace offers a user-friendly virtual environment on its website at the address www.peoplesinitiativefordepartmentsofpeace.org. The registrants have the possibility to publish news on different topics, events in the form of a calendar and various types of resources in the field of peace. The Forums section offers a diversity of general categories that welcome the users' contributions and comments.

The Newsletter

Keep up-to-date with the latest news and additions to the International People's Initiative for Departments of Peace by subscribing (from the front page of the website) to the bi-weekly Information Document.

Useful Links

- Department of Peace Australia, www.departmtofpeace-australia.org
- Working Group for a Federal Department of Peace, Canada www.departmtofpeacecanada.com
- Ministero per la Pace, Italy www.ministeroperlapaceitalia.org
- Nepal Peace Initiative Alliance, Nepal www.peacenepal.org
- The Peace Alliance, Campaigning for a US Department of Peace, United States of America www.thepeacealliance.org
Isn't it time?

Dept. of Peace within Govt. Structures?

Decide to network.

Use every letter you write, every conversation you have, every meeting you attend to express your fundamental beliefs and dreams. Affirm to others the vision of the world you want. Network through thought, network through action, network through love, network through the spirit. You are the center of the world. You are a free, immensely powerful source of life and goodness. Affirm it, spread it, radiate it. Think day and night about it and you will see a miracle happen; the greatness of your own life. In a world of big powers, media and monopolies, but of four and a half billion individuals, networking is the new freedom, the new democracy, a new form of happiness.

Robert Muller
Former Assistant Secretary General, United Nations.
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