



2022 President's report

Another year, the 10th of its existence, has passed for the BASEL PEACE OFFICE. Its activities are as important as always and again I gladly refer readers to the extensive list of activities, meetings and publications by the director of the BPO, Mr. Alyn Ware. It needs to be emphasized, that his role and inputs on issues of international security, peace and nuclear abolition are significant. The Basel Peace Office, through Alyn's work and due to us representing a number of globally active organisations (see letterhead), has attained some international recognition and relevance in the 10 years since its foundation. For this he is to be congratulated and thanked for.

As many people, interested in international politics, we from the BPO are concerned about the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia. It is terrible this war was started and is worse, that it still goes on and there is no end in sight. We regret the immense harm done to the Ukrainian population and economy and deplore the maiming and killing of so many young soldiers, both in Ukraine and in Russia. Let us hope, that the developments on the battlefield, international pressure and perhaps insight by the leaders of the two countries might allow some kind of a settlement as soon as possible. Due to this war, a certain insecurity seems to abound in Europe and it is understandable, that presently peacemaking is seen by many as less important than joining a military alliance and increasing military spending. Yet in our opinion, we at the BPO must continue to speak and think "peace".

The BPO again participated in the Basel Peace Forum and re-organized the annual PACEY (Peace, nuclear Abolition and Climate Engaged Youth) award competition and we were happy to again receive excellent entries. We had organized the event - and this will likely become the routine for many international meetings - in a hybrid fashion, with a few of the competing organizations being present and others joining through ZOOM. The two winning teams from Malawi and Bosnia were invited recently to a follow-up event, which allowed them to present their ongoing work ("Oil – leave it in the Ground" and "Interfaith activities jointly by catholic and muslim Youth). We from the BPO were able to give them advice as to how to proceed. This meeting was held at the new K-Haus, the former Basel barracks (Kaserne) and we were glad to have some Basel high school students and their history teacher being interested and joining us.

New opportunities are arising in 2023 for BPO and our partners to further advance nuclear risk reduction and disarmament. These include Switzerland taking up a two-year term on the UN Security Council from January, a UN Summit on Sustainable Development Goals in September, and also in September a Ministerial Meeting in preparation for the 2024 UN

Summit of the Future. The surprising agreement by G20 countries (including 6 nuclear-weapon States) in November this year that *'The threat of use or use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible'* provides a welcome opening. BPO is exploring these opportunities in a new briefing paper **"Opportunities for Switzerland to advance nuclear risk reduction and disarmament in the period 2023-2024."**

Given the current war in the heart of Europe, we considered the feasibility of a so called Nuclearweapon Free Zone for Europe (NWFZ E). In doing so we are aware, that nearly the entire global South is "legally declared Nuclear Weapon Free". Previous studies have indeed looked into this option also for Europe and there are other projects for NWFZ in the Middle East, South Asia, Northeast Asia and the Arctic. However, in 2022 the twice delayed Review Conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT Rev Con) dominated the security discussion in 2022. Although many of us were hoping for progress towards nuclear abolition, the outcome of the NPT Rev Con was again rather disappointing. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) still is not ratified by Switzerland and some of us fear it never will. This may be due to Switzerland's past experiences with, and the ongoing hope by the Swiss Federal Council and the Foreign Minister for, yet another mediation role: our neutral country may be invited to mediate between the few "Nuclear Have's" and the many "Nuclear Have's Not".

While some of us are rather skeptical about this to happen, the TPNW is presently being assessed in Berne and we are careful not to "disturb" this ongoing process by introducing the NWFZ Europe proposal. We may, however, take up this topic later in the coming year, perhaps with the support of swisspeace, dedicated to peace research and peace mediation, is an organization we have an excellent cooperation with. Its director and BPO board member, Prof. Laurent Goetschel, has brought his organization from Berne to Basel and is now the key tenant of the K- Haus.

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President