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**International meeting on environmental norms and  
military activities**

Geneva, 10–11 December 2009

**Message from civil society organizations**

**Note by the secretariat**

The annex to the present note contains a message to participants at the current meeting submitted by the civil society organizations present at the international civil society workshop on environmental norms and military activities held at Okinawa International University, Japan, on 27 and 28 November 2009. The message has been reproduced as submitted without formal editing.

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## Annex

### Message from civil society organizations

The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) assembled in Okinawa for the *U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) International Civil Society Workshop on Environmental Norms and Military Activity* hereby adopt the following message to the Governments of the world. We respectfully urge the Governments to:

1. Limit to the minimum all war-related military activities exclusively to the cases where national security concerns strictly so require as our experiences show that these military activities cause enormous negative impacts on the environment.
2. Stop nuclear testing. Nuclear and radioactive weapons development, manufacturing, storage, transport, testing, and disposal place great strains on the environment. Nuclear accidents witnessed in the past call for disarmament within a short timetable.
3. Use diplomatic means to solve international disputes because military solutions are not decisive, and, in any case, the resentment among people in the post-conflict stage can cause yet another confrontation. Further, we urge governments administrating post-conflict areas to:
  - (a) Partner with and support CSOs to provide basic environmental services (particularly safe drinking water, food, sanitation services, reliable energy supplies, and trash pickup) for the population as an urgent priority;
  - (b) Address meeting these basic environmental needs as part of any security plan;
  - (c) Adopt a participatory approach with the population and build their capacity to meet their basic environmental needs.

We urge militaries involved in past conflicts to assist in cleaning up post-conflict areas to rid them of all toxic residues and unexploded ordinance.

4. Remember that ensuring military forces take adequate care to protect the environment is not only consistent with national security, but is an essential element of national security. Ensuring that we have clean air, water and land, that our natural ecosystems are functioning properly, and that we leave a healthy world for future generations are all paramount national interests that military forces must seek to advance, not undermine. Care to protect the environment should start from the planning stage such as the proper conduct of EIA/EIS procedures. Due regard should be given to environmental justice concerns and to ensure that, at all stages of processes, the public is afforded meaningful opportunities for participation.
5. Ensure that minority populations and low-income populations do not bear a disproportionate burden of environmental impacts, especially from military activities. Among other measures:
  - (a) Consider classifying activities according to their environmental impacts and review how they are allocated domestically and abroad to reduce cumulative impacts on minority communities;
  - (b) Consider allocating and reducing greenhouse gas allowances to facilities and activities to reduce the military's overall ecological footprint and the impact of activities on those most affected by drought, sea level rise, and other aspects of climate change.
6. Protect their citizenry from contamination associated with cantonment and training of military forces and other military activities. To that end, we call on the Governments (1) to establish long-term monitoring regimes at all military bases to detect any releases of contaminants into the ground, air, and water, (2) to take expeditious steps to remediate any contamination that is detected and to prevent any such future releases, and (3), where monitoring reveals the potential for migration of contaminants off-base, to conduct toxicological and epidemiological studies to determine whether the health of surrounding communities and ecosystems has been adversely affected. To promote public confidence regarding the efficacy of the monitoring regimes and to ensure the regimes are designed to address the concerns of surrounding communities, the Governments should provide meaningful opportunities for the public to provide input on the design and implementation of the monitoring regimes and to review the information developed through the monitoring regimes. We further call on governments to clean up

sites of previous contamination and to indemnify affected communities.

7. Involve in a participatory manner communities neighboring military facilities and other interested and affected parties to:

- (a) Serve as monitors of military activities, including training, to ensure that procedures designed to promote environmental protection are being properly observed and implemented;
- (b) Dialogue regarding community concerns (e.g., noise, public safety, protection of sacred sites) and evaluate potential modification of military activities to address those concerns; and
- (c) Permit cultural access to military bases if cultural sites and/or landscapes are present on-base.

8. Maintain accurate records regarding munitions and potentially dangerous chemicals stored at military bases, both to minimize the likelihood of accidental contamination and to facilitate clean up in the event such accidents occur.

9. Recognize the role of CSOs and involve them in creating responsive mechanisms that will monitor and review the wide-ranging impacts of military activities on the environment. The effectiveness of any survey or review mechanism depends on the involvement of Civil Society and its access to information about the process and its outputs.

Moreover, the CSOs respectfully ask the Governments to affirm their military's duty to protect the environment wherever they conduct their operations and to act responsibly with respect to the most protective of local, national, or international standards or best practices when conducting military activities abroad. To that end, we urge the Governments to ensure the application of the nine standards and procedures enumerated above to all military operations abroad and to revise Status of Forces Agreements as necessary to provide for the protection of the environment in all nations, including, but not limited to, assurances that any remaining military-related contamination will be remediated promptly following the closure or relinquishment of any military facility located on another nation's territory.

Finally, we, the participants of the Workshop, have learned a lot through the exchange of information and experiences in this Workshop and are convinced that the awareness created this time should gather momentum by establishing a network of CSOs. We respectfully urge world Civil Society concerned with environmental problems related to military activities to join the network to be created by the participants of this Workshop that will exchange information and experiences and to participate with the UNEP on issues related to the effects of military activities on the environment. We urge the UNEP and governments to draw on international best practice in this area that can enhance the effectiveness of CSO intervention in this issue. The UNEP and governments should also engage in capacity development and ensure participation of key actors and institutions to develop an effective mechanism to monitor the impacts of military activities on the environment, produce appropriate international standards, assist in restoring damaged areas and indemnify communities affected by environmental damage as part of wartime or peacetime military activities.

November 28, 2009  
Okinawa International University

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