

Sustainable security



A manifesto for a safer world

This display was produced by Quaker Peace & Social Witness

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A better future

Facing global problems like climate change, poverty and war, how can we build a future worthy of all our children?

We need to think about the problems – and their solutions – differently. Many people think that terrorism is the greatest threat to world peace, but whilst it is certainly a serious problem, our focus on terrorism may actually be distracting us from the more serious threats of climate change, global poverty, and militarism. Not only that but many of our current approaches to these problems are actually doing more to increase the risk of further terrorist attacks than they are to reduce them.

Humanity can tackle all these problems: millions of people and many governments are waking up to global problems and changing their ways. At the same time, we have a long way to go and not much time to make the changes needed. If we just carry on as we are, we risk leaving our children with a highly unstable and dangerous world.



A better future matters: we can all be part of building it.

Thinking differently

The big problems we face globally – that is, the ones which will cause loss of life on a grand scale – are climate change, competition for natural resources like oil, global poverty, marginalisation and inequality, and using war to solve disputes.

At the moment, we are doing more to make these problems worse than we are to solve them. It doesn't make sense to say climate change is a serious problem but to build new airport runways, as the government wants to do. Nor does it make sense to say that we need to prevent war while spending large sums of money on the military and exporting weapons abroad, as Britain does.

A new approach to these problems will focus on tackling their root causes, rather than trying to control them or dealing only with their symptoms.



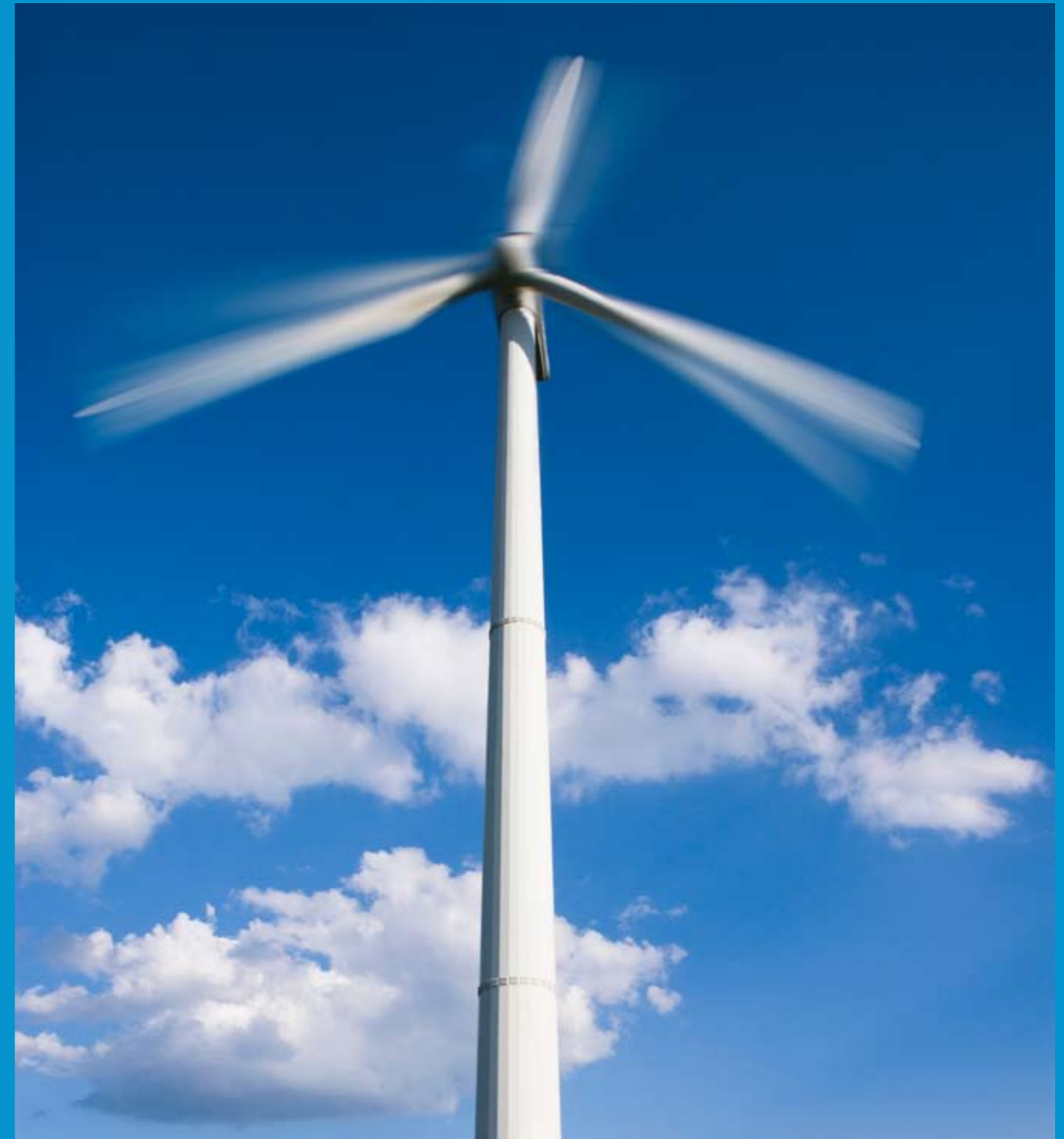
There are enough renewable energy sources to create a low-carbon global economy; the world's overall wealth has risen but the poorest have gained little – this injustice sows the seeds of conflict; a fraction of the world's spending on war would be enough to fully fund solutions to all the major problems that the world faces.

Stopping climate change

If global warming is not stopped it will force millions of people worldwide from their homes, leading to massive suffering, violent conflict and global insecurity. The government's chief scientific advisor has said that climate change is 'the most severe problem that we are facing today'.

Climate change can be stopped but the changes need to be made now by governments and citizens alike. Those changes need to be sustainable and long-term in their thinking.

Nuclear power is not the answer: it is dangerous; it is costly; and it can be used to build nuclear weapons. Contrary to popular belief, nuclear power programmes are not carbon-free; in fact, they produce large amounts of greenhouse gases.



Renewable energy – wind, wave, tidal, solar and biomass – is plentiful. Combined with energy efficiency and conservation, renewables really can provide for our needs, but only if we invest in them seriously and now.

Taking care of what we have

We are now producing and consuming so many goods that we are in danger of running out of raw materials and other natural resources like oil. Many of the planet's essential raw materials will run out if we continue to consume at the current high rate.

As materials are running out, countries are competing for what's left. As competition intensifies, the risk of violent conflict increases. This is one of the reasons for conflict between the United States and countries in the Middle East: the region contains about two thirds of all the world's oil and the US is the world's largest consumer of oil products.

The idea that countries need to grow economically by consuming more is making matters worse. If we are to avoid violent conflict over natural resources in the future, industrial countries must consume less and all countries need to manage natural resources sustainably.



The rate at which we are consuming natural resources is unsustainable. We need to consume less and manage our resources fairly.

Counting everyone in

Imagine being kept in extreme poverty by the decisions of people already rich. Imagine being denied the right to do anything about your situation and how frustrating that would be. That is the situation for most of the world's population.

Even though global wealth has increased, the gap between rich and poor has grown and more than two billion people still live on less than \$2 a day.

Some 'terrorist' groups are gaining support from disenfranchised people by convincing them that western states are to blame for their oppression. Images of civilian casualties caused by western governments are often all the persuasion they need. The lesson of Northern Ireland is that terrorism cannot be defeated militarily. It can only be stopped when there are no more reasons for ordinary people to support it: when people who were oppressed begin to reap the fruits of justice.



We can stop marginalising ordinary people around the world, by:
withdrawing our support for oppressive regimes and ceasing to sell them weapons;
ensuring that western corporations do not plunder other countries' natural resources;
lifting trade barriers that make it difficult for poor countries to export their goods;
and refraining from military action that creates the very problems it is intended to solve.

Waging peace not war

Since the end of the second world war, 25 million people have died in violent conflict. The world now spends over \$1200 billion every year on the military. As governments invest heavily in defence, wars become more likely and our resources are wasted.

Britain is one of the world's largest military spenders and exporters of arms, and a third of all government funding for scientific research and development is spent on the military. This is adding to global militarism, not tackling it.

It doesn't have to be this way; we don't need a powerful army in order to play an important role in the world. The real threats to our security are global: the effects of climate change and of depleting natural resources. Even a fraction of Britain's military budget would go a long way if used for preventing violent conflict and developing renewable energy technologies to combat climate change.



Photo © David Rose

With less than half of what the world spends on the military every year, we could:

stop runaway climate change (\$444 billion per year) – little over a third of global military expenditure;
meet all the international Millennium Development Goals for reducing global poverty (\$48 billion per year) – one eighteenth of global military expenditure.

Our children's future

We live in an increasingly interdependent world. Building a better future for our children will require a fundamental shift: from a focus on the 'national interest' to a focus on our 'shared interest'. We need to understand security in terms of inclusive justice and common human needs, rather than primarily the physical defence of the nation state achieved through military might.

Developing long-term 'sustainable security' for everyone means understanding the root causes of conflict and insecurity, and promoting dialogue rather than confrontation as the means to a truly secure world. Ecological responsibility, a reduction in consumption, economic justice, and progressive global demilitarisation are four core ingredients of a sustainable system of security that places equality and justice at its heart, rather than the power of few over many.



We already have the means we need to solve global problems. All that is required is for governments and citizens to work together to make it happen. We have a choice: to continue as we are thereby guaranteeing our children a highly unstable future; or to act now to make the changes necessary to forge a sustainable global society and a peaceful future for all our children.

What will you choose?