

*Justice & Peace Europe Concerted Action 2022*

## **Forging a new Culture of Peace**

### ***A Strategy for Europe***

1. Surveying global affairs today may leave us with a sense of disorientation, unpredictability or even fear. European nations and the European Union continue to be confronted on the global stage with fragile trust in international legal frameworks and multilateral mechanisms, even if seeds of hope seem to be emerging with the revival of the transatlantic partnership. Nevertheless, recent geopolitical developments, including the events unfolding in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of US troops, have demonstrated once again the need for a new narrative on peace, which reflects the failure of war and violent conflict. At this critical juncture Europe is required to assume more responsibility on the global scene and we as the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions are convinced that the way forward for Europe as a whole is to be found in the development of a new culture of peace. Justice and Peace Europe has decided to promote this idea in its concerted action 2022. The text below follows the well-known triad see – judge – act. It has been adopted by the General Assembly of Justice and Peace Europe on 4 October 2021, the feast day of Saint Francis and one year after the publication of the encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti* of Pope Francis.

*SEE – Europe is part of an increasingly fragile, multipolar and rapidly changing world.*

2. Currently, the world is set on a path to a renewed great power competition manifested in various ways, including trade wars, disinformation campaigns and hybrid warfare. We are also witnessing rising regional instabilities and an increased risk of violent conflicts, not unfrequently with the involvement of various non-state actors or foreign powers, aiming at creating divisions and undermining unity.

3. Gaps in arms exports control, continued possession and modernisation of nuclear arsenals by some members of the international community, and ever-increasing military spending<sup>1</sup> further foment fears and fuel instabilities, often in pursuit of short-term economic or geopolitical interests. Digitalisation and technological advances do not only offer opportunities, they also reinforce vulnerabilities and threats, while creating new destabilising environments, such as the exo-atmospheric space or the cyber realm.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the total global military expenditure rose to \$1981 billion in 2020, an increase of 2.6 per cent compared to 2019. Military spending across Europe rose by 4.0 per cent in 2020, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2021/world-military-spending-rises-almost-2-trillion-2020>.

4. Major threats to the life and security of people are in most cases, however, not posed by military means, as shown by the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating consequences. Extreme poverty, rising socio-economic inequalities, restricted access to natural resources, as well as advancing environmental degradation make the achievement of authentic peace impossible. They are also often among the root causes that can lead to criminal or extremist actions and erupt into violent conflicts.

5. In recent years, many of these elements have been witnessed in Europe's own neighbourhood and unfortunately it has developed into an arc of instability, with grave violations of human rights and democratic principles as well as tensions, including protracted and frozen conflicts, at both our Southern and Eastern borders. It is noteworthy that the causes of these conflicts often originate outside of our neighbourhood. Regrettably, in many cases the European Union lacks the necessary unity and political will to find effective ways to address these conflicts in a sustainable and peaceful manner.

6. Attention also needs to be paid to factors that have the potential to undermine social cohesion and endanger peace in Europe from within. We have only to think of dangerous phenomena that have been gaining ground in several European countries, such as xenophobia, hostility against migrants and refugees, or societal polarisation. In addition, external forces often fuel these phenomena.

7. The influence of Europe over strategic choices of global importance remains limited. In an increasingly multipolar and rapidly changing environment with a new emerging dichotomy between China and the US, Europe faces the question which role it intends to play at the global level. Does it want to remain an indifferent by-stander, or does it aspire to become an integrating force, actively shaping the post-pandemic world to make it a more peaceful, just, welcoming and sustainable place for all?

8. The European Union was born as a project of peace and reconciliation. Even though this peace dividend is very precious, today it tends to be forgotten and neglected. With the ongoing Conference on the Future of Europe<sup>2</sup>, the European Union has a unique occasion to listen to its citizens and renew its commitment to peace, both internally as well as globally. Moreover, after the adoption of the EU Global Strategy in 2016, the current search for an "EU Strategic Compass" may provide the sense of direction the EU wants to take in its Common Foreign and Security Policy. European countries may choose a path that fuels confrontation, or a path that seeks peace. In this particular period of time, we believe that we all – European citizens, civil society and governments - have the chance to further the idea of a new culture of peace as the overall strategy for Europe.

*JUDGE – "Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor" (FT2).*

9. In order to better discern the signs of times and to define the role of the European Union in the world more precisely we take inspiration from the latest encyclical letter of Pope Francis

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<sup>2</sup> <https://futureu.europa.eu/> .

*Fratelli Tutti* on fraternity and social friendship. We are particularly impressed by the fact that Pope Francis has described war itself, and not only terrorist attacks, racial or religious persecution as an “affront to human dignity” and that all “these situations of violence have become so common as to constitute a real ‘third world war’ fought piecemeal.” (cf. FT 25).

10. In such a situation restoring peace becomes the overarching moral obligation for Christians and all people of good will. Restoring peace that “is not merely perceived as absence of war but a tireless commitment – especially on the part of those of us charged with greater responsibility – to recognize, protect and concretely restore the dignity, so often overlooked or ignored, of our brothers and sisters, so that they can see themselves as the principal protagonists of the destiny of their nation” (FT 233). “Inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible.” (FT, 235)

11. A world war fought piecemeal requires from a political body like the European Union the development of what we call a new culture of peace, which “can be achieved only when we strive for justice through dialogue, pursuing reconciliation and mutual development” (FT 229). “The word ‘culture’ points to something deeply embedded within a political organisation, it describes its overarching inspiration and guideline. It means becoming passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone.” (FT 216) For the European Union this means remembering always its original vocation of bringing lasting peace to a war-torn continent through cooperation.

12. In *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis has called for the development of a “culture of encounter that brings enduring stability... and is the guarantee of a genuine and lasting peace. Integrating differences is a much more difficult and slow process, yet it is the guarantee of a genuine and lasting peace. That peace is not achieved by recourse only to those who are pure and untainted, since even people who can be considered questionable on account of their errors have something to offer which must not be overlooked.” (FT 217) In the ever more complicated and confused world of today this delicate predicament would also apply to the European Union, which should always be prepared to recognize in the first place its own errors and those of its member states.

13. “In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds”, writes Pope Francis (FT 225). A new culture of peace demands dealing with the open wounds of the past in Europe and its neighbourhood. Every “peace process requires enduring commitment. It is a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honour the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance” (FT, 226).

14. Finally, Pope Francis reminds us that a real and lasting peace will only be possible “on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family” (FT 127). Working for such a global ethic is a particular task for religions: “The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society.” (FT 271). They can keep alive the vision of a “new world, where justice and peace are resplendent.” (FT 278)

*ACT – Proposals in view of forging a new European culture of peace*

15. Justice & Peace Europe offers the following elements that, in our view, may contribute to forging a new European strategic culture of peace:

16. National and European decision-makers should endorse the understanding that being confronted with the same challenges to our security and peace, we all share the same geostrategic environment across Europe. Yet no European country has the capacity to comprehensively address such global issues on its own. Forging together a new culture of peace that refrains from an unfettered “profits first” attitude should become the core of a new global strategy for Europe. This will require harmonising different memories of the past and threat perceptions, defining common objectives and acting together with unity and solidarity. A new culture of peace will enable Europe not only to tackle effectively our internal and external security challenges, but also enhance Europe’s credibility as a key global peace actor.

*For its concerted action 2022 Justice and Peace Europe and its national commissions will multiply exchanges with political leadership and civil society on the idea of a new culture of peace in the light of Pope Francis’ encyclical letter Fratelli Tutti.*

17. European countries must stop fuelling conflicts in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere through their often inconsistent, non-transparent and unaccountable arms export policies. In this regard, resolute steps need to be taken to align national arms trade policies with the strict criteria defined in the EU Common Position on the control of arms exports<sup>3</sup>, including measures, such as the establishment of a European arms control supervisory body, effective sanctions mechanisms in case of non-compliance or an automatic revoking of licences granted by a national authority in the case of an EU embargo against a third country. We also call for intensifying national, European and international efforts for effectively curbing illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons.

*In the context of its 2022 concerted action Justice and Peace Europe will further explore and promote the idea of an annual and independent report on the arms exports of EU members states.*

18. In order to avoid an “over-militarisation” of policies and a regression into an armament dynamic, initiatives, such as Frontex, the Permanent Structured Cooperation<sup>4</sup> or the European Defence Fund<sup>5</sup> aiming at fostering European collaboration in operational matters and in the development of new defence technologies, should not only comply with strict ethical and legal requirements, but also go hand in hand with an overall trust-building and disarmament strategy. In this context, the EU Strategy against non-proliferation of weapons of mass

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<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32008E0944> .

<sup>4</sup> <https://pesco.europa.eu/>

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/defence/european-defence-fund\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/defence/european-defence-fund_en)

destruction<sup>6</sup> needs to be updated to take full account of the recent geopolitical, legal<sup>7</sup> and technological developments, and raise the level of ambition higher, particularly with regard to nuclear disarmament.

*In 2022, Justice and Peace Europe will particularly encourage the Holy See and bishops to engage in fostering disarmament strategies and offer them its support.*

19. To become a true global peace actor, the European Union needs to assume greater global responsibility by developing a “relational strategic autonomy “. To this end it should maintain and further step up its participation in bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks, while seeking creative ways of peaceful and value-based<sup>8</sup> engagement with actors that sow mistrust. Europe should also intensify partnerships with other regional and international organisations, including the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the African Union, while actively working for a greater coherence of international organisations and economic institutions to make sure their structures and procedures are more effective and inclusive in addressing the global challenges of today. In the post Brexit-era the idea of setting up a pan-European peace net could be explored. It should engage the EU and the UK but also Switzerland and all other non-EU European nations.

*Justice and Peace Europe will prepare a memorandum on the concept of relational strategic autonomy to be presented in the second half of 2022.*

20. Security and peace should above all be understood as citizens’ concerns and thus, they go much beyond a narrow state security concept which tends to be limited to protecting short-term national, geopolitical or economic interests. As well as national security strategies, the new “EU Strategies Compass” should therefore define clear strategic objectives oriented towards promoting human security – the security of persons, families and communities in their natural environment - and sustainable peace.

*Justice and Peace Europe will promote the idea of new culture of peace in the EU Strategic Compass and its subsequent implementation.*

21. Forging a new culture of peace across Europe should be based on a multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach, recognising that the major threats to human life and security are multi-faceted and interconnected and thus need to be addressed in an integral way. This requires breaking the silo mentality and creating effective links between different policy areas and bringing together different actors across fields, such as security, social,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nonproliferation.eu/hcoc/wp-hcoc/uploads/EU-Strategy-Against-the-Proliferation-of-WMD-2003.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> including the entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/> .

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Article 21 of the Treaty on the European Union: The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

development, human rights, climate, migration, or economic and trade policies, while maintaining coherence with the overall objective of human security and sustainable peace.

*As part of the European Laudato Si' Alliance Justice and Peace Europe will propose to work in 2022 on the connection between integral ecology and peace.*

22. It is evident that preventing conflicts is more efficient and effective than reacting to crises once they break out. We therefore urge European and national decision-makers to make more resources available for preventive diplomacy, for a more effective and equitable use of aid and an inclusive analysis of local contexts<sup>9</sup>, as well as for a reinforcement of capacities for early warning and action mechanisms at a stage where the seeds of a potentially violent conflict can be transformed and mediated in a non-violent and sustainable way. Since peace and human development are intrinsically linked, we also call on all EU Member States to finally fulfil their commitment to 0.7% of their Gross National Income (GNI) as genuine Official Development Assistance (ODA), and 0.15 – 0.20% of GNI as ODA to the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) within the timeframe of the 2030 Agenda<sup>10</sup>.

*Justice and Peace Europe will discuss with members of the European Parliament the idea of Pope Francis to use money for weapons to set up „a global fund to put an end to hunger and to favour development in the most impoverished countries“ (Fratelli Tutti 233).*

23. A culture of peace is intrinsically linked with a culture of encounter and dialogue. We therefore plead for promoting inclusive spaces and platforms for dialogue and engagement across cultures and religions; we also encourage decision-makers to recognise and better integrate into policy initiatives the peace-building capacities of religious actors who – often during all stages of a conflict cycle – provide indispensable humanitarian and social services, foster social cohesion and contribute to mediation and reconciliation.

*In the course of 2022 Justice and Peace Europe will further experiment new methods and tools of dialogue.*

24. Since each of us is called to be a peace-maker, we also invite European and national policy-makers to provide greater support for peace education and fostering spaces for civic participation, while strengthening the citizens' resilience against disinformation, populist voices or cyber risks.

*The member commissions of Justice and Peace Europe will strive to organise special events of dialogue and prayer for a new European Culture of Peace.*

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<sup>9</sup> According to the EU Council conclusions on the integrated approach to external conflicts and crises, all relevant stakeholders, including cultural and religious actors, should be involved in local conflict analysis, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5413-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>10</sup> In the past two years, four Member States exceeded the 0.7% ODA/GNI target, while only three met or exceeded the 0.15% threshold of ODA to LDCs/GNI, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda\\_21\\_1704](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_21_1704) .