

"Stop the killing – negotiations now": Vienna declaration for peace in Ukraine adopted

By Wolfgang Hofkirchner, participant of the International Summit for Peace in Ukraine in Vienna

The first conference of the international civil society for peace in Ukraine was opened on 10 June 2023 in Vienna to the sounds of John Lennon's "Imagine". It collected multiple perspectives with the aim of a ceasefire to allow a diplomatic solution. The spirit of the conference was the same spirit that is needed for peace negotiations to succeed. However, due to a campaign supported by Austrian mass media the organisers had to change the venue two days before the meeting. At the request of Ukraine, the ÖGB (The Austrian trade union federation) had withdrawn its commitment for the use of its premises (cf. [here World BEYOND War](#) and [here Werner Wintersteiner](#)). But the event could not be cancelled. The large hall of Lorely with a capacity of 350 people was occupied to the last seat. 500 people were connected via internet.

After video greetings from Noam Chomsky and Cardinal Álvaro Leonel Ramazzini Imeri from Guatemala, four speakers made their appearance in presence or connected via internet or with a video.

Jeffrey Sachs, a well-known expert in economics and US foreign policy and long-time UN advisor, told of his own experiences of how the USA, beginning in 1992, have been rejecting negotiations with the Russian Federation on the eastward expansion of NATO that, eventually, provoked Russia to intervene in the ongoing civil war, and how the USA stopped the March 2022 negotiations of the Ukraine with Russia. He compared this policy with US President John F. Kennedy's June 1963 Peace Speech after the settling of the Cuban missile crisis. It showed that another policy was possible then and is also possible now.

Former Professor at Jawaharlal University, India, Anuradha Chenoy stated that the peace movement in Europe is not alone. She clarified that the global majority – represented by the Global South – is helping pave the way for peace by advocating three practices: neutrality, a no-sanctions stance and multipolarity. Such practices differ fundamentally from Western practices that reveal Western values as double standard. Notwithstanding, the Global South countries don't view themselves as enemies of the West.

The Vice-President of Bolivia, David Choquehuanca, referred to indigenous wisdom when deliberating upon the way to peace. He presented a logic of complementarity, balance and harmony which they call Trialectics. This logic enables the people to know oneself and know the outside and allows them to transcend all those divisions that, ultimately, lead to war.

Former US Colonel and diplomat Anna Wright – who had opposed the Iraq war – focussed on the difficulties of the bringing about of ceasefires in wars. While in the US military experts for a multitude of sophisticated roles are abundant, there is not a single one to provide actions towards a ceasefire. Anyway, "Stop the killing – negotiations now!" is the order of the day.

A next item was devoted to activists from different movements in Ukraine, in Russia and Belarus. They presented the positions of the directly affected. Though some of them called upon the European/Western peace movement to give more support to their concrete struggles (for example, Olga Karach from Belarus demanded to support the removal of patriarchal President Lukashenko) instead of keeping singing peace songs, none of them explicitly spoke out against the call for an unconditional ceasefire for the start of negotiations. For humanitarian reasons alone, this demand should be self-evident.

On Sunday working groups were built, they discussed different and opposing political positions and amended the proposed outcome document. [See here the final declaration.](#)

Further meetings and actions in other countries have been arranged. The meeting in neutral Vienna was just the starting point.

The recordings of the conference will be available soon. Currently the website is under attack. / Vienna 23/06/16