

## **WPC Secretariat Meeting in Istanbul**

*Socorro Gomes (June 20, 2015)*

Dear friends:

Our World Peace Council Secretariat Meeting in Istanbul takes place amidst an international context marked by grave tensions and threats, instabilities and uncertainties.

The crisis of the capitalist system is deepening, with its negative social consequences for workers and people, class contradictions, geopolitical conflicts, rivalry among the great powers and blocks that are largely characterizing the situation.

An important realignment in strengths is taking place and it underlines the relative decline of the US, China's ascension and BRICS'. Peoples are resisting and struggling everywhere, achieving partial victories in their efforts for peace, democracy, national sovereignty and social justice.

Despite the struggle for peace and for a new balance of forces in the world, the imperialist aggressions are intensifying against those who are not subdued to the imperialist dictates, and this is the real threat of war. 70 years after the triumph of the democratic forces against Nazi-Fascism and the end of the II World War - which we celebrate with important actions - Europe sees Fascist forces reemerging at its very center, forces that are instrumentalized by US and EU imperialism. This is what the situation in Ukraine shows, where imperialist powers supported a State coup and prompted conflicts, aiming to turn the country in an attack platform against Russia.

We meet here motivated by the conviction that another catastrophe is unacceptable, since peoples unite, mobilize, and push forward a broad and solidary anti-imperialist movement, a broad front for peace, for the prosperity of all nations and democracy in international relations.

We have reasons to be optimistic. In the recent period, the World Peace Council organized important regional meetings, in Europe, Middle East and Asia-Pacific before that. I mention now some initiatives that represent quite well our struggles' essence.

In March 2014, we participated in the international conference "World Peace versus Global Imperialism and Interventionism", organized by the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals, on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since NATO's criminal bombardments against former Yugoslavia.

We also underline the World Peace Council's participation in the events that marked the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the II World War and the Nazi occupation of Prague, with a meeting in the Czech Republic, and the celebrations of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the peoples' victory on Nazi-Fascism in a great event in Moscow, last May. In both occasions, we emphasized the necessity of unity and strengthening the international solidarity in the anti-imperialist struggle, to gather more support against war. We reacted against the militarization of the planet and reaffirmed that we continue to struggle for a world of progress, cooperation and international solidarity, based on the respect for the peoples' self-determination.

The WPC's participation in the electoral-observation mission to Syria was very important, in a country confronted with terrorism and with the imperialist powers. There we observed again that the Syrian people continue to heroically defending itself from the criminal attacks by the world's greatest powers and their allies in the region. The elections showed the Syrian people's determination to defend their country, their sovereignty and their right to decide their own fate, and to find a fair solution for the conflict in which they are drowning, choosing dialogue and diplomacy.

Last year, we also organized different activities in different countries according to our call for a Global Day of Action against NATO, which since April has 65 years of threats and aggressions against the peoples. We had a fresh push to our incisive and permanent denunciation against this war machine, enemy of peoples and peace.

The Executive Committee's meeting, in November 2014, in Goa, India, under AIPSO's auspices, marked our commemoration of the WPC's 65 years and was an important fact in our activities in the recent period. I recall that the final communiqué defined priorities regarding our actions for strengthening the peace movement in the whole world, broadening our fronts and attracting new friends to the struggle for the abolition of nuclear

weapons, for the elimination of military foreign bases, for NATO's dismantling and for the recognition of the independent State of Palestine, among other essential issues.

In February this year, the WPC has participated in a solidarity mission to Venezuela, organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth and by the Venezuelan International Committee for Solidarity (Cosi), with our support. On the occasion, the Anti-imperialist Tribune also took place. The stakes are clear for the social movements and personalities expressing solidarity with the Venezuelan people in defense of their Bolivarian revolution. We carefully follow the transformations not only in Venezuela, since the arrival of Hugo Chávez to the Nation's government, but also in the whole Latin America.

Also in Latin America, we participated, from April 9 to 11 this year, in the Peoples' Summit in Panama, an alternative forum to the Americas' Summit among the leaders of the 35 countries member to Organization of American States (OAS). The US' threats to Latin America and the Caribbean, with over 70 military bases spread over the continent, as well as the interferences in the political processes in Venezuela and Cuba, were issues that we discussed, together with the peoples' endeavor for development and social justice and the construction of an alternative model based in sovereign relationships and solidarity.

Earlier this month, the WPC took our solidarity to the Colombian people, participating in the Second Forum for Peace, which gathered over 1,000 people from the Latin American continent and other regions, where we reaffirmed our commitment to support the dialogues for the peace building process with social justice in Colombia.

Dear friends,

The US' militarist rhetoric and the strategy of surrounding Russia with the concentration of NATO troops and weapons in Europe are among the main current threats to international peace and security.

According to news reports, the Pentagon plans to place heavy weapons in Eastern Europe in enough quantity as to supposedly "contain any Russian aggression", as they put it.

With an arsenal permanently based on the territories of allied countries up North, Central and Southern Europe, NATO, under the US' control, prepares new military maneuvers to train forces for high level of "response" as they call it.

The US Air Force prepares the deployment of F-22 Raptor combat planes, their last generation of planes, to complete the bellicose surrounding of Russia. US airplanes fly frequently over the airspace along Russian borders and the Balkans, accompanied by land and naval joint military exercises, with an intensity that could be compared to the worst moments in the Cold War against the former Soviet Union.

Recently, the British Foreign Ministry manifested the will to receive the US missiles in the British territory, with nuclear warheads, under the pretext of countering Moscow.

According to news reports on June 13, the Pentagon wishes to position heavy weaponry (tanks, cannons, etc.) and 5,000 soldiers in Latvia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania and Estonia.

While Washington announces it does not exclude the possibility of installing nuclear missiles in Europe, the Kiev Government announces that intercepting missiles could be based in Ukraine by the US and NATO, just like it happened in Poland and Romania.

US and NATO military commands and bases are acting to prepare "NATO's greatest military exercise since the end of the Cold War", the "Trident Juncture 2015".

The military exercises will take place in Italy, Spain and Portugal, from September 28 to November 6th, with land, aerial and naval unities and special forces from 32 countries (28 in NATO and five other allies): over 35 thousand troops, 200 airplanes, 50 warships. The military industries of 15 countries will also participate to evaluate which other weapons NATO needs.

These exercises' stated goals are to "test the response forces" (with 30 thousand troops), especially their highly fast operational response, also called the "spearhead" (with 5,000 troops). These maneuvers fit the mark of the militarist and interventionist offensive ratified in the last NATO's summit in Wales.

The production of weapons of mass destruction, the new military technologies and the rise on military expenses are part of this framework, in which the imperialist powers endanger the world peace.

Three general categories of technological weapon systems conform this strategy of new military technologies: ballistic missiles, conventional systems for long distance attacks and the space weaponry. Furthermore, the constant militarization and threat against the peoples are predominant in the international relations dictated by the imperialist powers, who present their new approach as if it were, on one hand, to improve their "security systems", as they put it, or, on the other hand, to pretend a good intention towards the reduction of their nuclear arsenals.

According to SIPRI, the Swedish institute, the military expenses last year reached 1.8 trillion dollars (2.3% of the world's GDP, a slight reduction of 0.4% in comparison to the previous year, but followed by rising figures in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia). Saudi Arabia had the greatest rise amongst the 15 biggest military spending: 17%. Although the US have reduced their spending by 20% since the peak reached in 2010, the sum is still 45% higher than in 2001, before 9/11, spending 610 billion dollars in 2014.

The US are still ahead of NATO members' overall expenditures, destining 3.5% of their GDP. Turkey, Greece, France and the UK are tied in the second place, spending 2.2% of their GDP, even in times of a devastating crisis leaving millions of Europeans unemployed, attacking their social accomplishments directly. These percentages reveal a slight fall in military spending in these countries affected by the crisis. However, during NATO's summit in Wales, in September 2014, the central commitment was, besides reviewing the "strategic concept" ever broadening the threat against the world even more, to spend more money in the sector, especially through the US' pressure, defining expenditure by 2% of national GDPs.

Germany, one of the five greatest expenditures in Western Europe (together with France, UK, Italy and Spain), announced that it intends to spend more in the military sector.

In Latin America, we cannot forget to link the revival of the Fourth Fleet in 2008 to the important discoveries of oil in Brazil, and with the accomplishments of the democratic processes conducted by progressive and leftist forces.

Dear friends,

The militarization and the interferences are remarkable as imperialist pushes against Africa. We underline the US African Command (Africom), one of the six spread over the planet by the military doctrine of full-spectrum dominance, and it was officially launched in activities in October 2007, becoming an independent command a year later, with its Head Office in Germany. According to its own website: "the Command's operations, its exercises and its programs of security cooperation support the US Government's foreign policy especially through activities military-to-military and through assistance programs". It goes further: "Our main mission in the assistance to African States and regional organizations for the strengthening of their capacities of defense allows for the improvement of the Africans' defense capacities to deal with their security threats and reduces the threats to the US interests."

This structure is the backdrop for actions such as the criminal bombardments to Libya in 2011. In the same direction, the French offensive against Mali, called Operation Serval (which lasted from January 11, 2013 until July 15, 2014), was launched unilaterally and clearly against the UN Security Council Resolution 2085 (December 20, 2012).

We also underline for the last period the tensions aggravated by the US interferences in the South China Sea, where territorial disputes do not concern this imperialist foreign power. Likewise, the constant destabilization of the Korean Peninsula, with joint military exercises among the US and South Korea, put an obstacle to the reconnection among the Korean people towards the peaceful reunification, a goal that is shared by both sides since their forced separation by the imperialism in the 1950s. This policy accompanies the US support to the re-militarization of Japan, against the very Japanese people's will, in whose territory the US also maintains dozens of military bases. As if it was not enough, Japan and the US agreed to establish military bases in the Philippines, an open provocation against China.

Friends,

Syria continues to face the dissemination and the advancement of brutal terrorist groups, at the same time when it confronts other violent groups that aim to overthrow a legitimate government. NATO sent its Patriot missiles to the border between Turkey and Syria, from where many of the mercenaries integrating the terrorist ranks depart. NATO maintains around 750 soldiers in the country, according to its own website. In 2012, it has decided to "collaborate to increase Turkey's defense capacities", as they put it, from 2013 onwards, turning the country into the entrance door for mercenaries paid by the imperialists and their allies in the region: Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

The devastation of cities and homes to thousands of Syrians is already recognized as one of the greatest catastrophes in the region, imposing sufferings the Syrian people never experienced: many were slaughtered or forced to seek refuge. Humanity's historical patrimony, of which Syria is rightly proud of, is systematically destroyed, which demonstrates the brutal obscurantism of the forces confronted by the Arab-Syrian Army. Cities of high strategical importance, such as Palmira, are among the main targets, and the voices of the most aggressive reactionary forces urge the imperialist powers to treat the war on Syria as a comprehensive, but unitary situation, supposedly fighting against terrorism of the self-proclaimed "Islamic State" and the very Syrian Government, to overthrow it. As if their goals were not constantly to overthrow the Government.

The Palestinian Question also remains at the center of our attentions and of the WPC solidarity. In 2014, declared by the UN as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we again watched the macabre repetition of the massacre perpetrated by the Zionist regime of Israel.

Violence in the occupied West Bank has reached records, as well as the building of illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories, but as if the daily violation of the Palestinians' most basic rights was not enough, another large-scale offensive was launched by Israel against the Gaza Strip, in July. It was the third of such "military operations" in five years, which left the territory again devastated, with little possibility of reconstruction due to the cycle of violence and the criminal blockade of the territory, killing over 2,200 people - including almost 600 children.

Many world organizations showed solidarity with the Palestinians and the UN agencies have condemned not only the massacre but also the very policy based on systematic

impoverishing and subduing. The catastrophe provoked by the new offensive has pushed forward global campaigns against the overall occupation of Palestine by Israel and against the impunity sustaining it. We salute, with hope, the Palestinian strategy to International Law and their position against the complete domination of the innocuous peace process by Israel's greatest ally and sponsor, the USA. The State of Palestine's accession to the International Criminal Court and the inquiry commission launched by the UN Human Rights Council - with only vote contrary to it, the US' - are paths that could finally lead us to accountability of Israeli leaders responsible for the genocide of the Palestinian people. We should push for these actions not to be empty, void, and demand the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. With this new government, even more racist and extremist in Israel and the declaration of an unbreakable alliance by the Obama government - although face with momentary tensions - we must have a clear understanding of the necessity of rethinking the approach, strengthening global movements in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just cause for liberation and for accountability.

I also wish to refer to Latin America and the Caribbean. The heroic people of Cuba achieved an important victory liberating the five heroes that were arrested in the USA. It was also a meaningful achievement the fact that Cuba was removed from the infamous list of "States sponsoring terrorism". We salute the country's achievements in the struggle against the blockade imposed by the US. We consider it positive for Cuban development and the struggle for world peace the effort for the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the US.

At the same time, we raise our vigilance and resistance to the destabilizing offensive by the US imperialist against Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador and Brazil.

Friends,

If we want peace, we must resist and struggle, strengthen an organizational effort to strengthen our council and turn it into a powerful center in this struggle, which has to do to the very salvation of humanity. Above all, we should read correctly the political situation, to correctly measure the correlation of forces, to understand the general sense of the facts, the essence of phenomena and the gravity of threats posed against the peoples.



More than ever, "peace is a matter of all peoples", as our first president Frederic Juliot Curie put it, and the key is in the broad unity for pushing forward our struggle and our cause's victory.

I recall here the vitality with which the French writer and pacifist Romain Rolland made an appeal in the 1930s for unity against war: "We call on every peoples, all parties, all men and all women of good will. It is not just about one people's interests, or one class's, one party. Everyone is at stake. Salvation cannot come if not by everyone's hands. May all act! It is necessary to leave discussions that dilacerate us aside. We must unite against the common enemy. Let's prevent war!"

May this spirit, this emphasis and this determination preside over our meeting's works and our actions.

Thank you very much.

Socorro Gomes

President of the WPC

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