

## Final Statement

of the **11th International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns**, which took place in Woltersdorf near Berlin from 26-29 October 2006. The topic was: **War Tax - Responsibility - Peace Tax**.

The participants reiterate their conviction that it is impossible to create peace through war and the use of violence. The responsibility of each of us is indivisible; war leads to the loss of humanity. Human beings are free to reject military violence. Therefore no person shall be compelled to participate in military violence, directly or indirectly. The participants hope that with every conscientious objection to serve with a weapon or to pay the military share of taxes, the total military potential for violence will decrease, and that with every euro spent on peaceful projects the military budget will shrink and more justice and peace will become possible.

The Conference deplores in the strongest possible terms the desecration of graves in Afghanistan by German soldiers. This is yet another demonstration of the danger to soldiers of becoming cruel and insensitive. The Conference demands an end to military action in Afghanistan and the deployment of civilian peace-keepers who have been trained for such purposes for a number of years.

“Conscience and Peace Tax International” (CPTI) introduced the study “Military Recruitment and Conscientious Objection: A Thematic Global Survey”. We were not surprised to learn that to this day, rich men can still buy themselves out of military service, and that the right of conscientious objection is still not honoured in several countries. We were, however, surprised to learn that e.g. in Switzerland any man who does not perform his military service has to pay 2% of his income till the age of 40 – so alongside many indirect taxes there are also direct military taxes.

Seven British citizens who refuse to pay taxes for military purposes – “the Peace Tax Seven” – are in the process of bringing their cases to the European Court of Human Rights. The Conference assures them of their full support. And so at the invitation of “Conscience UK”, the 12<sup>th</sup> International Conference on War Tax Resistance and Peace Tax Campaigns 2008 will take place in the United Kingdom.

We heard from other continents, particularly from countries where armed conflict is linked with severe human rights violations, Nepal, Colombia, Eritrea and the eight other African countries where wars are currently going on. We were urged to defend everywhere the right to conscientious objection to military service, to support the granting of political asylum to objectors and deserters. The Conference supports the initiative “International Law Campaign” (Aktion Völkerrecht) started by students from a secondary school in Heidelberg, as well as the “Manifesto against conscription and the military system” from the Gandhi Information Centre in Berlin.

Marian Franz, departing Chair of CPTI, was given heartfelt thanks for her many years of work. The Board of CPTI having reached the end of its period of service, the General Assembly elected a new Board for CPTI. The new Chair for the next four years will be the former treasurer, Pedro Otaduy from Spain. Hannelore Morgenstern-Przygoda, Germany, is Deputy Chair. The day-to-day work will continue to be entrusted to the experienced hands of Dirk Panhuis from Belgium, and the new treasurer is Alan Gamble from the USA. They are joined on the Board by Robin Brookes (one of the Peace Tax Seven, UK), Ricardo Esquivia (Colombia), Angelo Gandolfi (Italy), and Carla Goffi, (Belgium).