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- **EVANGELICAL CHURCH** Berlin-Brandenburg-Silesian Upper Lusatia
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Bishop Dr Dr h.c. Markus Dröge

Peace Meeting “Paths of Peace” in Münster and Osnabrück

Address at St Peter's Cathedral, Osnabrück

Tuesday, 12 September 2017, 5 pm

Isaiah 2:2-5:

*2 It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
3 and many peoples shall come,
and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

*4 He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide for many peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.*

*5 O house of Jacob,
Come, let us walk
In the light of the LORD.*

I.

Swords into ploughshares.

A bronze sculpture in the garden of the UN Headquarters building in New York impressively depicts this vision of Isaiah. A muscular hero reforges a sword into a ploughshare. In 1959, the Soviet Union gave it to the UN as a present.

Swords into ploughshares.

A copy of this sculpture was used by the Federation of the Evangelical Churches in the GDR for the invitation to the Peace Decade in 1980. "Swords into Ploughshares" – this picture was printed on fabric. Thus, this prophet's word became the motto for the peace movements on both sides of the Wall that separated Germany at that time. One of my predecessors in the Episcopate, Gottfried Forck, fixed the symbol as a sticker on his briefcase. In doing so, he demonstrated solidarity with those young people who experienced problems at school and at work when carrying this symbol as a patch on their clothes. Some of them cut the circular patch out of their jacket and, by leaving a round hole, showed everyone: This is where the prophet's word had been affixed, before it had to be removed.

Swords into ploughshares.

When we were celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Downfall of the Wall" in Berlin three years ago, the location of the Berlin Wall was again visualised by using many white balloons. On that occasion we had the symbol "Swords into Ploughshares" reprinted once more - as a button. On 9 November 2014 the young members of our

Church flew the balloons in order to show: That Wall no longer exists! Again they wore the prophetic symbol. In this way we commemorated the churches' prayers for peace in 1989. These prayers conveyed the Bible's promises of peace and contributed to our experiencing a peaceful revolution and to the Downfall of the Wall without any bloodshed.

II.

“Swords into ploughshares“ – Isaiah's vision of peace is a vision for *all* peoples. They come to God together and want to learn how peace is made. And after the peoples will have learned to create peace, they will be able to destroy their weapons. All resources that would have been necessary for the military until then will be employed for peaceful uses – in order to overcome hunger and to protect nature: “Swords into ploughshares”.

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Unfortunately, the world community is far from this visionary goal today:

Where do the peoples learn to make peace together today?

Where does humankind succeed in ending armed conflict by conducting peace talks?

Where do we negotiate on disarmament?

By founding the UN, the international community created instruments to design and comply with a peace order. However, the UN is getting far too little support by the peoples at the moment.

Who adheres to the message of the bronze sculpture today?

Who does take this vision of peace seriously and stands up for it?

At present, there are too few who effectively want to end violence, terror and war.

III.

Do we therefore have to give up the hope that there can and will ever be a global community of peace on our planet? No!

For we presently experience something new! We experience the fact that in our days and for the first time in the history of humankind representatives of many different kinds of religions from all over the world get together and discover their shared responsibility for peace.

If politicians, rulers and business leaders do not really succeed in getting together in order to ask what they are to do to make peace ...

if – on the contrary - a spirit pervades the world seeking for people's own benefit rather than for what it takes to promote common welfare ...

... then religions will have to raise their voice clearly!

Then all of us who believe in God need to remind the world of the great visions of peace.

Then we need to rediscover the potential for peace in our own religion and, by the power of the spirit, detect, unmask and overcome the abuse of our respective religions with regard to extremism, fundamentalism and legitimization of violence.

Let us go to God together and learn from Him how to make peace!

Let us formulate a peace ethics allowing all peoples of all religions and cultures, to learn how it is possible to make peace!

We have been meeting in Münster and Osnabrück since Sunday, – those places where the Peace of Westphalia ended the worst religious war in Germany almost 370 years ago. A peace order was created here; and we in Germany have been enjoying its fruits until now.

From here and now, the message goes out:

Let us learn together with all religions of this world how to make peace!

Amen.