

DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2019



Basel Peace Office pavilion at the Basel Peace Forum

*The Basel Peace Office is a joint initiative of:
Association of Swiss Lawyers for Nuclear Disarmament, Basel-Stadt Kanton, Global Security Institute,
Middle Powers Initiative, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament,
Physicians for Social Responsibility (IPPNW Switzerland), Swisspeace Foundation,
World Future Council and the University of Basel Sociology Seminary.*

BASEL PEACE OFFICE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This is the seventh year of Basel Peace Office (BPO) operations. Despite very low funding, our programs and events have been very successful and have had impact in Switzerland and globally.

We organized a number of events in Switzerland (Basel and Geneva), as well as global actions and campaigns. We also organised (or co-organised) events in Belgrade, Canberra, Dhaka, Dublin, Edinburgh, London, Luxembourg, New York, Prague, PyeongChang (South Korea), Vienna, Washington DC and Wellington (New Zealand).



Joint meeting of mayors, parliamentarians and disarmament experts, Basel January 14, 2019

CONTEXT: NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The political situation regarding nuclear weapons continues to erode. In 2019 the USA and Russia abandoned the *Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty*, USA pulled out of the *JCPOA* (Iran nuclear non-proliferation agreement), India and Pakistan traded nuclear threats over increasing tensions in Kashmir, the Korean peace and denuclearization process stalled and tensions between China and USA increased over territorial disputes in the South China Sea and a trade war.

The declared nuclear armed States are all increasing their nuclear weapons budgets and modernizing their nuclear forces. The high risk of a nuclear catastrophe and the continuing reliance on nuclear deterrence in security doctrines, moved the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists in January 2019 to re-set the Doomsday Clock to 2 Minutes to Midnight.

In 2017, non-nuclear States, in frustration with the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament by nuclear armed States on nuclear disarmament, negotiated a *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*. However, the nuclear armed and allied States have all opposed the treaty, calling it counter-productive to the *Non-Proliferation Treaty*, and have vowed not to join. This growing divide between the treaty supporters and the nuclear-reliant countries has led the Swiss government to hesitate to join the treaty - questioning whether it can influence the nuclear armed States - even though Switzerland launched the humanitarian initiative that led to the treaty.

In this context, the work of the Basel Peace Office is vitally important. We make important contributions in bridging the divide between nuclear and non-nuclear States. We identify and promote effective measures to move the nuclear armed and allied States to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use, phase out nuclear deterrence and make progress toward a nuclear-weapon-free world. We make links between the disarmament, peace, climate and sustainable development

communities. We build cooperation between key stakeholders including diplomats, legislators, religious leaders, youth and civil society organisations. And we identify and promote strategies to move those with investments and vested financial interests in the nuclear arms race (and fossil fuel industry), to shift these financial interests away from nuclear weapons and instead toward diplomatic, social, economic and environmental need.



Speakers at the Basel Peace Office conference on divestment from fossil fuel and nuclear weapons industries, April 12-13, 2019

SUMMARY: PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights for our 2019 program include organizing the following:

- a) Successful events in Basel in conjunction with the *2019 Basel Peace Forum*, January 13-14, 2019 including a pavilion action, public meeting and joint meeting of city leaders, parliamentarians and disarmament experts;
- b) An international conference in Basel on divestment from the nuclear weapons and fossil fuel industries, April 12-13, 2019;
- c) Two events at the United Nations during the *Preparatory Conference of States Parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)*;
- d) A diplomatic roundtable at the UN in Geneva on nuclear-weapon-free zones;
- e) Events in the UK and Scottish Parliaments in cooperation with the ATOM Project;
- f) A European regional conference in Prague on *Bertha von Suttner: Ideas that don't grow old*;
- g) The *Count the Nuclear Weapons Money* action in New York;
- h) Nuclear weapons divestment events in Dhaka, Dublin, Edinburgh, New York, Vienna and Washington DC – in addition to the Basel events on divestment listed above.

We also played a leading or active role in the:

- a) PyeongChang Global Peace Forum;
- b) Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly held in Belgrade;
- c) OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Luxembourg;
- d) Mayors for Peace Europe including the Executive Cities meeting in Hannover.

PROGRAMS

Abolition 2000

BPO serves on the coordinating committee of the *Abolition 2000 global network to eliminate nuclear weapons*. In 2019, BPO organized the *Abolition 2000 Annual General Meeting* in New York, at which a new working was established to build connections between peace, climate, sustainable

development and nuclear disarmament. The working group launched and promoted a [Global Week of Action on peace, climate, sustainable development and nuclear abolition](#) From Sep 21-27 bringing together Sep 21: [UN International Day for Peace](#); Sep 23: [UN Climate Summit](#); Sep 24-25: [Summit on SDGs](#) and Sep 26: [International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#).

BPO co-chairs a number of Abolition 2000 working groups including the Youth Network, Inter-faith working group, Nuclear Weapon Free Zones WG and the Economic Dimensions of Nuclearism Working Group. Through these working groups we organised a number of events, actions and programs during 2018, including side-events at the NPT Prep Com in Geneva and the UN General Assembly in New York. In addition, we maintained the Abolition 2000 global calendar of nuclear disarmament events.



BPO Director Alyn Ware leads a delegation meeting with UN General Assembly President Maria Espinosa to discuss the Global Week of Action on Peace, Climate, SDGs and Nuclear Abolition.

Basel Peace Forum 2019

BPO organized an interactive pavilion at the Basel Peace Forum 2019 plus a public meeting on [Investing in Peace and Sustainability](#) and a joint meeting of city leaders, parliamentarians and disarmament experts.

The pavilion focused on the negative impact of weapons exports from Europe, and included information videos, a quiz on Swiss weapons exports to countries in armed conflict or with poor human rights records, and an action to count the €23 billion in European arms exports and symbolically re-allocate this to the SDGs.

The joint meeting adopted the [Basel Appeal for Disarmament and Sustainable Security](#), which was circulated for additional endorsers and then sent to Presidents Putin and Trump and to the leaders of the Russian and US legislatures. The letter calls on them to preserve the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, prevent a new nuclear arms race in Europe and undertake measures to reduce the risk of a nuclear conflict and support global nuclear disarmament.



Prof Dr (med) Andreas Nidecker and Christine Muttonen counting the European weapons exports money

Climate/Nuclear Nexus

The [Climate/Nuclear Nexus](#) is a joint program of BPO and World Future Council to demonstrate the links between the climate crisis and nuclear threats, and to build cooperation between climate action and nuclear disarmament movements. Background materials from the program were useful in 2019 to establish the new Abolition 2000 working group (see above) and to engage climate activists in many of our events and actions.

Engaging parliamentarians

BPO and PNND engaged parliamentarians in nuclear disarmament during 2019 through a number of actions and events including the Basel Appeal (mentioned above), advocacy at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Luxembourg (see [OSCE Parliamentary Assembly advances peace, disarmament and sustainable development](#)) and at the IPU Assembly in Belgrade (see [Ending investments in nuclear weapons and fossil fuel industries](#)), through actions and events to support the Korean peace and denuclearization process (see [Parliamentarians and civil society call for progress at USA/DPRK Summit](#)) and through the Move the Nuclear Weapons Money campaign (see below).



BPO Director Alyn Ware chairs the IPU session on the Role of Parliamentarians to achieve a nuclear weapons-free world, and then speaks on climate action and nuclear disarmament in the plenary session.

Mayors for Peace

BPO serves as the liaison and organiser of the Mayors for Peace program for the Basel-Stadt Kanton. In 2019 this included organizing the joint meeting of city leaders and parliamentarians held in Basel on January 15, managing the [Basel Appeal for Disarmament and Sustainable Security](#) and participating in the Mayors for Peace Europe Executive Cities meeting to build joint actions and events.

Move the Nuclear Weapons Money

[Move the Nuclear Weapons Money](#) is a global campaign established by BPO and partner organisations to cut nuclear weapons budgets, end investments in nuclear weapons and redirect these budgets and investments to support peace, climate action and sustainable development. The campaign also works very closely with the global fossil fuel divestment campaign.

This was the main program for BPO in 2019. We organized a number of events including:

- a) **Basel, April 12-13:** [Move the Nuclear Weapons Money: an international conference on divestment and other actions by cities, universities, parliaments and religious institutions to reverse the nuclear arms race and protect the climate](#). For background to the conference see [Reversing the financial interests in fossil fuels and the nuclear arms race](#). For a report on

the conference see [Basel city hosts successful conference on Move the Nuclear Weapons Money](#)

- b) **New York, May 7.** [Move the Nuclear Weapons Money panel during the NPT Prep Com.](#)
- c) **Washington DC, June 19:** [Legislators, nuclear risk-reduction and Move the Nuclear Weapons Money](#)
- d) **Dublin, June 24-26:** Parliamentary and NGO events on nuclear weapons divestment.
- e) **Dhaka, July 19;** Parliamentary meeting on nuclear weapons divestment
- f) **Vienna, Sep 5:** Workshops for Austrian pension fund managers and disarmament NGOs on nuclear weapons divestment.

We also maintained the website, published [blog articles](#) on campaign developments and engaged a wide range of stakeholders through [Move the Nuclear Weapons Money memes](#).

- **Count the Nuclear Weapons Money**

[Count the nuclear weapons money](#) was a major action for the Move the Nuclear Weapons Money campaign. Over seven days and nights during UN Disarmament Week a [team of volunteers](#) in New York City physically counted out \$542 billion – the approximate global nuclear weapons budget for the next five years – and symbolically reallocated this to climate protection, poverty alleviation and the Sustainable Development Goals. The money was counted in 542,000 mock notes each of value \$1million. The aim was to demonstrate the incomprehensible magnitude of nuclear weapons spending, and what this money could instead support.

The main counting was done in at ‘The Hub’, a gallery in the Chelsea neighbourhood, where the counted money was placed in 17 large baskets representing the 17 SDGs. There were also short countings of the money in New York inside the United Nations, outside the UN with the School Strike 4 Climate, outside the office of a nuclear weapons contractor, in front of NY City Hall to support the campaign to get NY city to divest from nuclear weapons, at Strawberry Fields (tribute location for John Lennon) and in Union Square next to the Gandhi statue. And there were companion countings in London in front of the Ministry of Defence, New Mexico at nuclear weapons facilities and other places around the world. (See [Move the Nuclear Weapons Money blog](#) for articles about these counting events).

Senator Markey (USA) used the occasion of Count the Nuclear Weapons Money to re-introduce the *Smarter Approach to Nuclear Expenditure (SANE) Act* into the US Congress. See [U.S. Senator Markey introduces Act to slash nuclear weapons spending](#).



Counting the nuclear weapons money at the Hub in Chelsea, New York City.

Nuclear weapons and the Law

The main development during the past year with respect to nuclear weapons and the law was the affirmation by the UN Human Rights Committee in October 2018 that the threat or use of nuclear weapons violates the Right to Life. BPO worked with the [Abolition 2000 Working Group on International Law](#), the [Swiss Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms](#) and [Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy](#) (USA) to educate and mobilise civil society organisations to use this decision in their campaign and advocacy work. To assist this, we published and circulated the flyer [Nuclear weapons violate the Right to Life: Using UN Human Rights Committee General Comment 36 in grassroots actions and campaigns](#).

Peace and Sport

BPO has developed a proposal with Non-violence International, the Olympism Project and World Future Council on an *Olympic Peace Convocations Initiative: Advancing the Olympic Truce vision*. The proposal envisages a series of convocations (specialized conferences) of Olympic sportspeople and international peace practitioners to take place every two years in conjunction with the Olympic Games. We are currently liaising with the International Olympic Committee Education Commission to ascertain whether this could move ahead at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

UNFOLD ZERO and an end to war

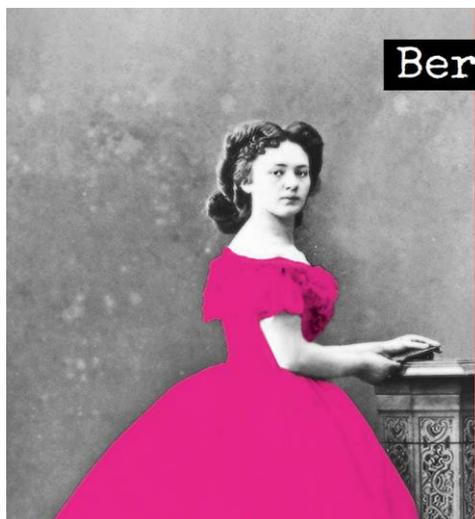
UNFOLD ZERO is a platform established by the Basel Peace Office to promote UN initiatives for nuclear disarmament and UN processes for addressing international conflicts and security issues in order to replace the current reliance on nuclear weapons in security doctrines. During 2019, UNFOLD ZERO circulated a [monthly newsletter](#) and published a number of articles on topics and developments. These included, amongst others:

- [French organizations commemorate UN Resolution 1 \(1\) rejecting nuclear weapons](#)
- [Gandhi, the atom bomb and nonviolence](#)
- [Roger Waters \(Pink Floyd\) – Nuclear money from evil to good!](#)
- [Nuclear policies impact Global Peace Index 2019 rankings](#)
- [Take action to help save the Korea peace and denuclearisation process](#)
- [As Treaties Collapse, Can We Still Prevent a Nuclear Arms Race?](#)

European Regional conference - Bertha von Suttner: Ideas that don't grow old

BPO, PragueVision Institute for Sustainable Security, PNND and World Future Council co-sponsored a regional conference in Prague on Oct 7-8 focusing on the relevance today of the ideas and advocacy of Bertha von Suttner, the Czech* peace campaigner who was the first woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

**Bertha was born in Prague but considered herself a European and internationalist even though the European Union had not been established before she died in 1914. During her life she lived in Austria, Germany, Georgia, France, Netherlands and Switzerland where she established the Bern Peace Society.*



Bertha von Suttner:
130 years of ideas that don't get old

Did you know that the first female Nobel Peace Prize laureate was born in Prague? Her name was Bertha von Suttner. She was a famous writer and peace activist. Austrians have her on €2 coins. In Czechia, she's nearly forgotten. Let's change it!

7-8 October 2019, Prague

international conference
lectures / panel discussions / workshops / movie screening
civil society / war vs. peace
nationalism vs. paneuropeanism

↓ More information

The first day of the conference was **hosted by Prague city** and was held in the historic Old Town Hall. The second day was **hosted by the Czech Foreign Ministry** and was held in Czernin Palace, the seat of the Foreign Ministry.

The conference included sessions on the European Union and Peace, the relevance of the Nobel Peace Prize, European peace movements, and youth engagement in peace. The conference also included the launch of the Czech version of Bertha von Suttner's classic novel *Lay Down Your Arms*, and a special screening of the German documentary movie about the friendship and intellectual dynamics between Bertha von Suttner and Alfred Nobel. For more information see <http://bertha.praguevision.org/>.

Prague-Basel partnership

Basel Peace Office partners with the *PragueVision Institute for Sustainable Security* to advance our programs. Due to limited funds for BPO and the much lower cost of living in Prague (less than half the cost of living in Switzerland), most of our interns work primarily from the Prague office on general programs and travel to Basel to assist with the events. We thank PragueVision institute for housing us in Prague.

Personnel – Board members, consultants, volunteers and interns

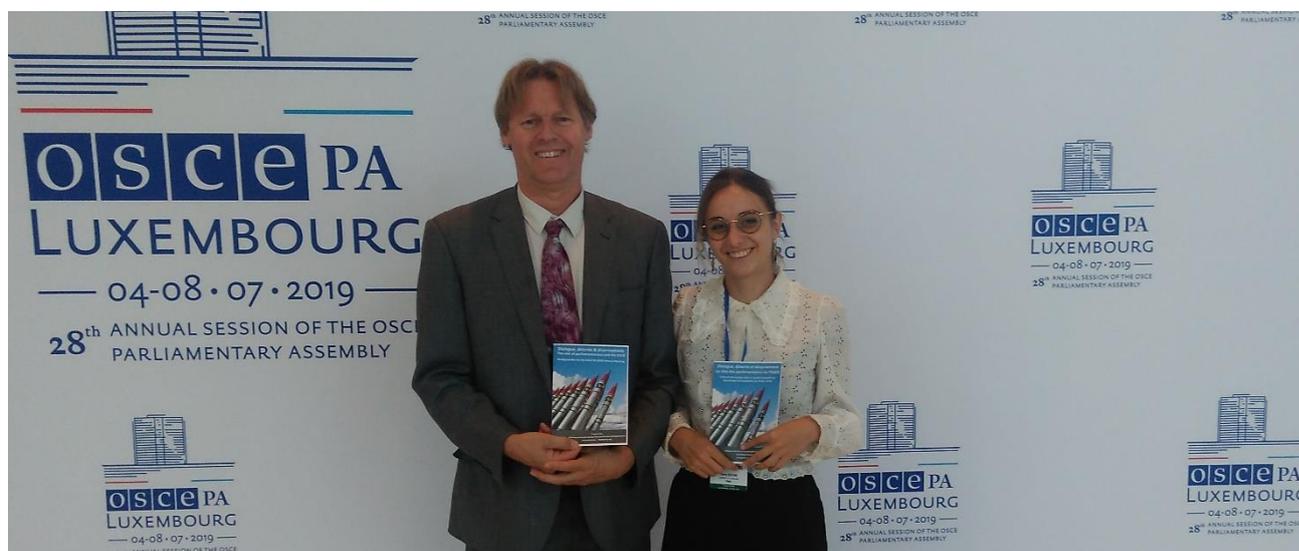
BPO does not receive sufficient funds for any full-time paid staff. We rely on board members, part-time consultants, volunteers and interns to implement our programs.

A note of deep gratitude to **Dr Andi Nidecker** for being a totally hands-on President, providing inspiration, guidance, support and leadership far beyond the call of duty.

A note of thanks also to other Board members who have been especially active in BPO management and/or programs including **Laurent Goetschel, Lukas Ott, Rudolf Rechsteiner** and **Daniel Rietiker**.

A big thank you to **Thies Kätow** and **Marzhan Nurzhan**, our two other long-term consultants (in addition to myself) who have been active on our programs this year.

Big thank you also to the dedicated volunteers **Vanda Proskova** and **Kristyna Chyňavová** and our 2019 interns **Elena Batani, Mariia Ashikhmina, Yira Godoy, Chaimae Sebbani** and **Matej Moles**.



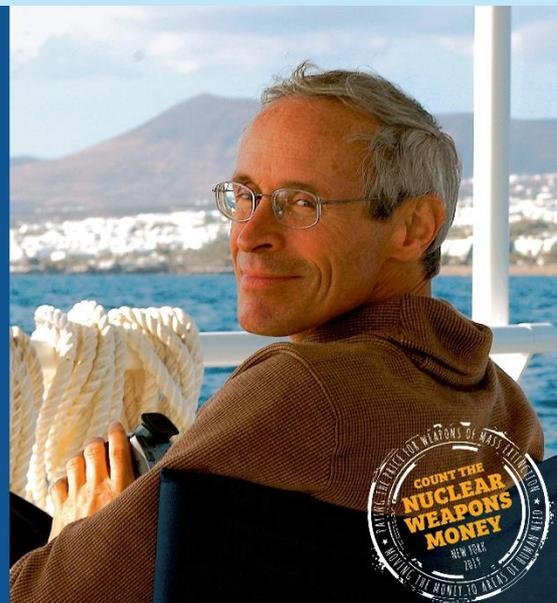
Elena Batani and Alyn Ware at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Luxembourg.

This report is dedicated to BPO supporter
and our dear friend and colleague
Martin Vosseler.



“We are facing a huge **challenge**: To keep our **unique** planet **inhabitable**. In order to live up to this **priority** we need to become a **cooperating human family** that **stops climate change**, keeps the **water clean** and the **soil fertile**, and creates a “**cradle to cradle**” economy without **toxic waste**. **Destroying** precious resources for **weapons** is a **crime** that has to be **stopped immediately**.”

- Martin Vosseler, MD, Founder of PSR/IPPNW Switzerland, Co-founder of Sun21



Martin was tragically killed while riding his bicycle on October 23.

Thank you Martin for your inspiration, friendship and your
dedication to a sustainable future.