

11 September 2005

Perugia-to-Assisi March for Justice and Peace

Let's ban war and war. Let's reclaim the UN.
I want it. You want it. Together we can.

APPEAL

From 14 to 16 September 2005, Heads of State from all over the world will meet in New York to decide, five years on from the Millennium Declaration, what new commitments are necessary to improve life on the planet, to combat poverty, to promote peace and security, to defend human rights and the environment, and to reform the United Nations. These issues are too important to be left in the hands of those same governments which are in large part responsible for the dramatic condition of humanity and the serious crisis at the UN. **For this reason, we invite everyone, girls and boys, women and men, movements and organizations within civil society, Municipalities, Provinces and Regions to participate in the Perugia-to-Assisi March for Justice and Peace to be held on Sunday 11 September.** Once again we have received promises and the promises have not been kept. Let's not remain silent! They could have saved the lives of hundreds of millions of people. Let's oblige them to do it now!

We want you to come along too, wearing a white T-shirt. Together we'll create the world's longest living white band. A white band (symbol of the world's commitment to eradicate poverty) with a clear message: **Let's ban war and war. Let's reclaim the UN. I want it. You want it. Together we can.**

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The world is ever hungrier, more desperate, more violent and more violated. Poverty and disease are growing, along with the inequalities and injustice which exacerbate them. Rich countries' exploitation and plundering of poor countries is growing. Environmental degradation and competition for natural resources are growing. International crime rates are increasing along with globalisation. Illegality and impunity are on the rise. We see growth, too, in trafficking in drugs, toxic waste, human beings, and light and heavy weaponry. War and the use of military force have come to dominate international relations again. Though the idea of human security is being consolidated the world over,

militaristic doctrines of national security continue to hold sway. The arms race has begun again and, with it, ever greater military spending. Acts of terrorism abound, sowing grief and desperation. At the same time, the so-called "war on terror" produces new conflicts, horrors and human rights violations. Warmongers and terrorists have transformed the media into a battleground: in order to impose their own agenda and their own will, they use lies, misinformation, the misrepresentation of facts and reality. The fight against terror is diverting the world's attention and resources away from the main causes of instability such as poverty, infectious diseases, environmental degradation and the crisis over natural resources.

We need a strong UN, but the UN is under attack; all the time it is being further weakened, delegitimised and marginalized. Its powers, resources and functions have been dramatically reduced. The unilateralism of the strong and uncontrolled globalisation are thrusting aside the only "common house" humanity has. At the same time, important political and economic decisions continue to be made in international forums and institutions lacking the necessary principles, values, legitimacy and democratic controls. Often the governments which control and manage the UN do not even maintain the political and economic commitments they voluntarily signed up to (as is happening with the Millennium Development Goals); they violate human rights and the very principles of legality and international democracy that they proclaim in their speeches and resolutions; they carry on managing international affairs without any consideration for the proposals that the world's civil society continues to advance. Some are clearly even attempting to foist the doctrine of pre-emptive war on the UN.

Throughout the world, millions of people and thousands of local councils and organizations within civil society have committed to denouncing, halting and reversing these processes. Despite the deafness and opposition of many governments and economic powers, their struggles and unremitting labour are helping to limit international disorder by encouraging the meeting of civilizations, forming a basis for a new world citizenship, promoting a just, democratic economic order, defending human rights, our common heritage and the environment.

Together with them, on Sunday 11 September 2005, let us renew our concrete commitment to justice and peace, in order to make the world more just, peaceful and democratic for all. **I want it. You want it. We can.**

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Let's ban poverty.

There is no longer any excuse. Poverty is not a natural phenomenon but the cruellest of injustices. It grows in an economy which is organized for the benefit of the few instead of the wellbeing of all, which puts the market above concern for people and which prefers unbridled competition to cooperation; profits made possible by inequality to a reduction in those inequalities; financial returns and speculative windfalls to production; quantitative economic growth to the quality and distribution of goods and services; the exploitation of nature

and the environment to their protection. The poor are a majority of the world's population and poverty kills them daily, even when the guns are silent. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes that everyone has a right to a dignified standard of living; the right to food, clothing, health, healthcare, housing, education, work. Poverty is the greatest and most widespread violation of human rights. That's why it must be banned. The eradication of poverty is possible and must be the first priority of all politicians and all institutions. The resources and know-how to do it are not lacking. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals is not optional: it is the minimum which can be done to begin to repay our debt to the world and to restrain the growing international instability. No army, no wall, no moat can ensure our safety if we continue to allow poverty and desperation to grow around us. Our peace and our security depend ever more, not on our muscles or the goodness of our hearts, but on our commitment to justice, the removal of the causes and the systems of injustice.

Let's ban war.

War is prohibited by the United Nations Charter, by international law, by morality and, in the light of the dramatic history of recent years, even by a healthy realism. War makes no sense because by now it is clear that even a war which is won does not end the conflict it was intended to resolve: it reopens it in more and more terrible forms. None of the wars waged for the most varied reasons since the end of the cold war can be said to have been concluded. Whatever it's called – just, humanitarian, pre-emptive, inevitable - the result doesn't change. War does not solve problems: it complicates them. The defence of human rights, of people and peoples we are called upon to uphold requires quite different tools, timing and methods. Nobody has the right to use it as an instrument to further his own interests. If it is true that liberty and justice cannot be won through terrorism, it is just as true that terrorism cannot be beaten by bombs. So, together with the families of the victims of 9/11, we denounce the absurd position of those who want to stop violence by using violence. War is the wrong answer, ineffective, illegal and dangerous, and must be banned. So let's cry out together: no more wars, no more terrorism, no more violence.

Let's reclaim the UN.

The UN's future is a question for all of us. There are no human rights without international, democratic, independent institutions capable of ensuring they are respected. The UN is in poor shape but if it did not already exist we'd have to invent it. Those who are responsible for its profound crisis are the very governments which control it. The UN we need has to be stronger and more democratic, transparent and participative; open to ongoing collaboration with civil society, local authorities and parliaments, capable of preventing the outbreak of new armed conflicts and of fostering disarmament; committed to defending international human rights laws and banning war; determined to regain a central political role in the social, environmental and economic fields (the three pillars of sustainable development); committed, in short, to really upholding "all human rights for all". Sixty years on from its founding, after

more than 15 years of debate, working groups, committees of wise men, reports and recommendations, we must accept that **no positive reform of the United Nations will be possible without strong pressure from the world's civil society**. This 2005 must be the year which sees a huge mobilization to save, democratise and strengthen the United Nations and, more generally, to build a new world order which is peaceful, just and democratic. The convocation of a "Universal Convention for the Democratisation and Strengthening of the United Nations" could be the first concrete objective. Let's reclaim the UN. It's ours. It belongs to the peoples of the earth. All the peoples.

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Let's start again from Italy.

Italy occupies an important place in the world. In the name of its values, its Constitution, its shared vocation in Europe, its cultural heritage, its enriching civil society, it could do important things for itself and for a large part of humanity. And instead, for a long time now our country has represented a problem for the world. And its international credibility is at an all-time low. It is scandalous that Italy, because of constant cuts in funding for international cooperation, should have slipped to last place amongst donor countries in Europe and the West. Just as scandalous are the way the little money available is managed; the non-cancellation of poor-country debt; the Italian government's backing for the doctrine of pre-emptive war; the repeated violation of Article 11 of the Constitution; the obstacles put in the way of the construction of a European peace policy; the constant increases in military spending; the blow inflicted on the law governing the arms trade; the shameful attitude toward refugees and immigrants,... All of this is even more unacceptable if we consider that a large majority of Italians have demonstrated clearly and repeatedly that their principles and views are quite different as regards poverty and war, cooperation, justice and international democracy.

Radical change is necessary and urgent. A number of European countries have already changed tack. Why shouldn't Italy do the same? The consequences of the growing inequalities and tensions in the world are not sparing our country. What we don't invest today in prevention and justice we'll pay a hundred times over tomorrow in facing insecurity and instability.

That is why on Sunday 11 September, immediately preceding the United Nations summit and on the occasion of the global mobilization day against poverty, war and unilateralism launched by the Porto Alegre World Social Forum, together with the millions of citizens from around the world who are part of the call to action against poverty, we are going to march from Perugia to Assisi to demand once again that the Government, the Parliament and all those in a position of responsibility in Italian politics should:

1. **honour, without further excuse, the commitments made to eradicate poverty, create an economy based on justice and achieve the Millennium Development Goals within the established timeframe**, with sustainable, consistent, transparent policies and measures which respect human rights and fully involve Local authorities and civil society;

2. **promote fairer trade** by radically changing the European policy of agricultural subsidies, ensuring the right of peoples to food sovereignty, recognizing the link between producers and their local territory, giving producers from the poorest countries access to our markets, sharing the fruits of global knowledge, fostering the creation of jobs, the fundamental rights of workers, the defence of the environment and the transfer of sustainable technologies to poor countries;
3. **cancel poor countries' foreign debt without any further trickery**, fully implementing law 209 of 2000, and review the lending system which generates unsustainable processes of indebtedness;
4. **increase resources for international cooperation to 0.7% of GDP**, net of the debt cancellation operations, establishing a quick, clear and effective multi-year plan, without forcing the beneficiaries to buy Italian goods;
5. **define a new law, in conjunction with civil society and Local authorities, to fashion a serious Italian policy for effective development cooperation**, on a participative basis, and consistent with the aims of sustainable democratic development;
6. **withdraw our armed forces from Iraq and from all military missions undertaken in violation of Article 11 of our Constitution and the UN Charter, reduce military spending and the arms trade, support disarmament and the reconversion of the arms industry** using the economic resources thus freed up in the war on want and the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals;
7. **build a Europe which is peaceful**, autonomous and independent, determined to construct a more just, pacific and democratic world and to combat poverty by promoting a fair economic model, repudiating war and opposing any plan involving "unending war", "clashes of civilizations" or terrorism so as to build a community of peace in the Mediterranean, the Balkans and the Middle East, and to pay its historic debt to Africa and its peoples;
8. **save, democratise and revitalise the UN**, giving it back the central position it must occupy in the multilateral system, advocating a Universal Convention on the UN's future, opening its doors to organized civil society in all its different manifestations, to Local authorities and Parliaments and guaranteeing it the powers and the resources necessary to: prevent wars and find peaceful solutions to existing conflicts; defend and bolster the full range of human rights for all and make international criminal justice work; intervene adequately regarding environmental problems, the world economy (global public goods, finance, trade, debt, etc.) and push for more just, democratic and transparent rules and international institutions; support general disarmament and the banning of all weapons of mass destruction;

9. **promote radical changes in the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization** and other associated institutions and their insertion into the United Nations system so as to guarantee respect for human rights, international law and the principles and aims of the UN;
10. **encourage wider and more accurate information for the public** about the big issues of our times and their possible solutions, and about the Millennium Development Goals, so as to develop ongoing education programs for peace and human rights by making use, in particular, of the resources, reach and capabilities of the public broadcasting service.

The Perugia-Assisi March on 11 September is intended to remind governments and those who wield power in the world that the time for promises is at an end. Now is the time for action. Not to act would be irresponsible. The sixth Meeting of the Peoples' UN and the second Meeting of the Young Peoples' UN, to be held respectively in Perugia and Terni from 8 to 10 September leading up to the March, will help to strengthen the direct involvement of civil society and Local authorities. We cannot sit on the fence. We cannot shirk our responsibilities. We cannot afford another failure.

Come along wearing a white T-shirt. Together we'll create the world's longest living white sash. A white sash (symbol of the world's commitment to eradicate poverty) with a clear message: Let's ban poverty and war. Let's reclaim the UN. I want it. You want it. Together we can.

Perugia, 2 July 2005

To join the march, or for further information:

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