

Open Letter from the Meeting of the European Branches of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation in Cardiff, Wales (May 9th-11th)

**Sent Via/Reply to
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19th May 2025

**to Mr. Mark Rutte, Secretary General of NATO,
and Government Leaders of 32 Allies and Partner Countries**

Dear Secretary General, and Government Leaders,

We write to you ahead of the NATO summit hosted by the Netherlands from 24-25 June 2025. We wish to draw your attention to our concerns and invite your response.

From 9 - 11th May 2025 members of European branches of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation¹, one of the oldest peace organisations worldwide, gathered in Cardiff, Wales. During this time we reflected on the increasingly violent world we live in and the proposed answers to instabilities and insecurities.

We recognise that we live in a fragile world. Our common home faces multiple challenges including insecurity, increasing inequality and climate degradation. We heard a powerful presentation from young people about the importance of tackling systemic poverty if we want to build a world of peace. By the end of our time we recognised that we each bear a heavy burden of responsibility to current and future generations to ensure we solve these interconnected crises in ways which enable humanity and our planet.

We are concerned by conversations which focus solely on territorial security and on 'solutions' which involve physical force, competition and instilling a climate of fear and 'deterrence'. We urge NATO-allied government leaders to consider that broader aspects of human security, including the very real climate crisis and its effects locally and globally, inequality and poverty, cyber security and the threat of pandemics are not profiting from a military approach. These existential threats cannot be solved but are instead accelerated by guns and arms. Plus there is significant evidence emerging of ongoing environmental and social harm as 'side-effects' of military spending. We instead call for international dialogue and cooperation as well as investments into protecting the planet, peace, prevention and resolution of conflicts.

While you meet in your conference there will be a counter summit made up of many different civil society organisations. This demonstrates a broader wish to engage in shared conversations on human security. We request that government leaders give civil society, and in particular peacebuilding organisations, a meaningful role in planning for longer-term human security, rather than limiting it to unsustainable military allyship. When considering what parts of civil society we

¹ <http://www.ifor.org/>: The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) was founded over a century ago in response to the horrors of war in Europe. IFOR now has branches in over 40 countries across the world. Its members share a conviction that conflicts can only be resolved, and sustainable peace achieved through nonviolent means, where systems that foster fear and hatred are dismantled, and where justice and equality are sought as a basis for peace.

ask you to centre young people's voice as they are the ones whose lives, prospects and mental health is most impacted by a pervading sense of fear and hopelessness for the future.

Finally we want to emphasise our increased concern about the fact that to this day the possession of Nuclear Weapons remains an integral part of your military strategy. As showcased at the conferences on the 'Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons'² and in several publications the fallout of even a 'small-scale' nuclear attack or war would be devastating for all of humanity. Development, renewal, and security strategies relying on the use of nuclear weapons do not lead to increased global security but indeed make the unthinkable possibility of the use of nuclear weapons ever more probable. At least 94 countries worldwide have now signed and 73 have ratified the United Nations' Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), making these weapons not only unethical, but illegal. We call for an end to the nuclear arms race and for our respective countries to sign and ratify the above treaty, committing to nuclear disarmament and taking on responsibility for dealing with the consequences of nuclear testing and bombings in the past.

We have met as a network in times of war and in times of peace over the last century. We meet convinced that nonviolence and peace are vital to a flourishing world. We urge you to broaden your conversation so that we may all play our part in building a world safe for all.

Yours Sincerely

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Geesje Werkman, Kerk en Vrede Netherlands
Christian Renoux, MIR France
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² Oslo 2013, Nayarit 2014, Vienna 2014 & 2022