

A COVENANT OF

SELF-UNDERSTANDING
&
PURPOSE

Adopted at the

First People's Forum on Peace for Life

November 28 to December 4, 2004

Davao City, Philippines

Peace for Life

A PEOPLE'S FORUM AND MOVEMENT FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE AND PEACE

Who We Are

- ▶ **Peace for Life** is a global faith-based initiative resisting militarised globalisation and creating life-enhancing alternatives.
- ▶ **Peace for Life** operates in the context of the global justice and peace front. In particular, it finds itself in the junction between:
 - the long history of peace initiatives being undertaken by faith communities worldwide addressing a whole range of issues including human rights violations and persecutions; the rights of children, youth and the elderly; violence against women; internal conflict and wars; environmental destruction; religious extremism, and so on; and
 - the multi-faceted protest against war and state terrorism, which has reached a global popular character in response to the U.S.-led War on Terror, and the growing social justice movement in resistance to political and cultural hegemony and corporate-dominated globalisation.
- ▶ **Within this environment, *Peace for Life* reaches out to engage faith communities and social movements to cultivate and mobilise the power of faith and spirituality in the struggle for social justice and peace and against global hegemony.**
- ▶ ***Peace for Life* is:**
 - A global **solidarity network** of peace advocates rooted in faith communities and social movements who are engaged in various forms of resistance to Empire
 - A **movement** committed to interfaith, South-South and North-South solidarity, and progressive faith-based discourse and response to the imperatives of justice and peace
 - A **space** for sharing cultural heritage, mutual support, reflection, and different expressions of resistance
 - A **centre** for networking, information exchange, common action, and programs and projects organised by the participants of the network



Defining the Need

▶ Militarised globalisation: a world at war

Today, in a scale more widespread than ever in human history, people are living in danger. Today the world is at war.

But this is a war far more insidious, destructive and pervasive than the two world wars of the past century. It is a war whose greater toll falls among the living: poverty and untold human suffering, disintegration of communities and breakdown of relations, loss of identity and dignity, destruction of the natural environment and life's vital sources of sustenance.

This is the War on Terror, launched by the U.S. government in the aftermath of September 11th. It is a war that has escalated the violence, fear and greed that drive what we call empire. By "empire" we mean the combined economic, military, political, and cultural domination by a powerful state, assisted by satellite states and aided by local elites of dominated countries, to advance its own interests on a global scale. U.S. military dominance conjointly with transnational corporate power makes up the heart of today's empire.

Economic globalisation fosters conditions that lead to war and violence: unrest, inequity, social inequality, conflicts, insecurity. The tragedy of September 11 took place in the context of economic globalisation, a global process of integration sustained by increasing militarisation to enable corporations' free access to resources and markets, especially in resource-rich regions of the world where competition for control is fierce. And the worst is still to come. The crisis of overproduction, destruction of the forces of production, plunder, wars for resources, local and regional conflicts will intensify.



► A global uprising for peace and the transformative force of faith

The people of the global South, who have long suffered under U.S. military intervention and economic domination, have unmasked the War on Terror – which soon led to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and later Iraq – as blatant empire-building. With tensions rising and threats to life growing in other parts of the world, a global anti-war and anti-economic globalisation movement has emerged. Never before had an awareness of a hegemonic power imposing its interests upon the world been so apparent and widespread.

The escalation of violence presents a challenge to faith communities worldwide to converge in an effort to lead divided communities towards the path of healing and to present peace anew as a viable alternative to war. The World Council of Churches, for one, has initiated a global process aimed at linking and consolidating various initiatives to overcome violence across the globe through the launching of the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010). Various faith communities have taken similar actions.

With a global war that is being fought militarily, politically, economically and culturally – with the support of the Religious Right – a faith-based resistance particularly directed against imperialist machinations becomes critical and urgent. The fundamental ethical values of justice, equality, human dignity, human rights and integrity of all creation represent an essential resource in the task of peacebuilding, and one that plays a specific role in the global anti-imperialist front. It is incumbent upon faith communities to harness this resource, targeting U.S. empire-building as the single most formidable force today that impedes the realisation of these values.

Harnessing the resources of faith and spirituality requires continually exposing the manifestations of Empire in people's daily lives and bringing this awareness – and the faith reflections – to all communities.

Cultivating the power of faith and spirituality to challenge the expansion of Empire is an activist undertaking that faith communities have felt compelled to take on in solidarity with one another, for it is in seeking shalom/salaam/shanti/peace in the whole world that faith communities themselves are renewed. But building faith-based anti-imperialist resistance requires an organised effort that will steer faith communities to the forefront of this struggle. It is in the context of this need that *Peace for Life* is formed.



Vision, Mission and Goals

► VISION

We envision a new world of peace and justice that embraces equality and fullness of life for all. It is a new world that resists hegemonic domination and struggles against imperial subjugation. It is a new world built by peoples and communities together interacting and cooperating through genuine and interfaith partnerships and peoples' solidarities. It is a new world nurtured by peoples upholding human dignity and respecting human rights. It is a world made possible by the healing and reconciliation of peoples and nations in the multiplicities of their politics, cultures, religions, ethnicities and races, including peoples and religions persecuted and marginalised in their minority situations. It is a world freed from economic exploitation, political oppression and cultural subjugation.

► MISSION

We will bring faith-based resistance to the struggle against global hegemony and its international and state apparatuses by raising the awareness of people of varying faiths on the evils of war and corporate-dominated globalisation and on the imperatives of justice and peace, consolidating these responses into a faith-based movement for change that is grounded on the principles of radical egalitarianism, inclusivity and compassion, and forging diverse local and transnational coalitions that place the poor, the deprived and the marginalised at the centre of our partnerships and advocacies.



GOALS

We will provide a venue for groups engaged in struggles for justice to draw strength and nurture courage from each other, lifting celebratory moments that foster an ethic, praxis and spiritually necessary for the struggle. Specifically we will be engaged in:

■ Examining our faith amid the threat of Empire

Foster within faith communities an understanding of and commitment to the faith imperatives of challenging the emergence and expansion of the U.S. Empire.

■ Building faith-based resistance to militarised globalisation

Help build and mobilise within the faith communities a critical mass that would promote and mobilise the transformative power of faith-based resistance to increasing militarisation, globalisation, and hegemonic control of the world's resources.

■ Promoting and living out alternative visions of peace for life

Engage the global faith community in a process of articulating, shaping, celebrating and living out alternative visions of peace for life.

■ Equipping ourselves for the task of peace movement building

Build the organisational and programmatic capacity of *Peace for Life* in order that it may play a key role in mobilising the transformative power of faith for the struggle against global hegemony.



Action Plan

■ Networking and Movement Building

- **People's Forum on Peace for Life** – to be organised at the international level in different regions of the world. The Forum may be convened in response to a pressing problem.
- **Peace Festival** – a cultural event aimed at examining the cultural infrastructure supporting the U.S. Empire and expressing cultural forms of resistance that would promote a culture of peace and non-violence.
- **Peace for Life Conference of Faith Communities and Social Movements** – may be organised during World Social Forums. Workshops and/or caucuses may also be organised as build-up to the Conference, which is aimed at:
 - examining the roots and manifestations of religious extremism;
 - confronting the prejudices that give rise to inter-religious conflicts and violence;
 - challenging social movements to include in the mainstream peace agenda the religious and cultural dimensions of war and globalisation.
- **Roundtable forums** – dialogues to be organised at the national level, aimed at facilitating sharing on the peace agenda among leaders of religious communities and social movements.



Education, Information Exchange and Advocacy

- **Resource Development** – collection, organisation and management of data, news, information, analysis, commentary, reflection pieces and other education materials from available sources; developing bibliographies, resource lists and articles appropriate to various people, cultures, language, national and religious contexts.
- **Action Alerts/Bulletins** – to be released by the Secretariat occasionally in the form of flyers and statements; to include news on initiatives, global campaigns, statements from network participants, and faith-based analysis and responses to issues related to war and globalisation.
- **Website and mailing lists** – develop an interactive internet resource site that will facilitate exchange of information and ideas among network members. It will carry relevant news updates, information on events and initiatives by network members, educational resources, and other information. Electronic mail lists for network members and working committees will be managed through the web site.
- **Special consultations** – a small informal quick-response meeting or fact-finding mission to address a new development and/or emerging trend and identify *Peace for Life's* response or specific course of action. This may be held in the country where the new development has emerged, with the participation of local religious leaders, persons from affected sectors, and individuals from various disciplines.
- **Pool of Resource Persons** – involving individuals who can offer a faith perspective on specialised topics (e.g., U.S. foreign policy, the Middle East question, the Arab-Israeli conflict, international law, feminist critique of war). Resource persons from different countries, representing the grassroots and various sectors of faith communities and those untapped as resource persons may form part of the pool. They will serve as resource base for speakers at gatherings, writers of position papers and educational materials, and to speak for and in behalf of *Peace for Life* in public gatherings and dialogues with other groups/movements.

Special Projects

Peace for Life may initiate projects with other alliances/networks of movements to address issues of war and globalisation, for example, a People's Charter on peace for life. The gathering of social movements and faith-based groups in the World Social Forum may be utilised to initiate, promote and seek commitments for such projects.



Participants and Partners

- *Peace for Life* will implement programmes intended to benefit and at the same time facilitate the participation of **PEOPLE** rooted in faith communities and social movements who are in a position to organise and promote faith-based resistance to war and globalisation.
 - For **people of faith communities** – heightened awareness on the evils of war and globalisation and on the need to respond to these and develop alternatives based on the faith imperatives of peace and fullness of life.
 - For **peace advocates** – a platform to expand and consolidate efforts and link these with similar efforts in other countries and the wider movement against war and globalisation; a venue to sharpen analysis, particularly on the links between the local and global manifestations of U.S. Empire-building.
 - For **children and youth leaders** – opportunities for leadership development in the area of peace advocacy and faith-life reflections on the issues of war and globalisation, enabling them to facilitate the active involvement of faith-based youth/student organisations in the struggle against Empire.
 - For **women** – a venue to develop and promote the unique perspective of women on the question of peace and security in the context of war and globalisation; and to build on emerging alternative feminist paradigms in peacebuilding – overcoming violence, transforming conflicts, building transformative relations.



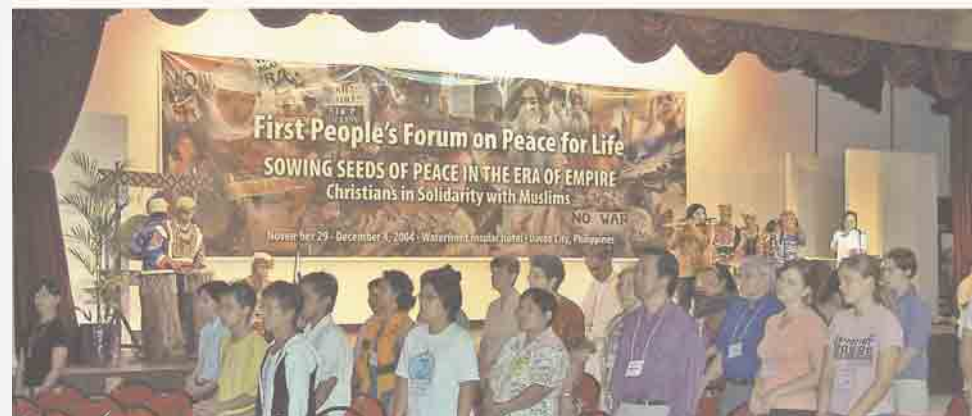
- ▮ *Peace for Life* will engage with the **VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS** of war and corporate-led globalisation as partners in its programmes, concretely in terms of framing a global people's vision of peace. Activities organised by *Peace for Life* (from local to international levels) will be venues for network participants to listen to their stories, dialogue with them and learn from the perspective of their firsthand experience with the life-and-death impacts of war and globalisation.



- ▮ *Peace for Life* will engage with **FAITH-BASED MOVEMENTS** and **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**, recognising the intersection between these two arenas as the network's particular milieu.
 - ▮ **Christian and ecumenical organisations and institutions** – partnerships with church and ecumenical institutions, including regional ecumenical bodies and world communions that have taken a stand on and are implementing programmes addressing the question of peace.
 - ▮ **Faith-based communities, organisations and alliances** – *Peace for Life* will build on existing initiatives for interfaith dialogue at the local, national and international levels to develop interfaith solidarity and common action on the issues of war and globalisation.
 - ▮ **Social movements** – people's organisations at the local and national levels, and global and regional alliances/networks of people's movements that are addressing the issues of war and globalisation. In particular, *Peace for Life* will work towards more active participation in the World Social Forum process, utilising the venue to build partnerships with people's organisations and social movements.

Organisational Structure

- ▮ The work of *Peace for Life*, as a participatory, open and dynamic movement, will be undertaken through the following mechanisms:
 - ▮ **The Forum** – an open and dynamic body comprising all individuals and groups affiliated with *Peace for Life* either as active participants or partners of its projects. Exchanges within the Forum will take place primarily through electronic mail. The People's Forum and similar gatherings that may be held at the national and regional levels will be the Forum's opportunity to interact face to face.
 - ▮ **Advisory Committee** – an interfaith body of about 25 individuals drawn from the various groups represented in the Forum which will play an advisory role on matters of programme and policy. Exchanges within the committee will take place primarily through electronic mail, but meetings will be convened as necessary.
 - ▮ **Consultative Group** – an interfaith core group formed out of the Advisory Committee that will ensure programme sustainability through periodic evaluation of the network's progress towards its set objectives. It chooses the Coordinator, decides on matters of programme and policy on behalf of the Forum and in consultation with the Advisory Committee where necessary, and oversees the work of the Secretariat. Exchanges within the group will take place through electronic mail, but meetings will be convened as necessary.
 - ▮ **Secretariat** – based in the Philippines at present and composed of staff from the Philippines and, where feasible and necessary, staff based in other countries who may be tasked with certain aspects of secretariat work. The Secretariat will coordinate programme implementation, which includes identifying members of the Forum to take on specific projects.
 - ▮ **Participants** – the 'members' of *Peace for Life* whose engagement will be voluntary and based on mutual trust and shared commitment to the vision, mission and goals of *Peace for Life*. They implement a large part of the network's programs, with the Secretariat playing a coordinating and supportive role.





Peace for Life

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