

# *are students shaping a more peaceful world?*

*by Robert J. Berg*



**P**eacemakers around the world have a weak reputation. Many people in power think of them as peaceniks, flower children just one step removed from well-intentioned Hare Krishnas who through chants and a vegan diet will somehow bring about peace.

This is far from what is actually happening.

The serious front lines work on peace-making around the world is now done by people who are trained and experienced for the real world tasks they face. It is these kind of people who have studied the negotiations process, who know the case histories of how societies break down and where the entry points are for holding back the break-downs; who know militaries (their ranks, their protocols, their strengths as potential peacekeepers) so that they can talk as experts with military officers. They know about post-conflict reconstruction, what sequences are needed, how do you organize the military for reconstruction, how to foster civilian resumption of leaderships, how to draw upon the strengths of international assistance. The best of these peace-makers are often found in the United Nations (UN), or as advisors to the UN, or work in collaboration with the UN.

I am a board member of the Alliance of Peacebuilding, a coalition of 50 major academic and civil society groups like the Carter Center, Search for Common Ground and the Harvard Negotiations Project. In Switzerland, there are numerous groups like Swisspeace.

What I am saying is that making peace is now an established profession. Those of you who want to enter this profession can now see a path ahead on how to do it, with whom you should study, and what a career in making peace can be...

Nuclear disarmament discussions have been difficult, prolonged beyond human comprehension

and immensely frustrating... The fact is that over the last three decades we have far too little to show for the efforts at global nuclear disarmament. But there are other signs of progress.

In fact the trends in inter and intra-state violence have declined sharply since the end of the Cold War and this is due to three reasons.

First, a recognition that the UN and regional groupings of States need to be at the center of peacemaking. Look at the terrific rise in the number of UN peacekeeping missions since the end of the Cold War.

Second, in the last two decades literally hundreds of millions of people have entered into the emerging middle class and above. Employment has broadened significantly. This means that a much higher proportion of humanity has a stake in stable societies.

And third, is the increasingly effective work of the profession of peace-making and peacebuilding. So the general trend is clearly for a more peaceful world. If anything, nuclear disarmament has lagged the general trend...

The World Academy of Art and Science believes that breakthroughs are possible from other sources that might help set a climate of pressure on the biggest powers to get to work on disarmament more seriously...

Will we have the imagination and the courage to think about a future where inter-state military adventures are a thing of the past, where multilateral security replaces national militaries, where there is new promise for human development because new forces of creativity are unleashed?

The imagination for peace lives in the Academy.

# Blix on the Campus Trail

## Former IAEA Head Hans Blix Still Inspires Students

Students are thinking good things for, and about, former IAEA Director General Hans Blix. Hundreds took part in 2008 in a global initiative for peace and nuclear disarmament.

“The best way to avoid nuclear weapons is to make governments feel that they don’t need them,” says Dr. Blix, who launched the initiative through Students for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World.

After leading the IAEA and UN weapons inspectors for more than two decades, Dr. Blix today is President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations. Earlier this year, he launched a global competition to engage students from around the world and from a diversity of disciplines to write an essay, design a poster or make a video to express their ideas on how to free the world of nuclear weapons.

The 15 winning students are from Afghanistan, Australia, Belgium, China, Colombia, Jamaica, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russia, Singapore, Slovenia, and the United States.

Inspired and committed, students decided in July 2008 to create a mass movement of youth against nuclear weapons. “We want to solve the problems before we inherit them,” says Catriona Standfield, a student from Australia. The students talked about

both strategy and substance during a three-day conference in Geneva.

The students are working on a statement that they will send to the heads of nuclear weapons States, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and US Presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama.

The student conference was backed by the UN and governments. Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, the Director General of the UN in Geneva, and Mr. Sergio Duarte, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, both sent messages to the students. The conference programme included sessions with the Ambassadors of Canada, Pakistan, Iraq and Sweden and meetings with Alyn Ware from Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, renowned investigative journalist, Phillip Knightley, and civil society activists, Susi Snyder and Colin Archer.

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*Students for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World has over 30 partner organizations, and is co-sponsored by the World Academy of Art and Science. To learn more, visit the website at [www.disarmamenthub.org](http://www.disarmamenthub.org).*

*Dr. Hans Blix served as Chairman of the 2006 Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission report. For an overview, see IAEA Bulletin article, “Wake Up Call”, by Manne Wängborg at [www.iaea.org/bulletin](http://www.iaea.org/bulletin)*

But it is not enough. The role of experts like those found in the World Academy is almost by definition limited. Yes we can generate ideas. And we can work with inner cores of activists, like the World Federation of United Nations Associations, disarmament non-governmental organizations, and various levels of the UN.

But while necessary, these inner cores have not been sufficient. I believe that the lesson of political change is that we require citizen activism, and the further lesson is that citizen activism is particularly effective when it can mobilize unexpected friends.

Unexpected friends are the key prize in activism. What if, for example, a large number of the world’s military leaders could be enlisted in this cause on the basis of the obsolescence of nuclear weapons?

History is on our side. Peace is prevailing over violence. There are new political figures coming on to the scene of great promise, and leaders in most countries are feeling the need to be more responsive to their publics. Our challenge is to put the problem of nuclear disarmament into the mainstream moving towards a more peaceful, progressing world. ☸

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