



Vienna, 7th June 2023

Democratic dialogue takes place - despite ÖGB's cancellation

Statement by Gerhard Kofler (AbFaNG) and Reiner Braun (IPB) on the refusal of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) to provide premises for the peace conference in Vienna on 10th and 11th June 2023.

It is with disappointment, frustration and incomprehension that we have to take note of the ÖGB's cancellation, two days before the planned peace conference at the Catamaran.

As a representative of the labour movement, the ÖGB knows that defamation, half-truths and insinuations are part of the opponents' repertoire in political debates, especially in socially acute situations. Denying the premises for dialogue, supportive discussion, and the exchange of opinions for peace is not only difficult to understand for the organisers of the Summit, but is also underlined by the many expressions of solidarity that we have received since the publication of the ÖGB cancellation.

Democracy and the culture of debate suffer from bans and exclusions. The attempt to make open discourse in a conference impossible by canceling the premises at short notice borders on a ban on speaking and is anything but a democratic gesture. In authoritarian states, one would probably speak of censorship here. But we, as part of the worldwide civil peace movement, will not be prevented from speaking, even if we have to move the conference to a public park.

All participants in the largest international peace summit since the beginning of the war in Ukraine stand for a democratic process, the rejection of the Russian war of aggression and the intensive search for peaceful solutions. Ceasefire and negotiations are for all the *ultima ratio* (as Willi Brandt said) to open a path to peace and reconciliation.

We remain open and ready for dialogue. We want to expand the culture of democratic debate. Therefore, the international conference will also take place as planned in Vienna as a large event with many active participants. The solidarity of all participants has made this possible.

Peace is our goal and peace is our way to the goal. This is the background and the intention of the international summit: We want to campaign for a peaceful way into the future, not only for peace in Ukraine, and we are looking forward to the numerous participants from all over the world. Solidarity is our strength. "Lay down your arms!" we call out again on the 180th birthday of Bertha von Suttner on 9 June 2023 and at the subsequent peace conference.