

***European Regional Meeting of Parliamentarians and City Leaders, January 15, 2019, Salon Rouge, Euler Hotel, Basel***

***“Nuclear Disarmament and Divestment”***

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Dear members of the Mayors for Peace,

Dear members of the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and  
Disarmament,

Dear representatives of the Basel Peace Office,

Dear speakers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to Basel. In this day and age, there are many good reasons and objectives for us to address the subject of “nuclear disarmament initiatives and divestment from nuclear weapons producing companies”.

Our goal is to create a world free of nuclear weapons. Today, nuclear disarmament is more important than ever – given that owners of nuclear weapons and most of their allies have reverted to the opinion that the world must become more peaceful before we can do without the stabilising effect of nuclear deterrence. Of course, it is these same nuclear powers who are responsible for the conflicts that hold back disarmament, thereby invalidating the credibility of any disarmament initiatives promised by nuclear weapons owners. This makes action in other quarters all the more important.

Yesterday and the day before, we met at the Basel Peace Forum, which was also attended by the Basel Peace Office. Today, we are here, and it is important that this meeting is taking place in Basel.

I think our beautiful city is the right venue for such an event, not least for historical reasons:

In 2012, on the eve of the First World War, for instance, a large international gathering of social democrats convened in Basel to try and prevent political tensions from escalating. Alas, as we all know, they failed. Which is not to say that this was not an important attempt, which clearly underlines the fact that peace accords and peace efforts have never been purely abstract procedures. Nor are they today. They emerge from the lives and acts of committed human beings.

This brings me to Karl Jaspers, the great psychiatrist and philosopher, who taught at the University of Basel from 1948 to 1961. Karl Jaspers received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1958. His book *The Atom Bomb and the Future of Humanity* was published in the preceding year. It contains a differentiated scale of the various facets the possibility of nuclear annihilation had brought to all aspects of human life. And, I must add, this applies just as much today. In my opinion, Jaspers' acceptance speech at the Peace Prize award ceremony – entitled "Truth, Freedom and Peace" – is among Karl Jaspers' most important contributions. Let me quote a passage from this speech which I consider one of its central themes:

*"Peace is impossible without freedom, freedom is impossible without truth. Untruth is the real evil that destroys any peace: untruth, which ranges from*

*cover-ups to blind neglect, from lies to mendacity, from thoughtlessness to dogmatic obsession with the truth, from individual untruths to untruths in the public sphere. Ultimately, peace depends on each individual's shared responsibility to live their lives in truth and freedom; primarily, peace is not a question for the world at large, it is a question for each and every one of us."*

But let's return from Karl Jaspers to our town.

In 2014, when Switzerland took over the Chairmanship of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Basel submitted the most attractive offer to host the ministerial council meeting.

The inevitable security measures surrounding the meeting prompted a debate about the advantages and disadvantages of such events. In the end, everyone agreed that it was a beneficial event for Basel. It put us on the map for about 60 foreign ministers from East and West. It also provided us with an opportunity to discuss peace policy issues which, as a city, we are usually less concerned with. Sadly, the refugee issue and its social and political repercussions have connected even our city with the realities of conflict-prone contexts in Africa and in the Middle East.

After the OSCE experience, we were ready to look out for other occasions linking us to world politics and peace issues. In the past two days, we have hosted the third Basel Peace Forum and have also convened for this meeting today. We welcome these links and the growing frequency of such events.

I therefore hope that Basel will be host to many more related events and will gain a reputation for political and intellectual reflection and innovation in the

field of global peace. The results and ideas of such events should contribute to our efforts to mitigate violence and promote peaceful coexistence in the world. I would like to thank the Basel Peace Office for its decision and motivation to organise this round-table meeting today and wish you all a thrilling and productive meeting.

Thank you for your attention.