Earth Dialogues Barcelona

Llotja del Mar
February 5-6, 2004

Theme Two
"Security Challenges"
Synthesis of Working Groups I, II, and III

Prepared by:
Johannah Bernstein
Alice Bisiaux
Bertrand Charrier
Julie Chon
Fiona Curtin
Lisa Eichler
Ellen McGrath
Remi Parmentier
Dorothy Slepyan

1. LIMITATIONS OF THE CONVENTIONAL APPROACH TO SECURITY

Disregard for the Voiceless Poor:
Conventional security approaches do not recognise the special needs and considerations of the poor, particularly as regards the tangible threats that overwhelm their lives on day-to-day basis. Moreover, the poor and dispossessed are also largely unequipped, or uninvited, to participate in global security and sustainability discourses.

Changing Nature of Conflict:
The concept of security has evolved far beyond the traditional militarist approach. Economic, social and environmental security aspects must be integrated to address the multi-causal nature of conflicts which dominate in the world at large. There is considerable uncertainty and lack of understanding regarding the security impact of emerging environmental stresses. There is a growing realisation that the concept of security has become part of the discourse of war, albeit prevention of war, rather than peace. Another concern is that the current dominance of security on political agendas is eroding concern for human rights and environmental protection.

Trans and intra-boundary conflicts:
Conflicts are no longer clear-cut battles between national armies. Conventional approaches based on national sovereignty cannot adequately deal with transboundary conflicts related to the exploitation of natural resources, migration, terrorism, disease or crime. In addition "at risk" groups, such as the poor, migrants and women are increasing in number in both developed and developing countries, which in turn contributes to the creation and perpetuation of civil conflicts.

The Institutional Gap:
The effectiveness of international institutions for peace and security is undermined in large part by the lack of effective mechanisms for enforcement. Another related problem is the politics of decision making processes, which ultimately lead to the development of weak and ineffective sanctions. The effective transition to a peaceful global order requires strong and effective systems of global governance.

Dominance of Asymmetrical War:
The exponential increase in military spending has in itself become a source of insecurity and has done little to actually prevent conflict around the world. Neither human rights nor environmental concerns can be defended by weapons alone. The terror attacks of September 11 are a stark reminder of the fact that massive military spending by the US cannot protect it from the rising threats of terrorism. Military spending does not target the new security threats. Indeed, economic and political power does not make the US any less vulnerable to attack. The traditional balance of power concept is meaningless in this context. Failing and fragile states are also a continuing concern, which tend to exacerbate the spread of conflict around the world.

The Desecularisation of Violence:
Conflict in the new millennium has become increasingly desecularised. Terrorism has become a means of pursuing fundamentalist religious ideology and must be addressed as such. Extremists the world over resort to violence, not necessarily out of protest to impoverishment or exclusion, but in promotion of extremist beliefs. Security policy must be oriented in part towards understanding not only the roots of fundamentalist ideology, but as well, to ensuring that societies are better equipped to protect themselves from the rising tides of extremism around the globe. As regards the growing threat of terrorism, it should be noted that one underlying factor is the "lack of perspective" and sense of responsibility that tends to characterise many of the new generation of perpetrators of violence.

Security Anxiety
Political systems are dominated by security fears, which in some cases may be valid, but in other cases, may be deliberately manipulated by the political elite. Societies are becoming accustomed to immediate security threats changing daily and being reported endlessly in the media, feeding our fears and resulting in the overshadowing of more long-term security issues related to the environment and social inequalities.

2. COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY CHALLENGES

Economic Security
Among the key economic security challenges include the global inequality that exists between and within countries, not to mention the lack of political will to ensure fair and equitable redistribution of wealth. Secondly, the HIV/AIDS pandemic presents an enormous challenge to the world in light of its unexpected impacts on other critical human security issues, such as the impacts on already overtaxed health systems in the developing world. Thirdly, environmental degradation creates economic marginalisation, not to mention increased migration and related stresses, as well as exacerbating conditions of poverty. "In Europe, economic globalisation has denationalised territories, while concern about immigration has

renationalised politics". The relations between immigration, human rights and sovereignty have led to crossroads where we can either choose to follow the path dictated by economics, or we can create a new solidarity citizens' pact, which adjusts to new realities and needs. Trade protectionism is another critical issue that must be addressed with a greater measure of political will. Increasingly the absence of basic human needs is being recognised as a great a threat to security as the manifestation of violence and war. In addition, increasing attention must be directed to the impacts of the global economic system in perpetuating a form of "organised violence" against the poor and dispossessed.

Ecological Security
The environmental situation has worsened significantly since Rio and this is due in large part to the reactive nature of the environmental policy making process. Resource scarcity, in particular in the Mediterranean region, is a major potential source of conflict. The links between the environment and conflict must be elevated on both the political and intellectual agendas. We need to not only identify the new challenges, but also establish a more systematic approach in the way we deal with environmental security problems. Much of our "natural environmental logic" has been lost through our dispossession from our traditional lands and cultures. It should also be noted that the preparation for war is more damaging to the environment than war itself. Building armies, pollution from the development of nuclear and chemical weapons cause massive destruction to the environment, and also divert resources away from peaceful and sustainable uses.

Human Security
The new challenges to human security are ultimately the same ones which have predominated for years. These include in part the challenge of how best to guarantee each individual the right to live a life of dignity free from fear and free from want. Human security is very complex, and based on trust and common values and experiences. The Middle East is a tragic example of what happens when a narrow definition of security takes over. Billions have been spent on "security" and the results speak for themselves: they have been counterproductive. We need to focus on alternative methods to build human security. Priorities have to change towards increasing investments in peace, through education, dialogue, and appealing to the common human values on all sides. Democracy building is key to the achievement of human security since free and democratic societies are the only guarantors of human dignity, fundamental rights and freedoms. "Female" values, especially the ethics of caring, should be considered as core security needs, rather than only peripheral to "masculine" issues of defence and military strategy. New, more inclusive forms of communication and cooperation are needed to help generate mutual understanding, and to replace the traditional competitiveness encouraged by economics and military dominated societies. These will be the most important tools in fostering lasting human security.

3. THE ETHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY APPROACH

Culture of Tolerance
The culture of tolerance beckons for a new understanding of how best to ensure solidarity amidst growing diversity in religious, cultural, social and political terms. It is about inspiring individuals to live harmoniously with each other and the larger community of life. It is about recognition of the strength and stability that stems from diversity.

Culture of Non-Violence

The culture of non-violence represents a complex of attitudes, values and beliefs that promotes the peaceful settlement of conflict in all spheres of life. It recognises that just as violence takes many tangible and intangible forms, non-violence stems from a wholeness within that is created by harmonious societal relationships.

Culture of Peace

The culture of peace goes beyond disarmament or conflict prevention. It presumes that peace is a way of being, doing and living within and between societies. The path towards a culture of peace must be grounded in the acknowledgement that "peace is the gift of one's enemies" rather than the result of the imposition of a security plan on the part of the strongest actor.