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Possibilities of a Weaponless World

WHICH WAY TO DISARMAMENT? – ONLY A HOLISTIC APPROACH IS THE
ANSWER

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Introduction

There are 20,000 nuclear weapons, 8 million small arms and a huge arsenal of fighter jets, tanks, ships, landmines, missiles including 25 million soldiers worldwide. This huge arsenal of weapons and military hardware leads to violence and wars in our world. The world is becoming dangerously militarised with the global military spending in 2012 standing at \$1.75 trillion, which is about 2.5% of the World's GDP.

India, at this important time in history when we need more growth for poverty reduction, is dangerously militarising itself which is a provocation for more violence and terrorism. India, China, Pakistan where poverty is the overwhelming problem are wasting their scarce resources on expensive weapons systems rather than on irrigation, pollution reduction, education and many other life improving essentials that their people currently lack.

The major producers and suppliers of conventional weapons are the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – the USA, Russia, France, China and the UK – and Germany. Together, these six states contribute nearly 80 percent of reported global major conventional arms exports. US, under Obama administration has deregulated arms control to sell more weapons in a shameful act of reducing US indebtedness. The major buyers of conventional arms exports are a handful of developing countries struggling with their developmental aspirations, deep poverty, internal violence and potentials for cross-border conflicts: ten developing countries absorb 61 percent of the arms exported to the developing world. In 2011, according to the Grimmett Report of 2012, the three major markets for conventional weapons in the developing world were Saudi Arabia (21 percent), India (13 percent) and the UAE (6 percent) while many other states have continually upgraded their military capability. Both China and Pakistan are major absorbers of conventional weapons, yet the data from China and Pakistan on arms spending and their bilateral trade in arms are too unreliable to make a reasonable analysis.

Military Industrial Complex (MIC) broadly includes science, technology, industry and military. Thousands of firms small and large have emerged to equip the military with weapons. MIC comprises of manufacturers of military technologies, dual use systems (from computer and software to fuel cells, lasers, robotic arms and optical equipment used both for civil and military purposes that commands astronomical prices in overseas markets) and industries deemed to be strategically important. It also includes the arms trade, illegal and legal. Arms companies sell weapons not only to democracies to use for self-defence but also to repressive regimes who use weapons for violation of human rights of its citizens. The arms trade is not about defence, but about profiting from violence, poverty and human rights abuse.

Vijay Mehta in his groundbreaking book, **“The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels War and Poverty in the Developing World”**, describes how the power of global elites, entrenched under globalization, has created a deadly cycle of violence. The book explores the disarmament and demilitarisation plans under a new initiative, 4D for World Peace (Disarmament, Demilitarisation, Development and Democracy) which should result in saving huge amounts of money which can be deployed for peace-building and a safer future.

The Magnitude of the Problem

More than 875 million small arms and light weapons are in circulation around the world. These were the weapons of choice in 46 out of 49 major conflicts since 1990, causing several million deaths — about 90 per cent of them civilians, and 80 per cent women and children. Human security is under increasing threat from the spread of small arms and light weapons and their illegal trade. They have devastated many societies and caused incalculable human suffering. They continue to pose an enormous humanitarian challenge, particularly in internal conflicts where insurgent militias fight against government forces. In these conflicts, a high proportion of the casualties are civilians who are the deliberate targets of violence — a gross violation of international humanitarian law. This has led to millions of deaths and injuries, the displacement of populations, and suffering and insecurity around the world.

Nuclear weapons are the most devastating WMD. Nuclear weapons were exploded twice in the 20th century and many other threats to use them have been made. The first bomb, on 6 August 1945, destroyed the Japanese city of Hiroshima and killed about 100,000 people at once. The second, on 9 August, destroyed the city of Nagasaki and killed about 70,000 people. Many more have died since then as a result of the radiation effects of those bombs.

There are 20,000 nuclear warheads in the possession of the declared nuclear weapon states USA, Russia, France, UK and China on top of that there is worldwide proliferation of nuclear weapons and technology which is being deployed by countries such as India, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea and Israel. When so much military hardware is available around the world terrorists can easily create mayhem by indiscriminate mass killing and destruction. Political violence, organised crime and inciting fear in the civilian population are becoming the hallmark of new terrorism.

World military spending in 2012 is \$1.75 trillion while the annual estimated cost required to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs¹) by 2015 stands at \$60 billion-\$70 billion, illustrating how governments are failing to address the most

¹ Eradicating poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education; promote gender equality; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development.

important issues of the global agenda. Thus limiting the chances of achieving the MDGs- agreed by heads of states at a UN summit in 2000, which was designed to reduce extreme poverty by 50 per cent by 2015.

Against the backdrop of world wide violence and nuclear escalation, the need for disarmament is ever more urgent. Disarmament simply means halting the spread of arms, and eventually eliminating all weapons from small arms to nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). It also means absence of violence and wars, thus increasing the chances of peace, respect for human rights, poverty reduction, and better environmental protection. The ultimate aim of disarmament is to make citizens aware that global and human security cannot be obtained through military superiority. The reduction of arms is the way to bring the peace dividend which was promised after the Cold War.

A holistic approach towards peace and human security depend on a reallocation of the world's resources so that billions of people who never see more than \$1 or \$2 a day are not held hostage to unconscionable poverty. Peace and Human security depend on universal adherence to and respect for human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights as well as civil and political.

We need holistic disarmament which forgoes the physical necessity and mental conditioning of possession of armaments which is born out of fear of insecurity. This fear has been inculcated by a highly violent and militarised society engaged in continuous warfare including the much publicised propaganda of war on terror.

Guns or weapons do not make a nation safer. The US, have the most guns per head (300 million guns for 300 million people) and has the highest rate of deaths from firearms. On the other end, Japan has a low gun ownership rate and their firearm related deaths are also the lowest. So, there is a significant co-relation between guns per head in a country and firearm related deaths. So the current thinking that guns provide safety is only a hypothesis and not a reality.

The Role of the UN

Since its foundation, the United Nations has made the goals of multilateral disarmament and arms limitation central issues in the maintenance of international peace and security- as is enshrined in its charter. Highest priority has been given to the reduction and eventual elimination of WMDs, which have posed the greatest threat to humankind.

The UN carries its functions through its various agencies i.e. UN peace keeping operations, office of Disarmament affairs, Conference on Disarmament (CD), The

International Atomic Agency (IAEA). These agencies have the responsibility of general principles of co-operation in the maintenance of International Peace and Security, including the principles governing disarmament treaties and regulation of armaments.

Some of UN achievements have been the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty 1968 (NPT), Anti-Personnel Landmine treaty 1997, the chemical weapons convention 1992, Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) 1996 and many multilateral and bilateral agreements including creation of nuclear weapon free zones. The IAEA plays a prominent role in peaceful uses of atomic energy and at preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons by its International Inspectorate team and its verification measures.

The NPT is the only binding commitment in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. Article VI of the Treaty obliges its signatories "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control".

The Way Forward for a Weaponless World – 4D for World Peace

To highlight, promote and adopt the soft power approach for the well being of humanity, we need to reinforce the fact that there should not be any place for violence and wars in our society. There are no military solutions – dialogue and diplomacy are the key which can guarantee lasting peace. In 2012 I started a campaign, 4D for World Peace inspired by my book the Economics of Killing. It is a campaign for civil society groups to work not only to change government policies, but also economic incentives and cultural understandings.

The 4D's are DISARMAMENT, DEMILITARISATION, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

This campaign aims to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus accrued to be deployed for real development and genuine democracy. World Peace and building a compassionate society is not a utopian dream. It can be realised by overcoming forces of destruction, violence, & war mongering. A film Change the World and a booklet 4D for World Peace is taking the campaign to the next level.

The work of reversing society's ills and standing up to injustice is not easy, and we need to be willing to invest the time and resources necessary to prepare ourselves just as much as a military prepares its front-line soldiers. Social change and the process of social transformation is not something that can be done overnight. One needs to frame issues which can resonate with the masses, building democratic decision making

structures within the movement as well as in the larger world one that is disciplined in the face of repression. Those characteristics come with nonviolent training which can bring change.

Reduction of military spending should be a tool to fund development. It's time for a mentality change within and among states towards new budget priorities, the demilitarisation of societies and the financial support for development efforts deriving from these sources. This can be done by uprooting the two most hideous features of the contemporary world – inequality and wars.

The mission of the campaign is to take the Quantum Leap Faster, Higher, and Further to spread the message of 4D which is resolution of conflicts in a peaceful way. The campaign has many supporters the world over.

“I support this important campaign of 4D for World Peace necessary steps to peace.”
Mairhead Maguire, Noble Peace Laureate, Northern Ireland.

“I support Uniting for Peace for a safer world and endorse 4D for World Peace. 4D, Count me in...!” – Deepak Chopra, Best Selling Author

“Peace is not only the absence of war, it means calm and it means conditions where human beings can maintain their human integrity” – Dr. Shirin Ebadi Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Iran, says about 4D for World Peace campaign

The way forward for a holistic approach to peace

- There are two different ways of viewing disarmament – unilateral/voluntary and bilateral/multilateral agreements. Unilateral and bi/multilateral arrangements are often overlapping initiatives. Unilateral disarmament is often an effort to encourage others to follow suit. For instance, during the 1990s, South Africa voluntarily disclosed and dismantled its nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs, which led to a region-wide moratorium on atomic weapons through the development of an internationally recognized African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. Additionally, actors in an ongoing conflict sometimes seek to defuse tensions through disarmament measures. Recognising that one's own weapons generate fear among potential rivals that can feed uncertainty and hostilities, an actor may choose to decrease such anxieties by voluntarily reducing the size or destructiveness of its own arsenal in hopes of reciprocal behavior from others.
- There is a need to galvanise civil society and grass-root movements to act as a catalyst for change in society, industry and global institutions, which can bring arms reduction, justice, equity and ecological integrity against the prevailing

culture of violence, profit, and greed. Jayantha Dhanapala (former ambassador at UN Department of Disarmament Affairs) aptly points out the obstacles to progress:

- "Complacency and apathy are widespread in society "almost all societies" as there always appear to be more important problems to worry about than catastrophes that could lead to the end of the world."

We as civil society need to work for demilitarising the economy and building an alternative security Regions of conflict must be at the centre of efforts to build peace regionally. Peace building includes conflict prevention through early warning and the presence of mediators and facilitators as well as post conflict peace building. Today, peacemaking is at the centre of political attention. This narrow view of security, while sometimes creating political and diplomatic breathing spaces to search for political solutions for conflicts, is not sufficient.

Most conflicts have deep-rooted causes that can only be addressed by civilian means of mediation and facilitation between the different needs of the people involved. Post-conflict peace building must be an integral part of efforts to secure human security in areas of conflict and tension. Unless societies and economies are demilitarized, there will be no lasting peace.

Most nations have economies geared towards preparation for war as well as industrial infrastructures geared to meeting these and not other needs. The true peace dividend is not simply the amount of money saved in the military budgets or in shifting it from one pocket to another. Rather, it is the opportunity to reallocate substantial resources to other productive activities. Like the establishment of the current permanent war economy, conversion will require large and long term investment. Internationally, all states should commit themselves to a thirty year Global Action Plan to Prevent War by reducing weapons and military budgets. A 5% reduction over 5 years would be a first step and would be to make available huge capital for development and poverty reduction.

For a weaponless world, Peace and Human Security will depend on eliminating the egregious root causes of violent conflict including racism, violations of our precious and only home called Earth, religious intolerance and misunderstanding, and contempt for the rule of law. We continue to ignore the rights of indigenous and unrepresented peoples while we militarize and nuclearize their lives and lands. Violent conflicts are fueled by economic greed and the grab for raw materials. Billions, and increasingly more billions are spent on the arms trade and forms of militarization. Peace and Security will depend on preventing children from being kidnapped to be slaves in war.

Finally the role of peace education in schools, universities and public at large cannot be underestimated. There is a need for wider awareness of the problems and solutions. The issues are:

large and growing military budgets in the face of ravaged health and education services in most of the West, as well as many developing countries;
refusal by the USA, the world's most powerful nation, to uphold important disarmament treaties such as Anti Ballistic Missile treaty and Start II, or to sign international treaties such as Kyoto and the International Criminal Court;
Some 20,000 nuclear weapons still in the world's arsenal;
The profitable and prolific trade in small arms;
Billions of dollars already being spent in the USA (and probably Britain) on missile production; the USA's so-called Missile Defence Shield, and the possibility that Canada and Japan may also join.

Vision Statement to Promote Disarmament

Global norms for disarmament are vital to the sustainable development, quality of life, and ultimately the survival of this planet. The need for such norms arises directly from the legacy of the last century of wars and preparations for wars. The costs of such conflicts have been extraordinary and have included the loss of untold millions of innocent civilians. Weapons of mass destruction, along with excess stocks and illicit transfers of conventional arms, jeopardize international peace and security and other goals of the Charter.

The potential effects from the use of weapons of mass destruction - especially nuclear weapons - demand their elimination. We believe that the very possession of such weapons necessarily entails risks of use. We shall work therefore to assist the UN, its Member States, and civil society in efforts to eliminate such arms.

We acknowledge that disarmament alone will not produce world peace. Yet we also maintain that the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, illicit arms trafficking, and burgeoning weapons stockpiles would advance both peace and development goals. It would accomplish this by reducing the effects of wars, eliminating some key incentives to new conflicts, and liberating resources to improve the lives of all the peoples of the United Nations and the natural environment in which they live.

We believe that disarmament will advance the self-interests, common security, and ideals of everybody without discrimination. Yet despite these benefits, disarmament still faces difficult political and technical challenges that can only be surmounted by deliberate human action, strong institutional support, and understanding among the general public. We call this combined effort sustainable disarmament -- our fundamental goal.

The global dangers posed by such weapons cannot be eliminated by the actions of any one country. We are convinced that the UN is the place to forge multilateral approaches to alleviate such threats.

Conclusion

A Weaponless world is possible if the challenges of security, poverty and environmental crisis can be met successfully through multilateral efforts based on the rule of law. All nations must strictly fulfil their treaty obligations and reaffirm the indispensable role of the United Nations and its primary responsibility for maintaining peace.

There are various approaches to disarmament as there are indeed various ways to achieve peace. But after long and hard thinking, I've come to the conclusion that the best way to general and total disarmament can only be achieved through a holistic, multilateral and universal approach based upon collective security combined with a set of ethics - freedom, equality, and solidarity. The process of disarmament should go hand in hand of building a viable social and sustainable development along with economic justice, poverty reduction, respect for human rights and a better environment.

Peace is not a dream. It is hard work. In today's society, we have weapons because violence has been glamorised and wars have become a common occurrence. How do we counter this trend? We must deligitimised war as a way of solving disputes. Our leaders must support their rhetoric of peace with laws. For example, every country should pass a law which prevents its military budget from exceeding its spending on education and health care.

We must choose to work and persevere even when prospects for success look dim and believe in our capacity to achieve our objectives. If we can prepare and wage wars, we can also prepare and work towards peace. From kindergarten to schools, universities to global institutions we need to infuse a culture of peace.

To take forward the agenda of a weaponless world, here are some action plans:

- Diverting the \$1.75 trillion military budget routinely spent could be used instead to feed, house and educate all the peoples of this world.
- Seek justice and settle disputes in a non-violent way, through dialogue, the UN, the ICC and the ICJ.²
- Peace education in schools is essential and through a national database, can be used as a way of networking and informing the general public. At a global level, the role of UNESCO is important to spread its message of a culture of peace to overcome violence and conflicts.
- Peace education should be linked to the wider expression of ideas. Such ideas need to be exciting to the younger generation. Peace hero's, rather than military hero's, should be made more visible in our cities, monuments and museums. We should glorify acts of humanitarianism and not acts of war.

² International Criminal Court (ICC), International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- Peace Education is a set of human values and not simply a subject. It is a life time endeavour which doesn't always bear immediate results but rather requires perseverance.

This article can be reproduced anytime, anywhere.

Peace and love,
Vijay

– Thanks for listening

Notes:

1. Vijay Mehta, *"The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels War and Poverty in the Developing World,"* Pluto Press, London 2012.
2. Vijay Mehta, "Which Way to Disarmament, Only A Holistic Approach is the Answer"

This speech can be downloaded from www.unitingforpeace.com

Please watch 4D for World Peace film:

“Change the World” – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9GEK4FFrXk>

Bio - **Vijay Mehta** is a renowned author, international speaker and global activist for peace, development and human rights. He is the chair of Uniting for Peace (www.unitingforpeace.org) and Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org).

Working since 1979, Uniting for Peace is a non-profit organisation devoted to creating and promoting a global culture of peace, nonviolence and poverty reduction. The flagship campaign of Uniting for Peace is called 4D for World Peace. It is a campaign to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy.

The charity Fortune Forum whose founder is Renu Mehta, daughter of Vijay Mehta, held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta’s books include *The Economics of Killing* (2012), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *Arms No More* (2005) and *The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century* (2005).

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ahtak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta is the recipient of the Global Indian Karmaveer (Action hero) Puraskaar (Award) by iCONGO (International Confederation of NGO’s). He is now a noble-laureate 2012 – 2013 of the iCONGO team of advisors and mentors (www.icongo.in). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice.

He has been appointed a fellow of the New Westminster College, Province of British Columbia, Canada in 2013.

Vijay Mehta’s new book **“The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World”** is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave

Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: www.theeconomicsofkillling.org

“Vijay....a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment”

The Sunday Times Magazine, London 1st February, 2009

“Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote ‘The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future’, a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group’s future activities.”

The Independent, London 26 September 2006