

Statement on Global Security Priorities Act

February 6, 2008

Human security is important for every citizen of the world. It is as important to the parents of a young girl in Asia who fear that she may not live to the age of five as it is to those who could be targets of a nuclear weapon in the hands of terrorists. Today I join in welcoming this significant bipartisan initiative, the Global Security Priorities Act, to reduce the threat posed by the number of nuclear weapons worldwide, as well as to enhance the lives of millions of children through increased nutrition and education resources.

This initiative is consistent with social policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which states that this church is "... committed to defend human dignity, to stand with poor and powerless people, to advocate justice, to work for peace, and to care for the earth in the processes and structures of contemporary society." (The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective)

Another social statement calls for "... shifts throughout the world from military expenditures to purposes that serve the needs of low-income people..." (Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All)

According to our social statement, The Church in Society: A Lutheran Perspective, "love calls for justice in the relationships and structures of society." When we can provide nutrition and education to the world's most marginalized citizens, we will all live in a safer world. Meeting someone's basic needs early in life contributes to social justice and builds better societies, both at home and overseas. With these advantages, we can create the circumstances in which people are less likely to engage in anti-social behavior such as terrorism. In Lutheran tradition, such efforts are the fruits of "faith active in love."

At the same time, we must take steps to remove tools that terrorists might employ to threaten the security of all. I am gratified that this resolution proposes concrete steps to reduce both the number of nuclear weapons worldwide and the dangers of rogue access to them. While we cannot, as people of faith, place our ultimate security in weapons, we must recognize the very real threats they pose to us. Consequently, this church's social policy also calls us to give high priority to arms control and reduction (For Peace in God's World):

We particularly urge a sharp reduction in the number of weapons of mass destruction. We call for arms control agreements that are substantial, equitable, verifiable, and progressive. We support mutual confidence-building measures to improve mutually assured security. In particular, we give priority to:

- agreements among the leading nuclear powers to reduce their nuclear stockpiles and to decrease the possibility of nuclear confrontation or accident;
 - the successful negotiation of a renewed Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, the strengthening of mechanisms to monitor and enforce nuclear treaties, and efforts that move toward the elimination of nuclear weapons
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This resolution helps us to meet these objectives. I urge elected officials to continue to take bold and symbolic initiatives, such as this one, to lay the groundwork for more initiatives in the future. While previous generations have not taken these courageous steps, now is the time for us to do so. I urge members of Congress to take up this challenge.

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