

Nico Koopman
Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology¹
University of Stellenbosch

Defence in a democracy. A church perspective on the post-apartheid defence review process.

ABSTRACT

This article consecutively outlines the Defence Review Process in South Africa since the dawn of democracy a decade ago, the consequent policies, actions and involvement in arms deals of our government and the responses of South African churches. The second section entails a theological evaluation of the responses of the churches. The overall conclusion is that churches succeeded to a high degree to engage with this public challenge in modes that are appropriate for public theology in the context of a democracy. In a last section some suggestions are made with regard to the future role of churches. This entails a more inclusive understanding of the church and a more comprehensive understanding of security.

Introduction

In a first section this article consecutively outlines the Defence Review Process in South Africa since the dawn of democracy a decade ago, the consequent policies, actions and involvement in arms deals of our government and the responses of South African churches. The second section entails a theological evaluation of the responses of the churches and in a last section some suggestions are made with regard to the future role of churches.

1. THE FIRST DECADE – FROM 1994 TO 2004

1.1 The Defence Review Process

The transition of South Africa from an apartheid to a non-racist democratic state where peace and justice reign supreme asked for transformation in all walks of life. Our defence philosophies,

1 This paper is the result of consultations of the Beyers Naudé Centre with various other role players, amongst others the Public Policy Liaison Offices of both the South African Council of Churches and the South African Catholic Bishops Conference, the Justice and Peace Department of the SACBC, the economic desk of FOCCISA (The Fellowship of Councils of Churches in Southern Africa), and the Quaker Peace Centre. A pre-conference consultation took place on Friday 7 May 2004 in Stellenbosch in which almost all of these partners participated. The technical information regarding the South African arms deal and the outline of the responses of the SACC were mainly provided by the Public Policy Liaison Office of the SACC. The paper was presented at an international conference on the international arms trade which was organised by the Christian Council of Sweden and the Swedish Fellowship for Reconciliation in Gothenburg on 20 -23 May 2004.

policies and practices also had to come into alignment with the broader transformation process. The South African Constitution, section 198(a) spelled out the direction that defence in a democracy is to take. "National security must reflect the resolve of South Africans, as individuals and as a nation, to live as equals, to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want and to seek a better life." The purpose of South Africa's defence force was clearly no longer to suppress opposition of citizens to illegitimate apartheid governments and to intimidate neighbouring countries. Hence, an extensive Defence Review Process, articulated in the White Paper on Defence that was first published in June 1995 and adopted by parliament in May 1996, was initiated by the new government. The negotiation on the purchasing of arms that was initiated by the apartheid government was halted in the light of this Review Process.

The White Paper stated that the greatest threat to South Africa's security does not come from any external aggressor, but rather from poverty and inequality within the country². Against this background the White Paper argued for containment of military spending, linking of defence policy to the aims of the Reconstruction and Development Programme of government, and for parliamentary oversight over major weapons procurement projects. The Defence Review Process that was instituted by the White Paper aimed to develop long-range proposals for the rationalisation of South Africa's military resources in a manner consistent with the new understanding of our security needs. The Review was tabled in parliament in April 1998. It recommended ways in which to cope with the fact that the defence budget has decreased from 4.5% of GDP in 1989 to 1.3% in 1999³, i.e. the downsizing of personnel. It paved the way for the financing of new weapon systems to meet proposed "core force" requirements. Consequently, capital expenditure, as a share of defence expenditure, was therefore scheduled to rise.

1.2. The decisions and actions of government

Even before the White Paper was published, the government had announced plans to modernise an aging naval fleet by buying four corvettes from a Spanish supplier at a cost of R1,7 billion. The deal prompted a public outcry, as well as protests from the German government, which felt that the tender had been given to Spain with undue haste. The Ministry of Defence withdrew the proposal in June 1995 pending a reassessment of the country's defence needs.

In September and October 1997, as the Defence Review neared completion, the South African government circulated a fresh Request for Proposals (RfP) inviting tenders on:

- 4 corvettes
- 4 submarines
- 48 fighter aircraft
- 6 maritime helicopters
- 60 light utility helicopters
- 108 main battle tanks.

2 Renowned South African economist, Sampie Terreblanche (2002:383,412), is of opinion that a lot is still to be done about poverty and economic justice in South Africa. According to him the gap between rich and poor has increased rather than decreased during the first decade of democracy with a few black faces joining the elite. Terreblanche refers to the 2000 report of Statistics South Africa, which states that in 1996 at least 41,4% of all households lived in poverty, i.e. they have to live with an income of between 601 and 1000 rand per month. He quotes various statistics to make the point that unemployment has increased in democratic South Africa. He, for instance, refers to the fact that in 1995 65% of black people between the ages of 16 and 24 were unemployed.

3 Defence spending decreased from 9.9 % of the national budget in 1993 to 6.1% in 2001.

The notice emphasised the importance of associated defence and industrial participation (IP) commitments (“offsets”). A shortlist of preferred options was compiled in December 1997. Early in 1998, Armscor invited a second round of proposals on a “Best and Final Offer” (BAFO) basis from the short-listed tenderers, to be submitted by May. This time, the size of the package was trimmed slightly and the IP requirements stiffened to 100%, to be split 50/50 between defence and civilian industries. Meanwhile, the SA Air Force initiated a tender process for 24 lead-in fighter trainers in late March.

The Cabinet announced the preliminary results of the tender process in mid-November 1998. The government proposed to enter into contracts reaching about R29, 771 billion with the promise of obtaining certain offsets⁴.

On 15 September 1999, the Cabinet announced a final package little changed from the preliminary configuration. The four maritime helicopters were dropped, and the utility helicopters cut by 25%. It was decided to take options on half of the Hawk trainer jets and 19 of the 28 Gripen fighters. This enabled the deal, initially expected to cost R21, 3 billion over eight years, to be portrayed in the media as “a 30% leaner arms-for-investment package” (*Business Day*, 16/9/99). In fact, Defence Minister Mosiuoa Lekota was quick to point out that the government would “most probably” exercise its option on the additional R8, 5 billion in aircraft before the 2004 deadline.

In a meeting with the SACC in October 2001 Mr Lekota, explained the background of and motivation for the arms deal. He mentioned that the last major weapons acquisition in South Africa occurred in 1966. Consequently much of this equipment was obsolete by the 1990’s. By the late 1990’s this was even more so. In the same meeting, Mr Lekota explained why a well-equipped military is important. They should enhance South Africa’s peacekeeping role in especially the Southern African region, protect the country’s marine and other resources, and play a bigger role in social delivery, e.g. during natural disasters, and in delivering books to schools and reinforcing the police.

1.3. The responses of South African churches

South African churches responded⁵ on a continuous and sustained basis to the arms deal during the past decade. Individual church leaders and especially the South African Council of Churches responded in this time.

4 The costs and potential offsets and job opportunities can diagrammatically be presented as follows:

Product	Supplier	Cost (Rm)	Offsets (Rm)	Jobs
4 Meko 200 SA frigates	consortium (Germany)	6 001	16 007	10 153
3 Type U209 submarines	consortium (Germany)	5 212	30 274	16 251
4 Super Lynx m'time helicopters	GKN Westland (UK)	787	2 720	2 536
40 A109 light utility helicopters	Agusta (Italy)	2 168	4 685	4 558
28 JAS-39 Gripen fighters	Saab/BAe (Sweden/UK)	10 875	48 313	23 195
24 Hawk lead-in trainers	BAe (UK)	4 728	8 580	7 472
TOTALS		29 771	110 579	64 165

A further R1, 3 billion in additional costs (provisions for price escalations, taxes, export credit guarantees, and administrative fees) would have brought the total package to R31 billion.

5 Response should be differentiated from reaction. Response refers to responsible action, i.e. a situation is analysed carefully and appropriate action is taken well in advance, not in a predetermined and therefore reactionary way, and courageously.

In June 1998 and in April 1999 Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and his successor Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, respectively expressed opposition to the arms deal. Last mentioned specifically focused on the potential negative consequences of the deal.

The South African Council of Churches (SACC) has a long record of support for peace and disarmament campaigns that includes a series of statements in 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1998. The SACC's witness has focused on four key concerns:

- Converting the South African arms industry to create sustainable employment that does not depend on the export of weapons;
- Prohibiting the sale of South African arms to countries in conflict;
- Banning the development, production, stockpiling and use of landmines; and
- Reducing the military budget and using the resulting "peace dividend" responsibly, with particular emphasis on the need to prioritise social development and investment.

The SACC has consistently acknowledged the duty of the State to protect the integrity of its territory and to safeguard its citizens from external aggression. Although the SACC includes amongst its members the Religious Society of Friends (the Quakers), a denomination that has historically adopted a pacifist position, the Council accepts that this responsibility includes – but is not limited to – the maintenance of a defence force and the capacity to wage war for defensive purposes.

Nonetheless, the SACC has repeatedly raised a number of concerns about the arms deal. The Council's objections have focused on a few key themes: the cost of the weapons and the deal's budgetary implications, the deal's developmental impact, the appropriateness of the weapons package in the context of South Africa's new understanding of national security, the ramifications for regional security, and, to a lesser extent, the potential for corruption. During the past eight years, the Council has worked with domestic and international partners, specifically the Christian Council of Sweden and the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation, to place these concerns on the public agenda through statements, public forums and advocacy (cf appendix 1).

2. The response of South African churches in theological perspective

In this section of the paper we offer a theological evaluation of the role of South African churches until now and in the last section we make recommendations about our public theological⁶ role in future.

1. The response of South African churches to both the arms review process and the consequent

6 The role of churches in the public sphere is unique in the sense that it is *theological*, i.e. it asks questions about God, specifically the questions on what the significance of faith in the triune God entails for the various public issues that we are dealing with. Dealing theologically with the issue of arms trade entails that we ask what faith in God means for this issue. Public theology is practiced in a variety of modes and styles and different approaches can be identified. I to a high extent coincide with the definition of public theology that is offered by the two US theologians Max Stackhouse and Dennis McCann. They acknowledge the confessional and particularistic character of theology, but plead that we go public in appropriate ways with our convictions. "Any theology able to address the future must reach beyond confessional particularities, exclusive histories and privileged realms of discourse ... theology adequate to the cosmopolitan challenges that await us must have another dimension as well: it must develop a social ethic of the emerging world in which democracy, human rights, and a mixed economy are acknowledged as universal necessities. It must address a world linked by technology, trade and a host of new interdependencies. This agenda for Christian thought requires a 'public theology', a way of speaking about the reality of God and God's will for the world that is intellectually valid in the

decisions and actions of government can be commended. How we responded in the first ten years give helpful directives on our future role. It might be helpful to describe and evaluate the role of South African churches in terms of the well-known distinction of the North American ethicist, James Gustafson, on how churches in the international ecumenical movement deal with social issues. Gustafson distinguishes between the prophetic, narrative, technical and policy discourses.⁷

The ecumenical movement in South Africa spoke *prophetically* by spelling out a vision of a society where arms deals are not done at the expense of the most vulnerable in society. Moreover, they courageously voiced their opposition to actions of the current government that they did not agree with. Churches fulfilled their prophetic role by indicating that security of people is served in a sustainable way where challenges like poverty and unemployment are adequately addressed.

The thorough engagement of our churches in the *technical* discourse was also clear. From the outline in section A of this presentation it is clear that we have done detailed scientific and technical analyses of the arms review process and the deals that government eventually signed. We also considered the views of other institutions of civil society like the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA)⁸. Our own position takes cognizance of how Christians respond elsewhere in the world. In this regard it is encouraging to recognize the similarities of our vision and

marketplace of ideas and morally effective in the marketplace of goods and services" (*A post-communist manifesto: public theology after the collapse of socialism* 1995:951).

7 Gustafson has studied the various ways in which Christians in the ecumenical movement all over the world deal with social issues. In the end he identifies four varieties of moral discourse, namely the prophetic, narrative, technical and policy discourses.

According to Gustafson (1988a: 269; 1988b: 7-17) prophetic speaking has two dimensions. It firstly refers to the task of formulating a vision of the good life. What people are supposed to aim at and strive towards is portrayed in almost slogan-like utopian language. In the second instance prophetic speaking has the task of indictment. Evil and its roots have to be unmasked and exposed in confrontative, vivid and clear language.

The second discourse that Gustafson (1988a: 269; 1988b: 19-27) refers to is the narrative discourse. The focus is on people, their identity, the communities that they belong to, the narratives that form them, and the significant others, role models and moral heroes that inspire them.

Gustafson's (1988a: 269; 1988b: 31-44) third discourse is the technical discourse. Scientific analyses of a situation are made. Meta-ethical and philosophical questions are asked. Positions are supported by means of arguments that pass the test of coherence, logic and consistency.

The policy discourse, according to Gustafson (1988a: 269; 1988b: 45-53), involves dialogue with decision makers and people in positions of responsibility. Attempts are made to influence their decisions and policies. In the process the public opinion on an issue is also influenced.

8 The response of IDASA and South African churches show remarkable resemblances. The issues that IDASA highlights in a 2001 document titled *Democracy and the arms deal* bear witness to this. They raise questions like (15-25): 1. Was the Department of Defence correct in assuming that parliament has approved the arms deal with all its implications by her approval of the Defence Review? According to the IDASA document parliament did not approve a procurement package, but a vision that would change over time and be subject o parliamentary oversight. The democratic issue of the relationship between the executive and the legislative arms of government is at stake here. 2. The fact that the arms deal might exceed the original amount of R29.9 billion and actually be over R50 billion, prompts questions on parliamentary oversight and the accountability of the executive to parliament, specifically to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA). 3. How can it be ensured that SCOPA, the Auditor-General and other institutions of democratic and constitutional accountability be insulated from party politics, especially since members of political parties, who are under the pressure of the caucus politics of their party, serve in these institutions that exercise oversight? The IDASA document (22) also questions the off-sets of the arms deal: "Or put differently, if it is possible, by spending R29.992 billion to achieve economic benefits of R104 billion, why does every developing country in the world not spend its entire budget on arms? The answer lies in the fact that off-sets are an internationally discredited manner of promoting arms transactions. The document (25-31) poses critical questions with regard to sub-contracts, conflict of interests and tendering procedures and the potential for corruption.

strategies with that of brothers and sisters in other contexts. The proceedings of the first Gothenburg conference on arms trade bears witness to this.

We also engaged in the so-called *policy* discourse. In a very responsible way we engaged in dialogue and consultation with government. Direct talks took place with amongst others the ministers of defence and public works. Presentations were tabled and individual leaders made public appeals as indicated above. All of this occurred to influence eventual policies and to ensure that they are in line with provisions in the Constitution and the vision of the Arms Review Process. This engagement on the policy level did not convince government to cancel the arms deal. Some successes, however, were achieved. The way was paved, for instance, for greater participation of churches and other institutions of civil society in future arms deals regarding determining whether it is essential, transparency, oversight by parliament, contracts and off-sets, and especially regarding the building of a culture of peace and security. Moreover, how we dealt with the challenges posed by the arms deal convinced government and other partners that South African churches can be taken seriously as dialogue partners. Not only do they spell out clear moral visions, but they also engage in the complex and technical process of formulating policies and actions that coincide with that vision. This engagement in the technical process, however, does not suggest that churches pretend that they are experts in the fields of weaponry, economics and politics who can formulate blueprints on these matters. They know that their contribution is a theological one. However, to make that contribution adequately and faithfully they need to inform themselves on the complex technical factors to take into consideration.

It is to be appreciated that we engaged in all of these discourses. We used these discourses in a *complimentary* way. Our clear prophetic vision of a peaceful society informed our technical analysis. It namely prevents us from limiting our solutions to what we view as military, politically and economically possible. It rather challenged us to search for innovative alternatives in an imaginary and creative way. Simultaneously the insights of technical analyses enabled us to speak prophetically and critically in a well-argued and therefore credible manner. In the end, our well-founded prophetic speaking and technical analyses enabled us to influence public policy on the arms deal. The vibrant and clear prophetic vision and sound technical analysis enabled us to influence policy decisions positively.

Thorough technical analysis enabled us to be sober and to make essential compromises. Compromises namely entailed that although we ideally would like to see that the world is peaceful and free from arms and weapons of all kinds, we know that in a world of sin we have to make compromises. Where the dignity of people, especially the most vulnerable members of society, is threatened, we namely have to use less than ideal means, namely violence in extreme cases, to protect potential victims from perpetrators. Awareness of and inspiration by a clear prophetic vision of a peaceful society where all life flourishes prevented us from making morally unjustifiable compromises.

2. Looking back on the way we fulfilled our task with regard to the arms deal during this first decade I think it is not pretentious to say that we guard against two real dangers that threaten churches in young democratic societies. These dangers are those of, on the one hand, Constantinianism⁹, which means we are co-opted by the agenda of the state so that we merely become their mouthpieces and the danger, on the other hand, of sociological sectarianism¹⁰, which

9 Churches in a young democracy like South Africa run the risk of being co-opted by the agenda of the state. Former struggle churches that opposed apartheid run the risk of being too loyal to former comrades in the liberation struggle, who are now in government. In fact, we can be so passionate to see that the new government is successful that we lose the appropriate critical distance. On the other hand,

means that we withdraw ourselves as churches from our public responsibility.

3. In the arguments that churches offered in the arms deal debate, the one central guiding criterion for our positions was the traditional Christian conviction, of which Liberation Theology reminded us again since the 1960's, namely that God is in a very special way the God of the poor, the wronged and the suffering and vulnerable¹¹. Standing where God stands entails asking what the impact of our policies and actions are on these vulnerable ones. This question surfaced continuously in the responses of churches to the arms trade.

At the end of this section we can conclude that many lessons can be learned from how we engaged theologically with the arms deal until now. There is, however, hard work to be done.

3. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The last part of this presentation makes some suggestions on our future public theological role. This role is to be fulfilled in cooperation with churches in other parts in the world as well as with local and international partners in civil society, politics, economics and the media.

1. We are called to play a continuous monitoring role in cooperation with local and international partners. This might entail that we ask for regular defence review processes, that we participate in the debates on whether arms deals are unavoidable at specific times, and that we ensure that where deals are unavoidable, transparency and accountability are adhered to and oversight by parliament and civil society occurs. With regard to current and future arms deals we need to act *responsibly*, i.e. we need to act pro-actively and not in a predetermined, reactionary way. This implies that we pay attention that we are aware of what is going on around us. A potential important instrument of advocacy is the 2003 Final Report of the Commission on Human Security of the United Nations (www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html). This document emphasizes that security is centered on humans and not on states in the first place. This human-centered security involves more than providing security through violent action. Security prevails where people enjoy economic security, reconciliation, health care, education and employment. This broader definition of security coincides with the approach of South African churches as outlined above. Former speaker of national parliament, Frene Ginwala served in this Commission, whilst fellow-South

former *status quo* churches that supported apartheid might, in feeling the need to compensate for former morally wrong positions, run the risk of overcompensating for the sake of gaining credibility in the new political, economic and social context.

As churches we should perhaps pay attention to those voices that appeal to us to strive to be faithful and not relevant, to let the gospel determine our agenda and not the state or the corporate sector or even other sectors of civil society

- 10 Former so-called struggle churches and former so-called *status quo* churches are tempted to withdraw themselves from the public sphere in post apartheid South Africa. Churches wrestle so much with issues like financial survival, the vast social problems of their members, structural renewal, re-orientation with regard to their role in a fast changing and democratising context, that they in practice make themselves guilty of withdrawing from their social responsibilities. Moreover, former *status quo* churches, fearing that they might make the same mistakes as in the past, rather opt for disinvolvement in societal affairs.
- 11 Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutierrez (*Theologie van Bevrijding* 1974:25-26) in a very illuminating way indicates that this option for the vulnerable does not imply the exclusion of the so-called stronger ones. They have first, but not exclusive, right to our solidarity. He pleads that we simultaneously confess the universality of God's love and his special identification with the vulnerable. If we fail to do this, we do grave injustice to the Christian message.

African Vivienne Taylor served in its secretariat. The report was also handed to president Thabo Mbeki. Hence, this document with its international vision and policy suggestions on security is of high relevance for South Africa. This view of security coincides with that of the original Arms Review Process and with the South African Constitution.

2. More can be done by churches to influence public opinion, and to conscientise, mobilise and organise civil society. This would entail that churches do not only deal with public issues on the denominational and ecumenical levels as has mainly occurred in the past decade, but that congregations and individuals Christians also be involved¹². The church in all its forms¹³ are to be involved in addressing the challenge of arms trade.

3. The afore-mentioned proposals imply a more inclusive approach to addressing the challenges posed by arms trade. We should function with a more inclusive understanding of security and we should view the church in a more inclusive way.

In the evaluation of the responses of churches in terms of Gustafson's discourses, it was remarkable that nothing was said about the narrative discourse, which deals with the identity of Christians. The identity questions on who Christians are, what stories they read and are formed by, what role models they adhere to, what values they embody, are articulated more explicitly in the worship services and the rest of the congregational life. This avenue should be utilised more in order to ensure that Christians are equipped to participate in various ways in the public discourse on arms deals and the building of a society of human security, but also for the sake of embodying in the micro and personal facets of life the values that enhance human security. Lastmentioned practice asks for processes of moral formation in and through worship services and congregations. And exploring the potential of the liturgy and local congregation for personal and social transformation was one of the prime practices of churches in the years of the struggle for democracy in South Africa¹⁴.

The inclusive approach implies that all forms of the church should participate in all

-
- 12 Dutch theologian Gerrit de Kruijf (1994:241-246) makes a valuable suggestion about the way that churches should participate in the democratic public sphere. He namely pleads that we be cautious and alert on a continuous basis. Being cautious entails that we stay true to our most basic convictions about the moral foundations of society and that we, through participation in democratic processes like the public moral debate ensure that these basis values are not violated. Sober means that we acquire the technical sophistication to engage constructively in these debates. The participation of churches occur mainly through individual church members who are assisted in congregations to make appropriate choices. The church as institution provide the beacons and crucial points that should be considered in the decision making process. It does not provide final blueprints, neither to congregants nor to the government. The institutionalised church speaks out publicly only in circumstances where she believes that the government has lost all sobriety, where the government does not engage in sober, rational dialogue anymore and where obedience to the state and obedience to God are in conflict. One can of course Although I disagree with De Kruijf's view that the institutionalized church should only speak out publicly in extreme cases (I reckon the institutionalised church should speak out publicly on a frequent basis and in constructive and appropriate ways), I agree with his plea that individual Christians be equipped in congregations to also participate in the public discourses.
- 13 South African theologian Dirkie Smit, who is also chairperson of the Management Board of the Beyers Naudé Centre, identifies six forms of the church, namely the worship service, local congregation with all her practices, denomination, ecumenical bodies, individual Christians in normal daily roles in family, work and neighbourhood, and individual Christians in voluntary institutions in civil society, e.g., peace movements (1996:120-121).
- 14 A number of South African theologians, including a growing number of postgraduate students in the Department of Systematic Theology at the University of Stellenbosch are currently doing research on these themes.

walks of life – in partnership with role players in the political and economic spheres of society, as well as with other institutions of civil society and the public media - in building a society of human security where every human being and all of creation experience life in abundance, life of dignity, life of peace, justice and joy – shalom¹⁵.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- De Kruijf, G 1994. Waakzaam en nuchter. Over Christeljk etiek in een democratie. Baarn:Ten Have.
- Gustafson, J M 1988a. An analysis of Church and Society social ethical writings, in: *The Ecumenical Review* Volume 40,p 267-278.
- Gustafson, J M 1988b. *Varieties of moral discourse: prophetic, narrative, ethical and policy*. The Stob Lectures of Calvin College and Seminary. Grand Rapids, MI.
- Gutiérrez, G 1974. *Theologie van de Bevrijding*. Baarn:Ten Have.
- Smit, D J 1996b. Oor die kerk as 'n unieke samelewingsverband (On the uniqueness of the church). *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe* 36/2, pp.119-129.
- Stackhouse, M L and McCann, D P 1995. A post-communist manifesto: public theology after the collapse of socialism, in: Stackhouse, M L and McCann, D P et al (eds) *On moral business. Classical and contemporary resources for ethics in economic life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Terreblanche, S 2002. *A history of inequality in South Africa* Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Democracy and the arms deal. An interim review by IDASA*. 15 May 2001.
- Arms trade. Final reports from an ecumenical conference*. Gothenburg, Sweden, June 15-17, 2001. Editors: Brune, Peter and Molin, Lennart.

APPENDIX I¹⁶

A Chronology of SACC Responses to the Arms Deal

In **January 1996**, an SACC delegation, led by former General Secretary Hlope Bam, met with Minister Kader Asmal, Chair of the National Conventional Arms Control Committee (NCACC), to raise these issues. On that occasion, church leaders called on the government to abandon permanently the proposed purchase of four Spanish corvettes. The General Secretary also wrote to President Mandela and other key officials on several occasions during 1996 and 1997 to oppose the sale of South African weapons to Rwanda. (Later, the SACC Parliamentary Office also wrote to Minister Asmal to commend him for the NCACC's March 1999 decision to destroy South Africa's surplus stocks of small weapons.)

In **May 1998**, at the conclusion of the second round of tenders for current strategic defence procurement package, the SACC was invited by the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Christian Council of Sweden to submit a statement on the deal for use at a church- and NGO-sponsored international hearing on Swedish arms sales to developing nations. This statement noted that South Africa faces no external military threat, but could encounter internal instability if the government is unable to deliver better living standards to those systematically impoverished by apartheid. It also strongly criticised attempts to justify the arms deal as a job-creation initiative. The SACC called on Sweden and all European nations to reconsider the deal in light of the obligations imposed by the recently adopted European Code of Conduct on Arms Exports.

In **October 1998**, on the basis of press reports on the progress of the negotiations, General Secretary Charity

15 The Decade To Overcome Violence (2001-2010) of the World Council of Churches provide ample of opportunity for South African churches, and churches elsewhere in the world to jointly participate in God's work of just peace building in the world.

16 This appendix was supplied by the Public Policy Liaison Office of the SACC in Cape Town.

Majiza wrote to President Mandela and Defence Minister Joe Modise to reiterate SACC objections to the purchase of sophisticated weaponry in the current economic climate.

As the cabinet neared a preliminary decision in **November 1998**, the SACC prepared a press statement on the deal, which was issued jointly with the Swedish Christian Council. This was circulated to the political and business correspondents of major media outlets in South African and Sweden. Meanwhile, the General Secretary Majiza addressed a Ceasefire Campaign workshop scheduled to coincide with the DEXA international arms exhibition in Gauteng.

In response to a **February 1999** invitation from the Campaign Against the Arms Trade in the UK, the SACC and other religious and secular organisations wrote members of the European Parliament requesting that they block the arms deal on the grounds that it was inconsistent with Criteria Four and Eight of the EU Code of Conduct on Arms Exports. (Criterion Four obliges vendors to assess a sale's impact on regional peace, security, and stability. Criterion Eight requires vendors to take into account "the technical and economic capacity of the recipient country" and "the desirability that states should achieve their legitimate needs of security and defence with the least diversion for armaments of human and economic resources".) SACC President Mvume Dandala, then Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church, also took part in the campaign, as did Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, former Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Catholic Bishop Kevin Dowling. CAAT used the letters as a mobilising tool during its "Stop the Arms Trade" week of actions.

Following the election of South Africa's second democratic government in **June 1999**, the SACC worked with partners in the Coalition for Defence Alternatives to prepare a briefing paper on defence issues for presentation to the new Minister and Deputy Minister of Defence, calling for the abandonment of the arms deal and the conversion of defence industries.

In **November 1999**, the SACC, Diakonia Sweden, and the Christian Council of Sweden organised a seminar on defence expenditure and poverty alleviation as part of the "Civil Society Encounter" sponsored by the Swedish government to coincide with the visit of Swedish Prime Minister Goran Persson. The seminar was addressed by the Deputy Minister of Defence, the Hon. Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, and church representatives. After the seminar, the convening organisations issued a joint statement calling on the South African government to publish details of the offset agreements associated with the arms procurement package, to establishing a broadly representative review committee to assess the offsets' potential for reducing poverty and unemployment, to initiate an independent judicial inquiry into the allegations of corruption and to declare a moratorium on implementation of the deal until both the commission of inquiry and the review committee have completed and published their reports.

Following the announcement of an inquiry into the arms deal, the SACC President and Acting General Secretary Donald Cragg took part in a religious leaders' meeting with President Mbeki in **January 2001**. In a post-meeting statement, the SACC emphasised the need to ensure "that honesty and integrity are the basis for conducting the business of the nation".

In **August 2001** SACC triennial national conference adopted a resolution on national security that states:

Affirming that poverty constitutes the greatest threat to the security of most South Africans and recalling that "freedom from fear and want" is central to the definition of national security found in the South African Constitution, Conference:

EXPRESSES strong opposition to the expenditure of billions of rands on sophisticated and unnecessary weapons in the midst of such staggering human need; and

CALLS on the South African government to decline all optional purchases associated with the current strategic defence procurement package and to explore the total abandonment of the deal.

Two months later, in **October 2001**, the SACC invited Defence Minister Lekota to attend an

extended National Executive Committee meeting in order to discuss the arms deal. The NEC presented the Minister (who was also accompanied by the Minister of Public Enterprises, Jeff Radebe) with a memorandum expressing concern about the costs and implications of the arms deal and calling on the government to decline the optional components of the package. At a press conference following the meeting, the SACC President's expression of appreciation for the government's willingness to help churches to understand their position was misrepresented by some journalists as a statement of the SACC's support for the arms deal.

In conjunction with the World Summit on Sustainable Development in **September 2002**, the SACC prepared a memorandum for the Swedish Prime Minister, Goran Persson, calling on the Swedish government to press for a restructuring of the "front loaded" financing arrangements associated with the purchase of 28 Saab JAS Gripen fighters to ensure that the South African government could decline its option on 19 fighters without incurring a unit cost penalty. This memorandum was presented by the SACC General Secretary, Dr. Molefe Tsele, to the Prime Minister's foreign policy advisor, Mr. Roger Halhag, in a meeting arranged by Diakonia Sweden. The SACC and its People's Budget partners (COSATU and SANGOCO) subsequently reiterated this request in an open letter to the people of Sweden, which ran as a newspaper ad (sponsored by Diakonia Sweden) in a major Swedish daily.

For the past four years – and most recently in **February 2004** – the People's Budget (published jointly by the SACC, COSATU and SANGOCO) has consistently called on the government to abandon the optional trenches of the arms deal and reallocate the savings to poverty eradication and job creation initiatives.