



ACTION ALERT

A World of Peace

By guest contributor Paula Sadler, Mission Coordinator for Social Action, Oregon Idaho Conference

The world spent nearly \$1.3 trillion on armaments in 2007 — 2.5 percent of the planet’s gross domestic product — and the United States accounted for 45 percent of the total, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Global arms sales have increased 45 percent since 1998, SIPRI reported.¹

Although the stated objective is to “build a more secure world,” SIPRI’s Yearbook 2007 concludes that resources could be more effectively spent in public health and poverty reduction:

According to reports by the World Health Organization (WHO), among the 10 leading global risk factors identified for developing countries with high mortality rates, four are related to hunger and two are related to the physical environment—unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene, and indoor smoke. Both of these are in turn linked to poverty. Thus, preventive interventions to reduce hunger, improve the physical environment and reduce poverty are important means of improving the security of human lives. In comparison with military expenditure, the prevention strategies developed for the WHO and other parts of the United Nations to reduce the risks to human lives are highly cost-effective.

Applying only 10 percent of the resources spent on global armaments could achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). These goals benefit everyone, but women and children are clearly the greatest beneficiaries of the eight MDGs:

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education	Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality	Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development ²

It is estimated that 8 million lives could be saved annually with a yearly investment of \$57 billion in basic health interventions. Such an investment is small compared to the level of world military expenditure.³

Anti-personnel mines have been deployed in a number of conflicts and are still being deployed today. These weapons are designed for use against human beings, not equipment like tanks. Anti-personnel mines cannot distinguish between the pressure of a soldier’s foot and that of an innocent civilian. A landmine blast causes injuries like blindness, burns, mutilated limbs and shrapnel wounds. Some victims die due to loss of blood or inability to receive timely medical care. Many face amputations, long hospital stays and extensive rehabilitation. Landmines are created to maim rather than kill their victims.⁴

Cluster munitions spread many small explosive devices over an area the size of two to four soccer fields. These devices have more explosive power than anti-personnel mines. In addition, the shapes and small size of these munitions make it more likely that children will pick them up. Published reports indicate that 62% of the casualties



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN’S ACTION NETWORK

Women’s Division – General Board of Global Ministries
100 Maryland Avenue, NE Suite 530 – Washington, DC 20002
Tel. (202) 488-5660 * Fax (202) 488-5681

www.umwmission.org

from cluster munitions in Vietnam between 2000 and 2005 were children. Unexploded cluster munitions can devastate communities long after conflict ceases by making it impossible to farm land or use roads.⁵

The prophets had a vision of what the world would look like when God's kingdom came. Isaiah (2:4) and Micah (4:3) envisioned a time when the tools of war would be converted into tools to till the earth and provide food to the hungry, when swords would be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. There are ways to move towards the prophets' vision of a peaceful world through eliminating the use of certain types of weaponry and increasing funding directed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The United Nations has adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction. Although 156 nations have agreed to be bound by the terms of the treaty, the United States has not.

In addition, the United Nations has adopted the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons—sometimes also referred to as the Inhumane Weapons Convention—which covers the use of cluster munitions. The United States has adopted only two of the five protocols that are part of the Convention. (For further information go to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_on_Certain_Conventional_Weapons)



Act to Ban the Sale of Certain Weapons and Redirect Funding Towards Development Aid!

The Global Poverty Act is pending before the U.S. Congress (H.R. 1302 and S. 2433). This legislation directs the president and the State Department to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to promote the reduction of global poverty and the achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of reducing by one-half the proportion of people worldwide who live on less than \$1 per day (MDG 1). Write or call your Representative and Senators and urge them to support the Global Poverty Act (H.R. 1302 and S. 2433)

Write or call your Senators and urge them to support the United States becoming a signatory to the UN Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction.

Write or call your Senators and urge them to support the United States acceding to the UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and all of its annexed protocols.

(To contact your representative and senators call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121)

Become part of a global women initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement...working to stop new wars and redirect our resources into health care, education and other life-affirming activities. Visit www.cidpink4peace.org for more information.

Visit www.wand.org for more ideas to reduce militarism.

Read The Book of Resolutions 2004 #382. The United Methodist Church and Peace pg. 840.

¹ [http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2008/September/Pages/GlobalArmsSalesTop\\$13Trillion.aspx](http://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/archive/2008/September/Pages/GlobalArmsSalesTop$13Trillion.aspx)

² <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>

³ <http://yearbook2007.sipri.org/chap7>

⁴ <http://www.icbl.org/problem/what>

⁵ <http://disarmament.un.org/Cluster%20Munitions/CM%20factsheet%20for%20web.pdf>