VOLKEL, 26 SEPTEMBER 2020.

Dear demonstrators, dear activists,

In May 2020 the Council of Churches in the Netherlands decided to send the Dutch Government a clear statement against nuclear arms.

After all, the current Cabinet promised in its founding statement that “the Government of the Netherlands will continue to work for a nuclear-free-world”.

So the Council of churches called upon the Government

* To urge for the start of multilateral negotiations in the UN to achieve comprehensive nuclear disarmament in the context of the up-coming Review Conference of the Non Proliferation Treaty;
* To sign the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

The Council had issued similar statements against the production, possession –let alone the deployment- of nuclear arms consistently in previous years and supported the large public demonstrations in the 1980’s against nuclear arms.

As we support this one today!

Right now the Council is yet again very concerned about the new nuclear arms

race that has begun due to the recent termination of international arms control agreements. Billions are to be spent on so-called ‘modernization’ of nuclear arms, instead of investing these funds in the implementation of the SDG-Agenda of the UN.

Nuclear arms and climate change constitute the greatest threats to the survival of humanity and indeed the planet Earth. Young people around the world are justifiably anxious about this and this is cause for hope!

The Dutch Government -in reacting to the statement by the Council of Churches-responded that, although the Government is indeed committed to work actively towards a nuclear- free- world, obligations following from its NATO membership prevent the Netherlands from signing the TPN.

In a comment responding to this reaction I pointed out that the NATO-Treaty

as such does not make any statement about the types of weapons to be used when defending the common territory of the member states.

Therefore member states are free to make their own choice in this respect. So Denmark, Norway and Spain have made it clear that they will not allow nuclear arms in their countries in peacetime. Iceland and Lithuania are taking it a step further:

they will not agree to the use of nuclear arms, even in times of armed conflict!

So our conclusion is that signing the TPNW does not hinder entering into cooperation and alliances (NATO) with other states in any way.

However this would require a nation state to follow its own nuclear-free course!

We need a Europe-wide Atom-*Waffen-* Ausstieg!

So let us end the so-called ‘nuclear sharing’, which is incompatible with the NPT. More and more politicians *and* church leaders are voicing out to remove nuclear weapons from Europe altogether, since they do not enhance security, on the contrary!

One last observation: the struggle against nuclear weapons, the struggle AGAINST militarism, should really be embedded in a struggle FOR an *alternative, inclusive and civil peace- and security policy.*

Last week – at the start of the international week for peace- a campaign for just such an alternative in the NL was launched by a Workinggroup on Inclusive Security. It follows the example set by the Evangelical Church in Baden in Germany which worked out a scenario study to transform the military security policies into civil peace- and security policies in a phased approach by 2040:

*Perspective 2040*. It is titled *Sicherheit Neu Denken*. Meanwhile this campaign by the church in Baden is supported by many German organisations.

Right now the documents have been translated into English, French and Dutch and a translation into Polish and Russian is underway. Perspective 2040: this means we need the support of all of you young people that are here today in that campaign. And as young people like: check it out on [www.ekiba.de](http://www.ekiba.de/) or [www.samenveilig.earth](http://www.samenveilig.earth/) !

To start with I have brought copies of the Dutch version for my fellow speakers at this demonstration!

*Thank you for your attention, but most of all for your engagement today!*

*Let us create a truly nuclear-weapon –free and peaceful world!*

Kees Nieuwerth

Quaker and vice-president Council of Churches in the NL.