

Bern, 16th December 2003

Christmas Message from the Presidency

To attention of the Justice and Peace Commissions Europe

To attention of their employees, friends and donators

Dear fellow activists for Justice and Peace,

Signs of Hope, despite all

A bloodstained year is coming to an end and poverty, the source of so much injustice seems to grow instead of retreat. This view on our human society could let one disheartened, wouldn't there be all these small and big signs of a starting peace and real solidarity with the ones suffering in misery.

Such a sign of hope is for example the peace plan jointly elaborated by Israelis and Palestinians and recently signed in Geneva.

The assumption of the presidency of Justice and Peace Europe made us aware of how many organisations were involved in an admirable effort for peace and justice.

The whole diversity of work done in our Commissions is a special part of this and therefore we would like to present our sincerest thanks.

The numerous well-founded statements on burning issues are forming an important voice in our society. To publicly stick to one's conviction for peace and against injustice is a continuation of what Jesus has been a living example of. This is what keeps hope alive even in the apparently most hopeless situations. The programmes of structural help recently started, are signs of active solidarity. We would like to thank everybody who has been participating and keeps participating in this.

A Network for Justice and Peace

The Conference of European Commissions in October in Geneva made clear how important it is not to loose track of the coordinates of the existing cross: Next to the North-South dialogue, which exists for a long time already, another dialogue along the axis East-West has emerged during the last 10 years. Especially Western Europe is called to take on the challenge of both, wealth and poverty of the East and the South on one and the

same level. The cultural wealth can bring new impulse on the way to a more peaceful future. The poverty can help to develop us into societies led by solidarity. To complete the network of justice and peace, the dialogue between East and South, something many of us still aren't used to, has to be intensified. Justice and Peace can contribute to cover the entire Europe with a convincing network of peace and justice.

„Channels of Peace“

Fundamental to all our work must be a radical readiness for peace oriented on Jesus Christ (see Appeal on World Peace Day). A basic attitude not focused on one's own rights and power, but always and in each situation building on a vision of a future worth living for, with harmony among people and the whole creation. This is valid for our daily relations, for our work and also for the relations between nations and world regions. Meeting people who radiate this readiness for peace feels good and provides oneself again with energy to continue on the way to peace and justice. This all could not be achieved without any help of God, as was shown at the service in Geneva when Sebastian Temple presented the peace prayer of St. Francis of Assisi in his very specific way. Therein we implore God to make of us "Channels of Peace". This song shall transport our thanks to all of you. The song shall encourage and join you into the New Year:

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred,

Let me bring your love.

Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord.

And where there's doubt, true faith to you.

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope.

Where there is darkness only light,

And where there's sadness

Ever joy.

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek

So much to be consoled as to console



CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSIONS

CONFERENCE DES COMMISSIONS JUSTICE ET PAIX D'EUROPE
KONFERENZ DER EUROPÄISCHEN JUSTITIA ET PAX KOMMISSIONEN
CONFERENCIA DE COMISIONES IUSTICIA Y PAZ DE EUROPA

To be understood as to understand

To be loved, as to love,

With all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

In giving to all man that we receive,

And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

With the warmest solidarity

Presidency of the Conference of the European Justice and Peace Commissions

Sonja Kaufmann, General Secretary

Josef Bieger-Hänggi, President

Annex: Appeal on World Peace Day