

**Independent Expert on the promotion of an equitable and democratic
international order Concept Note
Expert Consultation
Brussels, 15 May 2014**

Background

On 29 September 2011, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 18/6 on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, by which it established the mandate of the Independent Expert on the promotion of an equitable and democratic international order. Mr. Alfred de Zayas (USA) was appointed as Independent Expert on 1 May 2012, and presented his first reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, respectively in September 2012 and October 2012, his second reports in September and October 2013.

Resolution 18/6 affirms that a democratic and equitable international order requires, inter alia, the realization of the right of all peoples to peace and that therefore “all States should promote the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security and, to that end, should do their utmost to achieve general and complete disarmament under effective international control, as well as to ensure that the resources released by effective disarmament measures are used for comprehensive development, in particular that of the developing countries” and further stresses “the need for adequate financing of and technology transfer to developing countries”.

In accordance with the mandate given to him by the Council, the Independent Expert intends to examine how the arms trade, the continuing production and stockpiling of conventional, nuclear and biological weapons, the current arms race, war-mongering, aggression, the privatization of war through the use of private military and security companies and other factors impede the realization of an international order that is more democratic and equitable.

Following the cataclysm of the Second World War, and notwithstanding the prohibition of the threat of and the use of force stipulated in article 2(4) of the UN Charter, the world has found itself in a state of perpetual armed conflict. There was a brief hope at the end of the Cold War that military alliances would be dissolved and that military expenditures would be drastically reduced, thus releasing manpower and resources to consolidate peace and to further human rights and development. This, however, did not occur. The consultation should explore why this was so, and whether, as some observers maintain, wars are fuelled by the military-industrial complex, which has a vested interest in producing – *and destroying* – weapons, because only thus can this industry prosper.

In his 2013 reports the mandate holder noted the lack of budget and fiscal transparency in many countries and the lack of clear and reliable information on the proportion of national budgets being devoted to the military-industrial complex, including “black budgets” of secret intelligence and “national security” programmes, government surveillance, military research, the production of drones, missiles, nuclear submarines, the expansion of military bases abroad, the militarization of outer space, the conduct of wars and proxy-wars etc. The mandate holder noted the insufficient level of public participation in the establishment of national priorities, in particular, the failure of

governments to hold public opinion polls and referenda on such expenditures. He wishes to continue exploring the obstacles that prevent people from participating in policies that affect them, including decisions to spend the national budget on military-related matters rather than on sectors that advance the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, conservation of the environment, development and strategies to address the global problems arising from climate change, particularly in a world in austerity mode. The Independent Expert also intends to explore how non-State actors such as special interest groups, military contractors and lobbyists influence governmental policies, and how greater voice could be given to the people by way of opinion polling and referenda on budget and fiscal matters.

On 2 April 2013 the United Nations General Assembly by a vote of 153-4 with 23 abstentions adopted the Arms Trade Treaty. The expert consultation should explore how the international community could build on this convention and go beyond mere regulation of the trade to explore the modalities of universal disarmament. In this context United Nations disarmament initiatives should be explored, including the work of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs.

To inform the development of his report, the Independent Expert intends to convene a one-day consultation with governmental and non-governmental experts on current military expenditures and the possibilities of gradually shifting national budgets away from war and other military ventures and toward the promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights as well as a democratic and equitable international order. This entails a gradual retraining and recycling of personnel currently employed by the military-industrial complex into other activities including conservation of the environment, education and medical research.

Expected outcome

The expected outcome of this consultation is to provide the Independent Expert with inputs and suggestions from experts to inform his 2013 report to the Human Rights Council. It is also expected that the discussion will assist the Independent Expert in identifying recommendations to be addressed to States and other stakeholders.

Objectives

The objectives of this consultation are twofold:

1. To seek the views of experts on the lack of transparency in budget and fiscal matters, the obstacles to meaningful participation of the public in determining budget and fiscal policies, and the obstacles to the implementation of structural reforms of the current economic and financial model inextricably linked with the military sector, as well as possible measures to overcome them and thus contribute to an international order that is more peaceful, democratic and equitable;
2. To discuss pragmatic and implementable recommendations to States and other stakeholders on how resources currently devoted to the military-industrial complex could be redirected to the promotion of peace and development industries.



Modalities

Duration

The meeting will be conducted over one day and will consist of two plenary sessions. A detailed agenda will be shared in due course.

Venue

The meeting will take place at the UN House, 14, Rue Montoyer, 1000 Brussels.

Participants

Participation in the meeting will be upon invitation only.

The meeting will be conducted in English only.
