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Founding meeting of youth network in Milano, Italy

European Youth Unite for Nuclear Disarmament

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A clown army, bombspotting actions at nuclear weapons bases, peace blogs, and actions during the NATO summit next year in Brussels, were part of intense discussions and planning last weekend in Milano. Youths from 7 countries, namely: Italy, France, Belarus, Ukraine, the UK, Germany and Belgium, formed a network to cooperate more closely for their common vision of a nuclear-weapons-free Europe in a nuclear-weapons-free world.

In a public meeting at the "Casa della Pace" (House of Peace) in Milano, participants reported about their campaigns in different countries, analyzed the situation of nuclear weapons in Europe, and pointed out that nuclear weapons and all kinds of human rights are irreconcilable. The youth were strongly encouraged by Lisa Clark, "senior" activist of Beati i Costruttori di Pace, and Irma Dioli, Deputy for Peace and Youth Policies of the Milano Province, who supported the meeting among other things by a fantastic buffet lunch. Parallel to the meeting, there was an exhibition on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of the Protection Wall for International Law, an international student project, displayed at the House of Peace.

During the lively founding discussion of the youth network, issues were raised such as outreach strategies, the connection between nuclear weapons and nuclear energy, organisational structures, and ideas for common action. "Until we are large enough to organise simultaneous actions in different countries, we plan to organise a couple of events per year at one specific place", said Roel Stynen, 24, from Forum voor Vredesactie, Belgium. So in the coming year, during the NATO summit, Belgium will be the emphasis of the network's common activities. Planned are a network meeting in August, as well as actions and events in the context of a NATO alternative and an action summit in Brussels in November/December. But additionally, the network will try to be present at numerous nuclear disarmament, peace and youth events all over Europe throughout the year.

Working groups on outreach materials, events, creative action, finance, and workshops, will follow up the ideas and plans that came up during the meeting. The participants hope to be joined for that by others, e.g. the 38 individuals of 23 organisations that have shown interest in the network without being able to be present at the Milano meeting. Means of contact will be an email list, as well as a website with a list of country contacts, an organising kit for youth activists, an event calendar, a market place of ideas... Further details on how to subscribe to the e-mail list, on the website URL, and on the final name of the network, will be announced shortly.

The aim of the newly founded youth network, besides, of course, the exchange of experiences and ideas, is to reach out to the young generation via an information campaign, actions and events, to campaign for a nuclear weapons free zone in Europe. These activities are linked to the existing networks of Abolition 2000 Europe and the Abolition 2000 working group on Youth and Disarmament. The youth activists aim for a build-up to a big action at the EUCOM (European Command of the US Army) at Stuttgart, Germany, in 2009 - one year before the next Review Conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The weekend meeting was self-organised by the young activists Giorgio Alba, Archivio Disarmo, Italy, Sophie Lefeez, Mouvement de la Paix, France, and Julia Kramer, Friedenswerkstatt Mutlangen, Germany, who had attended and witnessed the failure of this year's Review Conference of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in May in New York.

At the end of the Milano meeting, the participants felt a boost of motivation, and agreed that even if only a fraction of their ambitious ideas would be realized, the meeting itself had been a success. Participant Manuela Avagliano, Italy, stated: "To see that there are young people all over Europe working so determinedly for peace and nuclear disarmament, gives me hope for its realisation."

European Youth Network for Nuclear Disarmament

(author: Julia Kramer)

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PS:

ACDN congratulates the organizers and the participants of this Founding meeting and will support by all means their future initiatives. It's a great hope to see the European youth standing up for nuclear disarmament.