



## **Global Peace Services USA**

*Promoting Global Understanding through Service*

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November 29, 2022

Dear Friend of Global Peace Services USA (GPS),

The impacts of the unprecedented global plagues of the Coronavirus Pandemic and Climate Change have worsened over the last year. While Coronavirus infections, hospitalizations and deaths have declined in most developed countries, owing to the skewed availability of effective vaccines in many developing countries, the virus is still a major cause of illness and mortality among a majority of the world's population. Given the rapid multiplication of mutant variants of Covid-19, the absence of a resurgence in the northern hemisphere cannot be taken for granted.

The impacts of global Climate Change have been increasingly felt in virtually all countries. But, as with the Coronavirus, Climate Change has disproportionately impacted countries with the least capacity to mitigate or adapt to it, which also tend to be those least responsible for contributing to climate change.

While these plagues have been twin drivers of inequality, hunger and disease, they have also contributed to forced population displacement and violence in a number of countries, such as in Sahelian Africa and in Somalia, Yemen, Haiti and Myanmar. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated these impacts through population displacement and by curtailing grain and other Ukrainian agricultural exports to impoverished countries that depend on them. But amid this grim picture there have been recent hopeful developments in two countries that have been wracked by violent conflict: Colombia and Ethiopia. In both countries, determined internal and regional efforts have led to outcomes that promise an end to chronic violent conflict, potential reconciliation and the resumption of policies and programs to address hunger and disease.

While Colombia achieved a widely publicized Peace Accord in 2016, the implementation record has been flawed since only one guerilla group signed the accords and the national government under President Duque gave them mixed support at best. However, the prospect for lasting peace took a more positive turn with the election of Gustavo Petro as President in June 2022 and the approval by the Colombian Congress on October 26<sup>th</sup> of the Petro Administration's Plan for "Total Peace," which includes negotiations with all guerilla groups. Challenges to implementation remain; yet, as one Colombian human rights organization representative observed, "There is a possibility to end the conflict in Colombia as peace is, once more, a central point of debate."

The Ethiopian Federal Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed a Peace Agreement, brokered by the African Union, in South Africa, on November 2, 2022. This was followed ten days later by an agreement by top military commanders on a "Peace Road Map" whose provisions include protection of civilians, allowing unhindered humanitarian access to the region, disengagement from all forms of military activities and formation of a joint disarmament committee. The parties also agreed to a transitional justice policy "to ensure accountability, truth, reconciliation, and healing." If effectively implemented, the agreements would mark the end of a brutal conflict that devastated the Tigray region and killed hundreds of thousands. A chief reason for caution about the prospects for implementation is that the Government of Eritrea, which had forces on the ground in Tigray during the conflict, was not a party to the agreement.

In this fragile environment, GPS has continued to undertake research, publications and awareness-raising events intended to broaden the adoption of nonviolent approaches to conflict prevention and resolution. As noted in the examples above, systemic violence, whether overt or simmering beneath the surface, continues to afflict countries in all continents. GPS will have little, if any direct influence over these situations, but through widespread dissemination of its publications and events, we seek to catalyze the efforts of leaders of government and nongovernment entities to enact and implement nonviolent approaches.

In 2022, GPS continued a series of virtual forums aimed to engage wider audiences on key societal issues related to our mission. The third forum was held in September 2022 on the "Diversity of State Energy Policies in the US" and featured three expert speakers with on-the-ground experience in states that had implemented policies providing incentives to invest in electricity production from renewable energy sources despite having large deposits of coal, like Illinois, and other states, like West Virginia, with similar endowments, that have adopted nothing like the Illinois approach. The November 2022 issue of the GPS Newsletter includes a summary and commentary on the forum discussion by GPS Board member Dr. Ronald Ridker.

The GPS Newsletter, now in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, was published in May and November 2022 and continues to provide articles on innovative and newly emerging aspects of nonviolent approaches to peacemaking. What I wrote in my introduction to the May newsletter on the relevance of GPS to the warfare underway in Ukraine is as germane now, if not more so, as it was six months ago. I observed that successfully addressing the current crisis also requires considering a longer-term timeframe. I further queried: What, beyond the absence of war, should peace look like? What kind of strategy will preserve the sustainability of the peace? What principles should guide relationships within countries and alignments among them? GPS becomes very relevant to these longer-term questions that nonetheless also require formulation and widespread discussion in the short-term.

In the May issue, GPS Board member, Dr. Robert Muscat – in his reflections on "Multicultural Peaceful Societies" --examines the long sweep of the historical record of

sustained multicultural peaceful societies worldwide and seeks to understand the reasons explaining this phenomenon. He addresses the following key question: “How did these periods of internal or domestic peace, these exceptional chapters, happen? They deserve to be celebrated, as they have been in many individual studies. However, there appears to be a dearth of studies that compare, categorize, and analyze these episodes. They are not, and were not, utopias. But the inhabitants of these eras, and their governors, were among the luckiest and most judicious we have known.”

Also in the May issue, GPS Board member, Dr. Mindy Reiser, in her article on “Pursuing Peace Across the Centuries: Teachings from the Jewish Tradition,” reviews a recent volume by Rabbi Daniel Roth, *Third Party Peacemakers in Judaism: Text, Theory, and Practice* (Oxford University, 2021). She highlights Rabbi Roth’s drawing from the writings of rabbis across the centuries encouraging active engagement by rabbis and laypersons in serving as third party peacemakers and reconcilers and concludes that the book is of value “both for readers specifically focused on successful strategies for conflict reconciliation and peacemaking, as well as people interested in gaining a richer appreciation for the wisdom and teachings of rabbinic ages and commentators.”

Our November 2022 issue featured a summary and commentary on our September forum on “Diversity of State Energy Policies in the US” by GPS Board member, Dr. Ronald Ridker, who designed and moderated the forum. He concludes that the three case studies and the related discussions have “exposed ways that energy policy at the state level might be influenced.” The second article highlighted an update by, GPS Board Member, Dr. Robert Muscat, of his pioneering work recently published as a Toda Peace Institute Policy Brief, “Official Apology: Cementing Peace, Disavowing Injustice” (No. 136, August 2022). The Policy Brief distills Dr. Muscat’s previous papers on aspects of Official Apology, several of which appeared in past issues of the GPS Newsletter. As he notes in the introduction: “Before the war, there were few cases of official apology in all recorded history; thus, the wave of recent apologizing is a remarkable development in human governance. It should be pursued as a new and major instrument for domestic and international social repair.” The article also updates information on recent official apologies and related developments since publication of the Brief.

In an accompanying piece, “Universal Peace: Progress and Retrogression,” Dr. Muscat also provides an update on the state of the peace “movement” since the publication of a broad ranging stock-taking of the strengths and weaknesses of the world’s peace efforts in a book published by John Gittings in 2012, *The Glorious Art of Peace* (Oxford Univ. Press). Dr. Muscat concludes that the experience of the last decade provides at least some reason for encouragement, but that another book would be required for a full update. He notes that such a book would have to reckon with such factors as the bellicose foreign policies of some countries, the destabilizing effects of climate change, the rise in many countries of populist nationalism and resistance to globalization and the return of religion as a conflict intensifier (e.g. the violence of Islamic extremism). But it would also “highlight the world-wide wave of governments (and various institutions) confronting their own injustices, both domestic and international, telling the truth and offering

apologies and reparations to make amends.” Muscat considers this to be “a historic turn, seen only in the past seven or so decades ... a major growing affirmation of humanity and the desire for a more civil society.”

For GPS --whose work is accomplished through the commitment of engaged volunteers-- to realize its agenda for 2023, which will include a forum on growing and sustaining peaceful societies and newsletter explorations on the role of the arts in peacemaking. With your support, we look forward to furthering our work as catalysts for peacebuilding and peacemaking in the U.S. and in the wider world. Thank you for heeding our call.

Your tax-deductible gift would be a tremendous help toward enabling us to carry our work forward in the coming year. Please complete the enclosed form and mail it with your check for \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250 or another amount to Global Peace Services USA in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope or contribute through PayPal (accessible through our Website - [www.globalpeaceservices.org](http://www.globalpeaceservices.org) – and go to “Getting Involved”). In the enclosed form we encourage you to share your ideas, express interest in becoming involved with one of our projects, or suggest topics for our newsletter. We welcome your working with us to expand our program outreach. You can reach us by email: [globalpeaceservicesusa@gmail.com](mailto:globalpeaceservicesusa@gmail.com) or by phone at [\(301\) 681-6968](tel:3016816968). We look forward to hearing from you.

Gratefully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Eriksson".

John Eriksson, President

**2022 SUPPORT FOR GLOBAL PEACE SERVICES USA**

**I would like to make the following contribution to the work of GPS USA in 2023**

\$ 25 \_\_\_ \$50\_\_\_ \$100\_\_\_ \$250\_\_\_ Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

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I would like to offer the following suggestions to support the growth and/or direction of GPS USA in 2023:

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I am interested in helping with the following project(s):

- Climate Change and Conflict  
 The Health Professions as Healers and Peacemakers  
 Engineers and Conflict Resolution  
 Alternative Approaches to Conflict Resolution and Prevention

I suggest the following topics/news for a future issue of the GPS USA newsletter:

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Please share the GPS Newsletter with the following people:

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

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