

Almost 40 years ago, the concept of "Common Security" was created by an international commission headed by the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme. Common security meant a new way of thinking in a world characterized by the arms race and increased tensions between the superpowers; a situation that could have led to a nuclear war resulting in the extinction of humanity.

The Palme Commission argued that a nuclear war cannot be won, but would be disastrous for all parties involved. For that reason, the security of the state that procures the most powerful and advanced weapons does not increase. Disarmament and *joint* action are needed to reduce the risk of war.

The situation in the world today is in many ways similar to the situation that prevailed when the Palme Commission presented its report. We are back on the brink of nuclear devastation. Tensions between the nuclear powers are rising, military spending is also rising and nuclear arsenals are being upgraded. This is despite the fact that everyone knows that a nuclear war could lead to hundreds of million dead, and with consequences that can result in the ecosystem on which all life on earth depends collapse.

It is time to once again highlight the principle of common security, and persuade those in control of weapons of mass destruction to initiate disarmament and create mechanisms that reduce the likelihood of devastating war.

Unlike 40 years ago, it is no longer just about East and West, NATO against the Warsaw Pact, the USA versus the USSR. The threat is global, with more states possessing nuclear weapons and relationships between states more complex than in Palme's time. Britain's ambition to sharply increase its nuclear arsenal - arguably contrary to international law - is proof that there is reason to speak to a broader group than just the so-called superpowers.

One strength of the concept of common security is that states with opposing interests in other areas can agree that they have a common problem to address. The Palme Commission had members from both the United States and the Soviet Union. Today, in this specific context it's enough that the United States, Russia and China realize that a war with weapons of mass destruction between any combatants could be just as devastating for all parties.

The concept of common security should also be a key word when dealing with non-nuclear regional and local conflicts. In our world, there are wars and conflicts that have been going on for a long time: Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia, Mali, Syria, Israel - Palestine, etc. These are conflicts without winners, where all parties lose in the absence of peaceful solutions.

The world needs a restart after the pandemic. The post Covid-19 situation is very worrying, with globally increasing hunger and unemployment. In authoritarian states, the pandemic has been used as a pretext for leaders to further weaken democracy, and attack civil society organizations. And we should also consider the need for the enormous efforts required to combat climate change.

That is why peace and a sensible use of economic resources are needed. The world's total military spending today is staggering \$1981 billion. Spending more resources on military rearmament is certainly not what the world needs now. It is also not acceptable that the entire human race should continue to live under the threat of total extinction, perhaps as a

result of a simple mistake somewhere in the systems that control nuclear weapons. We want to put the human race ahead of the arms race. A real reduction in the weaponry of mass destruction is now required, with the long term goal of achieving total nuclear disarmament.

We who sign this article are now forming a new commission with the ambition to update the conclusions from the report Olof Palme and the other members of his Commission produced. In April next year, 40 years after that the Palme Commission submitted its report, we will present our proposals to create increased and common security for everyone on our planet.