A Proposal to Make a Declaration on Enduring Peace and Justice

Background
In order to strengthen local, regional and global awareness of the rich philosophical traditions of many regions of the world, UNESCO launched its programmes on inter-regional philosophical dialogues in 2004. Through a series of meetings and dialogues there was consensus that war and peace is a critical issue for dialogue.

In the most recent meeting of this dialogue series, the Joint UNESCO-UNITAR Asia-Arab Interregional Philosophical Dialogues on the Roles of Philosophy in War and Peace, held in Hiroshima, Japan on 25-27 July, 2008, the participants discussed themes pertaining to the philosophical analysis of War and Peace. These included the roles of philosophical dialogue in the practice of non-violence, analysis of the Culture of Peace, analysis of how to recognise and reconcile conflict, and peace education. There was analysis of past and present wars, examination of so-called just, pre-emptive, and preventative war, the use of depleted uranium*, and how we can link traditions of philosophical reflection to policy making and implementation of policy.

The meeting recognised that 2008 is the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that violence is counter to the protection of human rights, and to the survival of the biosphere, environment and all species on the planet. The participants made the following proposal, in mutual abhorrence against all forms of violence, noting that the distinctions between war and terrorism are difficult to define.

Recommendation to the International Philosophical Community
As a group of philosophers from many cultures, we urge all thinkers to recommit themselves to the goal of mutual understanding between people of different worldviews and traditions.

We realize the fragility of our contemporary global institutions to sustain the necessary social and environmental conditions that will protect and enhance the well-being and dignity of our peoples.

We also find that every religious and philosophical tradition in the world strives to promote a philosophy of life, peace and non-violence. We urge philosophers around the world to analyse, teach and research how ideas can be used to overcome the prevailing culture of violence and strengthen the culture of peace.

Given the growing gaps between the rich and poor in the world, and the uneven distribution of risks and benefits, we urge greater attention be paid to examining social and environmental justice, and nurturing traditions that promote a culture of peace. We also urge philosophers to find ways to promote the philosophy of love and justice as a necessary response to violence and hatred.

Recommendations to States
The freedom of thought and expression are enshrined as human rights, yet philosophers in many states continue to face repression and threats to their lives. The targets of this violence have included those who promote peace. We urge all states to enable thinkers to work in intellectual freedom, while they take responsibility for the growing ways in which ideas are shared with information technology.
We urge states to include human rights in the constitutional processes of their laws, promoting social responsibility and justice.

We urge states to support the teaching of philosophy at all levels to assist in the development of critical thinking among their citizens.

Mindful of the tragic loss of lives and resources that the history of war has caused as a consequence of the aggression of those who have dominated the economic, technological and political imbalances within our social and environmental systems;

We propose to the UNESCO, as a specialised organization that aims "to build the defences of peace in the minds of men" to rejuvenate its efforts for the construction of an enduring peace through the promotion of social and environmental justice and a culture of peace in our world today. We propose that UNESCO consider developing a “Declaration for the Construction of an Enduring Peace Through the Promotion of Social and Environmental Justice” (Short title: Declaration on Enduring Peace and Justice).

Agreed in Hiroshima, Japan, 27 July, 2008