NIFEA Consultation

Economy of Peace

Theological Communique and Action Plan

"Then justice will dwell in the wilderness and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.
The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.
My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

-Isaiah 32:16-18

"For [Christ] is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us."

-Ephesians 2:14

From 26 to 28 August 2026, we, theologians, church leaders, economists, youth leaders, Indigenous leaders, ecumenical partners and peace-building practitioners coming from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, North America and Europe met in Panama City for the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) Consultation on Economy of Peace. NIFEA, which envisions an Economy of Life for all, is a joint ecumenical initiative of the World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the Council for World Mission and the United Society Partners in the Gospel.

We gathered at a moment when war economies are thriving and resources are being diverted, at an unprecedented scale, toward militarisation. Between a quarter and half of international wars since 1973 and the recent U.S. military interventions in Venezuela and Iran have been linked to the control of oil for energy security, economic leverage, and strategic power.[1] Militarism itself is a significant driver of the climate crisis with militaries accounting for nearly six percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions.[2] Wars also act as risk multipliers that accelerate ecological tipping points.[3] For eleven consecutive years now, global military spending has been rising, reaching its highest level ever recorded in 2025.[4] These expenditures take away from the demands of climate mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage, as well as basic human rights and needs including health and education.

We came to Panama City – a place shaped by empire, colonialism and commerce – to discern the roots of these conflicts and to explore how economic systems, policies and strategies can and must be

[1] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305911046_Do_Countries_Fight_Over_Oil
[2] https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SGRCEOBS-Estimating_Global_MIlitary_GHG_Emissions_Nov22_rev.pdf
[3] https://esd.copernicus.org/articles/16/1197/2025/
[4] https://www.sipri.org/publications/2026/sipri-fact-sheets/trends-world-military-expenditure-2025

reshaped to foster global peace, social and economic equity and ecological wellbeing, and to reflect on the churches' prophetic role.

We were reminded from the outset that peace without justice is no peace at all; that oil and energy giants, Wall Street investment banks, and defense contractors are reaping billions in profits from the ongoing wars while those who contribute least to the crises of militarism and extraction suffer the most.[5] An Economy of Peace requires us to look beyond conventional methods. It asks that we measure and secure what we as societies actually need and care about – the things that make for healthy and flourishing communities and ecosystems – rather than what markets and gross domestic product teach us to value.

In the spirit of lament, confession and hope:

We discern…

We discern that fossil fuelled, financialised capitalism is not a neutral economic arrangement but an ethical, moral and theological problem. Its roots lie in the doctrine of discovery and in Enlightenment notions of property that treat the Earth as though it has no inherent value or rights of its own. A colonial Christian interpretation of "dominion over creation," visible historically in the violence of oil, gas and mineral extraction, continues to foster U.S. American exceptionalism entangled with white male and imperial supremacy.

We discern deepening trends of violence in the form of economic inequity and ecological degradation: climate change, economic deprivation, competition over scarce resources, and political instability feed one another. Not only does war undermine people's livelihoods; tariffs, sovereign debt, development aid, sanctions, and embargoes have been increasingly weaponised, producing very real casualties, often exceeding casualties from direct military conflicts.[6] In Cuba, the ongoing fuel blockade has left many people hungry and without electricity for many hours a day and has crippled an entire country's health system, preventing people, including children, from reaching hospitals and clinics and accessing necessary treatment.[7]

Ecological degradation itself becomes violence through the displacement of communities, the toxification of land and water, and the greenwashing that masks these connections. We noted, too, how language itself is used to obscure the links between ecology, inequity and conflict.

We discern that inequality based on exploitation is the bedrock on which the global economy is built – not an unfortunate by-product but necessitated by its structural foundation. The economy we inherit was designed to extract, and it does so with precision, producing profits for the already-powerful and losses for the already-vulnerable. The current conflict around the Strait of Hormuz illustrates how

[5] https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce8pyyz5e0ro
[6] https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(25)00189-5/fulltext
[7] https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/cubas-health-care-buckles-under-fuel-blockade

disruptions to global energy transport ripple through shipping, insurance, and prices, generating record financial gains for certain multinational corporations and increasing the cost of food and other basic needs for small importing countries and communities. This irony was visible in Panama itself: increased demand on the Canal from ships re-routed because of this geographically distant conflict now arriving even as the Canal, heavily dependent on rain water, faces its own climate-driven challenges. In this sense, war reorganises economic value and creates new markets and dependencies; an "economy of war" that looms in the shadow side of the fragile Economy of Peace we seek.

We discern that the race for critical minerals is increasingly driven by a patriarchal military-industrial complex, prompting us to ask "critical for whom?". The minerals essential for renewable energy technologies are also used for missiles, drones and artificial intelligence that harm peoples and the Earth, and treat both as territory to be consumed and reconquered. The digital frontier, powered by fossil fuels and rare earth minerals, is not clean or immaterial: hyperscale data centres now seize massive amounts of energy, water and land, including Indigenous lands, and extend digital and environmental neocolonialism.

We therefore discern that building a future less plagued by violence requires moving away from fossil-fuelled, financialised capitalism and indeed any form of extractive, exploitative economy. A decolonised and truly just transition – that prioritises the wellbeing of impoverished and climate-vulnerable communities and actively reduces inequality among and within nations – offers an alternative.

Through Indigenous perspectives and voices, we discern different epistemologies altogether. In Panama, the Guna people's practice of *war ued* is a ceremony that restores balance when the world order is disrupted, and their naming of the Earth as *Nabguana,* a family member rather than a resource, calls us to seek permission before we enter any territory. The Guna People refer to this practice as *Balu Wala* – the balance between all living beings and the Economy of Permission that flows from it. This is not only a cosmology but an operational proposal for how any territory may be approached. We discern the ongoing violence of "carbon piracy" and the urgency of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) that is authentically sought and granted and the right to say "no!" wherever extraction is proposed. Our Indigenous brothers and sisters reminded us of the need to understand communities' visions and dreams before acting on their behalf, and to strengthen grassroots organisations rather than bypass them. Popular education was named as a discipline of listening; one that not only respects the history communities have undergone but also the future they dream of building. We further discern that transformative alternatives to the extractive economic order already exist as economic practices and governance systems informed by Indigenous knowledge and cosmologies, and informed by new economic models that prioritise equity and ecological well-being over profit and that prohibit maximising profit at the cost of human and ecological wellbeing.

We discern that even the biblical concept of shalom cannot be proclaimed as a universal good without being decolonised through truth-telling. We need to decentre the voices that have always occupied the main stage of our theology and accounts of history, and to listen instead to the marginalised and to

women and youth, so that they might shape the work of building an Economy of Peace. In Panama, for example, the segregated system of labour and slavery imposed on Black Caribbean canal workers is an example of systematic racism that colonial history tried to erase. We were cautioned not to idealise the Canal, but to let it teach us how to do theology, to be a reminder of a place where peace has already been shattered.

We discern, finally, that institutionalisation can cause us to lose sight of what it means to be the church, while grassroots communities, particularly young people, are left feeling hopeless in the absence of a credible plan. Neutrality, in the face of these realities, is not an option.

We affirm…

We affirm that peace is inseparable from justice. Scripture's vision of a just peace in Revelation 21:4 promises a future with no more death, mourning, crying or pain, for the old order will have passed away, while Isaiah 32:17 reminds us that the fruit of righteousness is peace. Peace, therefore, is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of right relationships: social, economic and ecological.

We affirm that "the Earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1), a reminder that we are caretakers, not owners, of God's world. This affirmation calls us toward a communal posture, embracing interdependence rather than individualism; interdependence challenges the logics of coloniality and neoliberalism.

We affirm that the biblical narrative consistently locates God alongside the marginalised and those who suffer. Speaking of those who were hungry, captured and alienised, Jesus said: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40). Placing ourselves where God in Jesus is, just peace is best discerned not from the centre of society but from the peripheries -- the place from which hope, trust, faithfulness, love and a hunger for righteousness continually emerge. We affirm the biblical jubilee as scripture's own initiative for the redistribution of wealth, the very manifesto Jesus proclaimed at the outset of his public ministry (Luke 4). The church's vocation is to embody the fullness of this "kindom" here and now.

We affirm that an Economy of Peace must be built on dialogue, relationships, and interdependence grounded in equity, mutual security and cooperation, rather than concentrating wealth among tech billionaires and multinational corporations while leaving the smallest and most vulnerable to absorb the greatest shock. We affirm that technology and resource extraction must be subordinated to human dignity and the wellbeing of our common planetary home, upheld by strict public regulation.

We affirm that the Economy of Peace includes local efforts to establish economies of peace wherever armed conflicts, exploitation of people and the planet, corruption, landgrabbing, and displacement happen. Creating regional and global networks is an important tool to support communities in their struggles for peace with justice.

We affirm the dignity and agency of the Earth herself, *Nabguana,* kin rather than commodity, and the wisdom of Indigenous cosmologies that call us to reciprocity rather than extraction. We affirm that reimagining our economies requires refusing the structures inherited from colonial systems and instead drawing on community and Indigenous knowledge, and on new emerging economic frameworks that prioritise equity, ecological wellbeing, and democratic participation over maximising profit, growth, and wealth accumulation so that a just peace becomes a practice built from the ground up rather than imposed from above.

We affirm public confession and public witness as practices that sustain ultimate hope. Celebrating the Eucharist in remembrance of Christ's life, death, and resurrection is much more than a liturgical ritual. It calls us into the world to share God's gifts so that everyone has enough and peace reigns.

We affirm joy, rest, self-care, and sabbath as forms of resistance. People's movements do not only resist injustice, they can generate joy as a renewable resource born of solidarity itself, one that must be tended and replenished if it is to sustain the long journey and struggle.

We commit to…

- Standing in solidarity with communities non-violently resisting military systems of dominance and militarised extraction and seizure of Indigenous lands for mining and data-centre development.
- Reconstructing the life-giving theologies of peace buried beneath the doctrine of discovery and to upholding authentically practiced FPIC wherever extraction is proposed.
- Building and championing economies of enough in our own institutions and communities, highlighting our values of dignity, sustenance, and right relationship, rather than profits and economic growth alone.
- Practising joy and rest as forms of resistance that sustain our movements for the long term, and to public confession and witness as expressions of ultimate hope.
- Decentring our own institutional visions and naming clearly where our own institutional histories have been complicit in structural violence of any form, in recognition that reconciliation requires confession.
- Accompanying communities in Panama and beyond who bear the costs of an interdependent global economy including the climate pressures now facing the Panama Canal while others reap its benefits from a distance.

We call on our witness as churches to…

- Advocate for cuts in military spending, living or "peace wages," debt cancellation and tax justice as foundations for sustainable peace and in particular to press for a global two percent tax on billionaires, an international minimum corporate tax of twenty-five percent, and the elimination of regressive consumption taxes to tackle inequality.
- Move their own money from being invested in militarisation and extractive industries, and instead invest in renewable energy sources and community-rooted vehicles: local currencies,

community banks, debt-for-social-investment swaps, and other life-giving alternatives while advocating publicly for the policy changes an Economy of Peace requires.

- Stand against the normalisation of violence used to secure consent for extraction, and support Indigenous-led struggles for FPIC.
- Produce teaching, worship and sermon resources on the Economy of Peace, and embed economic and ecological justice in seminary and theological curricula.

We call on governments and international institutions to…

- Stop militarisation and allocation of resources to weapons and wars, redirect resources from militarisation toward the eradication of poverty, the confronting of climate change and the pursuit of a just transition, and implement debt relief and progressive taxation for heavily burdened nations.
- Regulate the extraction and trade of fossil fuels and critical minerals to limit consumption and ensure land rights, including the FPIC of affected communities, and end agreements that tie reconstruction or aid to mineral access.
- Stop subsidising fossil fuel industries, and instead support a just transition to renewables.
- Support new and more sustainable economic models as well as fair and inclusive trade and finance, including climate finance, that address the structural inequalities underlying conflicts around the world, and end the use of embargoes as a weapon of war.
- Ensure that AI and digital infrastructure serve the good of all rather than serving as tools of death for the purposes of military hegemony or digital empire-building, including safeguards against the seizure of land, including Indigenous land, and water for data-centre development.