

Statement of Appeal to Corporations to Support Eliminating Weapons of Mass Destruction

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The recent cataclysmic events in New York and Washington, September 11, 2001 emphasize the importance of our objective: to seek corporate support in the mission of eliminating the design and use of weapons of mass destruction. Such weapons threaten the survival of civilization at all levels --the personal, social, political, economic and judicial levels.

In the past this mission has been supported primarily by individuals and ad hoc social organizations concerned with issues of peace and security. Government support has been severely limited by conflicting public pressures and a lack of overall leadership and commitment.

For reasons which are no longer tenable following the September 11 events, the corporate world has distanced itself from any significant support of this essential mission. It is time for change. Particularly so in the Western World where there has been a major shift in economic and political power from governments to corporations. Whatever the merits or otherwise of this shift, it is clear that the corporate world needs to exercise increased responsibility to ensure its own survival, as well as that of its producer and consumer bases.

The candidate for a weapon of mass destruction which has received the most attention has been the atomic (i.e. nuclear) bomb, with the possibility of a worldwide nuclear holocaust.

Consider again the September 11th event with its unbelievably terrible destruction in material, social and economic terms. But what happened is still not comparable in terror and damage compared with what would have happened if any of the commandeered aircraft had carried a nuclear bomb, even of modest size, designed to explode on impact.

But there are other candidates for mass destruction -- toxic attacks on the water and food chains, biological weapons, paralyzing of essential transportation and communication systems, etc. The human capacity for the design of evil instruments knows no limits.

Along with the increased power of the corporate world goes the need for increased responsibility to reduce the prospect of the use of weapons of mass destruction as options for whomever or for whatever purpose. Conventional approaches have been to seek treaty agreements between nations on the production and control of such weapons in an effort to achieve universal security. These attempts have failed primarily because the strongest nations have refused to share what they conceive as their superiority in the exercise of power.

How is the task for the corporate world (of reducing the prospect of the design and use of such weapons) to be achieved? Perhaps the first step is to recognize the problem at its root causes while there is still time to work on them.. A second step could be for corporations singly, or better in consort, to fund task forces with the resources to study the situation in all of its complex aspects, and to develop strategies for dealing with the issues arising.

A primary issue, of course, is availability. What is not available cannot be used. Professor Anatol Rapaport, a psychologist and peace activist at the University of Toronto, stated its essence in the debate on gun control, "if guns were made unavailable, it would put an end to murders by shooting".

The September 11th atrocity has clearly shown that peace and security cannot be guaranteed by physical force alone. In terms of raw physical power, the U.S. has many times more than the rest of the world combined. But it does not have a monopoly on human values, human intelligence or inventiveness. Corporate security, as well as social and individual securities, requires a stable world wherein impoverished peoples can look to improvement of their circumstances without resorting to desperate means through attacks on the perceived bastions of greed and power. In essence, moderation in all things. While moderate differences are tolerable, perhaps inevitable, perhaps even desirable, excess in anything or in any process is probably inconsistent with world stability, and international security. How can moderation in beliefs and actions be achieved and hope nurtured on a world scale? Difficult problems, indeed ! But elementary logic tells us that a steadily increasing gap between the rich and the poor of this world contains the seeds of destruction for global civilization. Physical power alone will not solve our problems, but the study of causes and the applications of wisdom may.

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