

Statement of the EUFOR meeting in Vienna, April 28-30, 2017

50 years ago, on April 4th, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave a remarkable speech at Riverside Church in New York City: **“Beyond Vietnam. A Time to Break Silence.”** Addressing his own nation and people, the United States of America, he talks about the need to *“break the betrayal of my own silences”* about the Vietnam war, but then moves on to *call for a “significant and profound change in American life and policy, a shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.”* And he argues that only a *“true revolution of values”* will be able to overcome the issues of inequality, poverty and warfare.

Meeting as European branches of IFOR, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, this weekend in Vienna, just before the start of the new review cycle of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and few weeks after the beginning of negotiations in the U.N. in New York for an instrument to prohibit and ban all nuclear weapons, now is the time for us to speak up about this issue. Our message is directed at our own, European countries, our own governments as well as our people.

We believe that all weapons, particularly weapons of mass destruction, cannot be held or defended legitimately. From our belief in active nonviolence as the only power to be able to overcome the circle of violence and to enable peaceful solutions to existing conflicts, we reject any reliance on nuclear weapons, because:

- nuclear weapons are morally and ethically wrong, as they threaten the lives of millions of people, if not of humanity as a whole
- the humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic, as many studies and appeals at the three “humanitarian conferences” (in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, 2013-14) have reminded us again

- adding to this, the ecological consequences of any use of nuclear weapons would be devastating in their immediate and long-term effects
- the (threat of) use of nuclear weapons is illegal according to International Law and International Humanitarian Law
- nuclear weapons are denying the absolute value of each life and are not person-oriented (“human security”)

We welcome the decision of about 130 states **to break the silence** - after decades of standstill in nuclear disarmament – and start negotiations on a treaty making nuclear weapons illegal. We encourage all states who have not yet joined the negotiations to do so for the second session in June and July 2017. We also encourage all states to simultaneously engage in all measures to reduce and eliminate the risks connected to nuclear armament and deterrence in the framework of existing treaties.

In regard to our European context, we recognize the different roles of actors involved and ask them to act accordingly:

- We are grateful for the active role some European countries (e.g. Austria, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland) have taken in the process of negotiating the elimination of all nuclear weapons and encourage them to stay determined in their efforts
- We welcome the participation of additional countries in the negotiations in New York, especially the Netherlands, as the only NATO member country to participate
- We call on all European countries being part of a military alliance (NATO) and/or the European Union, not to rely on a military doctrine which includes the option of nuclear weapons for deterrence or use
- We call on all European countries which have nuclear weapons stored on their soil (Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey) to take adequate measures to remove these weapons from their countries
- We call on the two official nuclear powers in Europe, France and the United Kingdom, to fulfil their obligations to nuclear disarmament under existing treaties (mainly Art. VI of the NPT) and to enter into negotiations on a ban treaty

We are aware that appeals alone will not be sufficient to bring about nuclear disarmament and the elimination of all nuclear weapons. We also admit that we have not done enough to raise awareness of this ongoing threat to humanity among our populations. We therefore commit ourselves to cooperate among ourselves and with other actors in our society to work with nonviolent means and strategies for our vision, a world free of nuclear weapons, through:

- Continuing to monitor ongoing political developments of our governments, be they in favour or against progress in nuclear disarmament
- Advocacy towards our governments in the run-up to the Ban Treaty negotiations in June/July in New York
- educating the public on the ongoing risks and dangers of nuclear weapons
- continuing nonviolent actions such as blockades and banner actions where Nuclear weapons are stored in Germany and Italy, actions during the NATO summit in Brussels in May, actions on Hiroshima Day in various countries
- enacting solidarity and mutual support among IFOR's membership in these kind of activities
- holding actions on September 26, the "International Day for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons"

Martin Luther King closed his speech in 1967 with the following words: "We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. We must move past indecision to action. (...) If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight." These words still are resounding 50 years later if we look at the matter of nuclear weapons.