

## THE PRINCETON DECLARATION OF THE THIRD WORLD ASSEMBLY

1979

## Preamble

The Third Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP III), meeting at Princeton in 1979, is the continuation of an important heritage. The first World Conference on Religion and Peace at Kyoto in 1970, and the second at Louvain in 1974, revealed on the international level a basic unity of purpose and goal amid diversities of religious belief, and widened the pathway of inter-religious cooperation for peace. In spite of the scars of religious strife in some parts of the world, we perceive with joy a growing ferment of mutual understanding and respect among the followers of the great religions. We learned in the first two assemblies of WCRP that, while maintaining our commitment to our respective faiths and traditions, we may respect and understand the devotion of others to their faiths and religious practices.

We pledge ourselves to continue to grow in our mutual understanding and our work for peace, justice, and human dignity. The Assembly is aware that we are approaching not only the turn of the century, but also a turning point in human history, with the survival of world civilization at stake. Therefore, we chose as our theme: Religion in the Struggle for World Community.

We rejoice in the sign of world community which this conference represents in gathering 354 participants of Buddhist, Christian, Confucianist, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, Sikh, Zoroastrian, and other religions from 47 countries around this common theme. We know that forces which negate human dignity are strong and all around us. We see the menace of deadly nuclear weapons and desperate national insecurity. Technological and economic power often exploits and excludes the poor of the world. Political power often represses dissidents and denies human rights. Human greed also destroys the natural environment on which we all depend. We realize that our religious insights and actions are only one contribution to the struggle against these forces. We therefore meet with humility but with urgency to face, with the resources of our traditions and beliefs, the danger before us and the world.

## Peace is Possible: Our Conviction

World community, built in love, freedom, justice, and truth, is another name for peace. It is the goal of all our striving. It is not a utopian dream. Despite the temptation to despair as competition for dwindling resources grows more fierce, as centers of economic power intensify their exploitation, and as stockpiles of nuclear weapons grow, we have come together in a spirit of hope. In our various religions, we know that we are members of one human family. Sustained and motivated by the spiritual power by which we all live, we believe that there is an alternative to violence. We believe that peace is possible.

This is the hope we would share, not only among ourselves, as followers of our various religions, but with the whole world. We dedicate ourselves to the task of becoming more effective agents of building community. We call upon believers and all human beings to share this hope and to join a commitment to work for its realization.

We believe that, as a religious people, we have a special responsibility for building a peaceful world community and a special contribution to make.

On the one hand, we realize that far too often the names of our various religions have been used in warfare and community strife, and that we must work harder against this. We cannot deny that:

*The practices of our religious communities are often a divisive force in the world;*

*Too often we conform to the powers of the world, even when they do wrong, rather than confronting those powers with the word of the teachings of our religions;*

*We have not done enough as servants and advocates of suffering and exploited human beings; and*

*We have done too little to build inter-religious understanding and community among ourselves on the local level where prejudices run strong.*

On the other hand, we have been brought to a new awareness, in this assembly, of the deep resources we share for making peace, not only among ourselves, but in the world.

Adhering to different religions, we may differ in our objects of faith and worship. Nevertheless, in the way we practice our faith, we all confess that the God or the truth in which we believe transcends the powers and divisions of this world. We are not masters, but servants and witnesses, always being changed and disciplined in worship, meditation, and practice by the truth which we confess.

We all acknowledge restraint and self-discipline in a community of giving and forgiving love as basic to human life and the form of true blessedness.

We are all commanded by our faiths to seek justice in the world in a community of free and equal persons. In this search, conscience is given to every person as a moral guide to the ways of truth among us all.

We believe that peace in world community is not only possible but is the way of life for human beings on earth, as we learn it in our prayers or meditation and by our faiths.

These convictions we share. Therefore we can go further and share a common confidence about the fruits of religious witness in the world. We trust that:

*The power of active love, uniting men and women in the search for righteousness, will liberate the world from all injustice, hatred, and wrong;*

*Common suffering may be the means of making us realize that we are brothers and sisters, called to overcome the sources of that suffering;*

*Modern civilization may someday be changed so that neighborly good will and helpful partnership may be fostered; and*

*All religions will increasingly cooperate in creating a responsible world community.*

In this confidence, we turn to particular areas where peace and world community are at stake.

## **Mobilization for Peace: Our Struggle**

### **A. A Just International Economic Order**

It is an affront to our conscience that 800 million people in the developing world still live in poverty, that hundreds of millions more are destitute because they are physically unable to work, and that 40 per cent of the world's population cannot read or write. The gap of economic disparity between the developed and the developing countries has widened during the past decade. In view of the stress laid by all the great religions on social and economic justice and the right of all men and women to have a share in the earth's bounty, we call on religious people throughout the world to work for a just and equitable economic order where dignity and humanity in harmony with nature will not be denied to any person.

Such a new international economic order of growing justice and equity would stimulate all nations to achieve viable and self-reliant national economies, capable of participating in international trade on a basis of equality rather than dependence. In order to establish this new vision, there must be the political and social will to promote balanced economic growth worldwide and to allocate its benefits to the abolition of poverty, the meeting of all basic human needs, and the creation of equitable trade relations between the industrial and the developing countries. We call upon religious people to work for the elimination of the structures of economic and social injustice in their respective countries and to mobilize governmental public opinion in favor of anti-poverty programs. We call on religious institutions with economic resources at their command to work for social amelioration, prevention of destitution, and succor of the poor.

Our sense of religious responsibility impels us to reaffirm that social justice and democratic participation in decision-making are essential to true development. We are of the view that suitable measures should be taken at the national and international levels to ensure that the

transnational corporations and enterprises of all economic systems do not wield undue economic, political, and social power in the host country.

All the wealth of the universe is a common heritage held in trusteeship for all. We advocate the rights of yet-to-be born generations to planetary resources that have been wisely developed rather than wastefully exhausted.

## **B. Nuclear and Conventional Disarmament**

We believe that a major concern for the human family on earth today is the looming danger of nuclear annihilation, either by design or accident. We acknowledge that, in spite of SALT I and II, nuclear arsenals are continuing to grow, imparting a sense of urgency to the need of a worldwide movement to outlaw war and all weapons of mass destruction.

We regard the SALT II treaty between the U.S.A. and the USSR as an encouraging development for nuclear disarmament and hope that it will be ratified so that SALT III negotiations may soon begin. It is the duty of organized religions to oppose the proliferation of nuclear weaponry, the arms competition between the U.S.A. and the USSR, and the expansion of the conventional arms race throughout the world. Nuclear powers must not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against nuclear or non-nuclear States.

A global moral and religious campaign which will say NO to ANY KIND OF WAR BETWEEN NATIONS OR PEOPLES is our call to governments, religious groups, and all men and women of conscience and faith. This movement must work toward disarmament and nonviolent means of maintaining security. As a prerequisite, it is essential to create an atmosphere of trust and foster a spirit of conciliation between peoples.

In pursuance of these objectives, we propose that the following steps be immediately taken: (1) a cessation of all testing, research, manufacture, spread, and deployment of nuclear weapons and other instruments of mass destruction; (2) a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty; (3) effective methods of verification to ensure the implementation of these measures; and (4) a United Na

tions convention against the use of all weapons of mass destruction, declaring that such use is a crime against humanity.

In order to reduce reliance on arms, we propose that the mechanisms of international security through the United Nations be strengthened, that all nations implement unconditionally all the resolutions of the Security Council, that the present concept of balance of power be replaced by a system of collective security in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

We express our profound concern over the massive increase in military spending, which has rocketed to \$400 billion a year. It seems a cruel irony that, while millions sleep with hungry stomachs, nations and their governments devote a great part of their resources to armaments, ignoring the demands of social justice. We therefore appeal to the members and leaders of our respective communities to use every political and moral influence to urge a substantial reduction in the current military expenditures of their own nations and the utilization of the funds thus saved for development around the world.

## **C. Human Rights**

We reaffirm our commitment, made at Kyoto and Louvain, to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, and we deplore the denial of human rights to any individual or community. We pledge our support to all societies, organizations, and groups sincerely struggling for human rights and opposing their violation. We condemn religious discrimination in any form, and urge the United Nations to adopt a Declaration and Covenant for the Elimination of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. We uphold the right of citizens to conscientious objection to military service. We urge religious bodies to press their governments to ratify and enforce all the U.N. declarations, conventions, and covenants for the protection and promotion of human rights. All the religions to which we owe allegiance enjoin us to protect the weak against the strong, to side with the oppressed against the oppressor, and to respect human life, freedom of conscience and expression, and the dignity of all people. We support the U.N. declaration and

convention against racism and racial discrimination and urge all governments to adhere to them. The actions of the United Nations against apartheid should be implemented by all States, organizations, and individuals.

Noting the WCRP III coincides with the United Nations sponsored International Year of the Child, we reaffirm our belief in the United Nations General Assembly's 1959 declaration that humanity "owes the child the best it has to give" and that the child should be brought up "in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among people, peace, and universal brotherhood." We appeal to religious people throughout the world to help promote and work for the adoption of social, economic, and population policies in every country so as to assure a better and a brighter future for every child. It is profoundly important that faith be actively involved in this movement of religion for peace, and inter-religious gatherings of youth should be encouraged.

We affirm that all human beings are born free and for freedom that they are equal in dignity and rights, and that any discrimination on grounds of sex is incompatible with human dignity. We are convinced that practices, prejudices, or laws that prevent the full participation of women along with men in the political, economic, cultural, and religious life of their countries are morally indefensible and should be eliminated.

## **D. Environment and Energy Crisis**

The earth is threatened increasingly by human misuse of the environment in quest of material prosperity. We are endangering future generations by our depletion of nonrenewable natural resources, our pollution of air and water with chemical and radioactive wastes, and our overexploitation of the soil in many parts of the world. An energy crisis stares us in the face. With diminishing supplies, of oil, nations and individuals will have to make sacrifices, develop alternative - if possible renewable - sources of energy, and even change their lifestyles. The resources of all religions are needed to cultivate respect for the natural world in which we live, conservation of its resources, and a style of human life that is in harmony with all of nature. (The Assembly took note of the views of some of the participants that there should be no continuation of the development of

nuclear power). The children of the earth must conserve our planet's limited resources so that the bounty of the earth may not be wasted.

## **E. Education for Peace**

The world's religious bodies must undertake major educational programs to increase mutual appreciation of all peoples and cultures and foster a commitment to the values of peace. Our efforts so far have not been sufficient. We therefore rededicate ourselves to the education of children, youth, and adults, to the training of our religious leaders, and to the promotion of values of peace and understanding in our conduct in personal and public life.

Ultimately, peace and justice move toward the salvation and wholeness of all humanity, and flow from them as well. We, as followers of great religions, should be the channels through which spiritual power can flow for the healing of the world. We confess that we have not been worthy of this high calling, but we pledge ourselves here anew to be its faithful servants and witnesses. World peace in world community, with justice for all, is possible. We believe that the faith and hope which brought us together in this Assembly have been nurtured and strengthened during our time together. If this faith and hope were to be shared in the same way through the whole life of the religions to which we belong, then at last, a new force would be brought to bear in human affairs and a new era would begin in the world. We shall pray or meditate, as well as work, that this new era may be realized.

**Religions for Peace** 