



Video Message from US Congressman Dennis Kucinich to the Article 9 & Article 12 Conference – Peace Constitutions for Global Disarmament

Hi, I'm Congressman Dennis Kucinich.

I want to thank you very much for the opportunity to participate, through this video, in your important Peace Conference, as the SS Oceanic docks in Puntarenas, Costa Rica, on its important mission of world peace. I want to thank each and every one of you who has made a commitment to peace, who understands that war is not inevitable, that indeed, peace is inevitable if we are willing to set in place structures that can help guide our nations and the world towards a culture of peace. Such structures have, of course, been put in place, historically, in Japan and Costa Rica.

I would like to cite from Article 9 and then reflect on it, in the Japanese Constitution. Article 9.

Article 9:

1. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes.
2. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will never be recognized.

When you think about the power of Article 9, think about a world, which could take a new direction – a direction towards a commitment to peace, which begins with the renunciation of war and also is furthered by work to create cultures of peace within our own society. We become so used to war, we become inured to violence that war breeds. War becomes part of the culture.

When we look at our nation in the United States and we see the proliferation of domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, violence in school, racial violence, gang violence, gun violence, violence against gays, what we see is a culture that is so wrapped up in violence, that it's trapped so that its highest instincts have trouble being able to come to the fore. And yet, if we had a Department of Peace, a bill that I have written and has the support of over 60 members of Congress, we could move towards an understanding of the power that is imminent in Article 9. We can understand that peace is not just the absence of war, its an act of presence, its a state of our capacity to be able to transcend all conditions, to be able to work through the human heart, to settle our differences.

Instead we are trapped. We are trapped not only with an annual budget of over \$600 billion dollars that goes for war preparations, but we are also trapped in spending up to \$2 trillion in a war against Iraq; up to \$1 trillion in a war against Pakistan; and endless amount of money preparing for future wars.

We should prepare for peace. We should prepare to take down this arms infrastructure that has caused instability around the world. Just last year over \$1.5 trillion was spent on armaments. Granted, the United States spends more than the rest of the world put together, but the fact is that our entire world has been immersed in a culture of violence that comes from a belief that war is inevitable.

Every nation has the right to defend itself; the right of defense is inherent, and it is recognized in the UN Constitution, the UN Charter. But the fact of the matter is that all too often that is taken as a license for belligerency, and the power of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution is such that it recognizes the need for every nation to temper the impulse towards war. And in doing that we seek to develop our higher instincts towards diplomacy.

When we look at Article 12 in Costa Rica:

1. The army as a permanent institution is abolished. There shall be the necessary police forces for surveillance and the preservation of public order.
2. The military forces may only be organized under a continental agreement or for the national defense. In either case, they shall always be subordinate to the civil power; they may not deliberate or make statements of representations, individually or collectively.

When we look at Costa Rica's commitment to peace, it is very clear in its statement of the right of defense, but it also understands that the police can have, and do have, a democratic function and that if we ever blur the difference between the police and military, we then come into a situation where we've risked the threat of our lost of liberty.

Years ago, the United States passed a law called *Posse Comitatus*, which says that you cannot use the military in civilian affairs. But our country is still going through the struggle of believing that the only way we can defend our country is through having, or spending, over \$600 billion a year; to have a military that is so powerful that its spending requirements are swamping the domestic requirements for health care, for education, for job creation, for rebuilding our infrastructure. But if we fear that we are going to be attacked, that fear will drive great expenditures for armaments. The whole Cold War was built upon the thinking that Russia was going to attack the United States, and between Russia and the United States, an arms-race ensued that threatened the peace and security of the entire world.

When we look at Article 9 and Article 12, you come to an understanding of the potential for a restructuring of society. But that does not happen easily, and it certainly does not happen overnight. We have to first pull back and talk about "How can we, in the United States, work to build a more peaceful culture?" That's what the Department of Peace is about. It's not about causing us to lose our willingness to defend ourselves, but it's about seeing our defense in a more advanced way, about seeing our defense as being a part of our moral standing in the world, as being our ability to be able to settle differences without using arms, to see our strength as not being tied to weapons but as being tied to our willingness to reach out and to engage in what Franklin Roosevelt called the "science of human relations." This, too, is the thinking behind creating a cabinet level Department of Peace.

As you gather on this important voyage, which has stopped temporarily in Costa Rica, think about what you can do as a citizen of the world to help take a stand for peace, not only in your country but in countries around the world. The world is one. It is interdependent. It is interconnected. And what supports all efforts of peace is our awareness of the imperative of human unity.

We must declare our unity. We must let our understanding of that unity be unshakable. We must challenge all thinking which seeks to divide us or that seeks to dehumanize or degrade any one of us. We must find those areas where there is fear and bring great courage to those moments and help people deal with the range of difficulties, which causes people to be vulnerable to the predations of war. I speak of poverty, of famine, of drought, of lack of access to housing or decent health care.

If we begin to take the resources of the world and focus in those areas, we can create that new world. The poet Tennyson once wrote, "Come my friends! Tis not too late to seek a newer world!"
Come, my friends!

Thank you.