

Position Paper - Human Assembly -13 September 2025

III World Meeting on Human Fraternity

Ministry for Peace: A Choice for the Future

1. Introduction

In an era marked by wars, humanitarian crises, growing social tensions, and environmental instability, peace is too often treated as fragile, abstract, or secondary. Yet never before has the **construction of peace** been such a concrete, urgent, and political challenge. Peace **must become a national priority, structurally supported by government institutions.**

2. Origins of the Campaign

The proposal to establish a Ministry of Peace has been raised in various parts of the world for decades. Costa Rica abolished its army in 1948, choosing instead to invest in a culture of peace. Experiences of ministries of peace and institutional bodies for peace and reconciliation have been established in various countries and are currently operating in Costa Rica, the Solomon Islands and Ethiopia.

Since the 1970s, activists and scholars in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere have promoted similar initiatives. There is also an international campaign, the Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace (GAMIP).

In Italy, the idea took shape in the 1990s, amid the horrors of the Balkan wars, through Don Oreste Benzi and the Community of Pope John XXIII. Don Benzi used to say: *“We have always organized war; now it is time to organize peace.”* His prophetic vision inspired the birth of the Italian campaign. In 2017, the initiative *“Ministry for Peace – A Choice for Government”* was relaunched with broad support from civic networks, faith-based groups, schools, municipalities, and engaged citizens.

3. Ethical and Legal Foundations

The proposal is firmly grounded in international and national law:

- **United Nations Charter (1945):** commits member states to save future generations from the scourge of war.
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):** affirms the right to an international order where rights and freedoms can be fully realized (Art. 28).
- **Italian Constitution (Art. 11):** declares that Italy repudiates war as a means of settling disputes.

Despite these commitments, there remains a **structural gap**: no dedicated institution exists to translate these principles into consistent priority for public policymaking. Security based on military deterrence has already failed and continues to fail; it has not made peoples and individuals safer. It is urgent to understand that we need to practise an alternative to mere armed security as public policy.

4. Growing International Support

In 2023, the creation of Ministries for Peace worldwide was endorsed in the *Declaration on Human Fraternity*. In 2024, the *World Meeting on Human Fraternity* reaffirmed this call, with the support of leading academics and religious leaders such as Jeffrey Sachs and Stefano Zamagni. These voices strengthen the case that Peace requires not only ideals, but also a political architecture and institutional bodies dedicated to and founded on international solidarity.

Purpose and Functions

A Ministry for Peace would not duplicate existing ministries but rather provide a **central hub** to unify and coordinate policies now fragmented across education, justice, foreign affairs, and internal security. Its functions would include:

- **Conflict prevention and mediation** in schools, communities, and urban settings.
- **Education for peace and nonviolence**, incorporated into national curricula and teacher training.
- **Peace diplomacy and international cooperation**, through strengthened Civil Peace Corps and civilian mediation.
- **Promotion of nonviolent defense, disarmament, and conversion of the arms industry.**
- **Restorative justice and reconciliation practices** as tools for repairing social divisions.
- **Human security**, understood as protection, dignity, and social cohesion, not military deterrence.

5. Institutional Structure

The proposed Ministry would be organized into five departments:

1. **Education and Training** – mainstreaming peace education at all levels.
2. **Territorial Peace Policies** – local mediation, restorative justice, and community reconciliation.
3. **Disarmament** – monitoring arms agreements, reducing military spending, and promoting conversion of military industries.
4. **Civilian Nonviolent Defense** – institutionalizing and expanding Civil Peace Corps and national civil service and civilian-based nonviolent defense.
5. **Human Rights and Peace Economy** – promoting sustainable, solidarity-based, non-exploitative economic models.

Two coordinating bodies would support this structure:

- A **Council of Peacebuilders**, representing civic and social organizations.
- An **Interministerial Committee**, ensuring coherence across government policies.

6. Educational Transformation

Current educational systems continue to narrate history through wars, empires, and military conquests, sidelining traditions of nonviolent resistance and cooperation. This implicit pedagogy normalizes violence as the “engine of history.”

A Ministry for Peace would support a paradigm shift: highlighting the “History of the Good” and equipping young generations with skills in nonviolent communication, ethical disobedience, and constructive conflict resolution. This is not an additional burden but the **core mission of education**: forming free, responsible, and solidaristic citizens.

7. Local, European, and Global Dimensions

At the **local level**, peace departments within municipalities and regions could foster community regeneration, especially in areas affected by poverty or exclusion.

At the **European level**, the creation of a Commissioner for Peace and Reconciliation within the European Commission is envisioned. Nobel laureate John Hume already supported this idea two decades ago.

At the **United Nations level**, the appointment of a **Special Rapporteur on the Right to Peace** would provide monitoring and accountability at the global scale.

8. Feasibility and Next Steps

Institutionally, in Italy the creation of a Ministry for Peace is straightforward: new ministries can be established by decree. A detailed draft bill already exists. What is required is not legal revolution but **political will**.

9. What Is Truly Human in the Proposal for a Ministry for Peace

The proposal to establish a **Ministry for Peace** is rooted in two fundamental human dimensions: **alliance** and **dignity**. Alliance is the relational fabric that binds people, communities, and nations in mutual recognition and responsibility. Dignity is the inviolable value of every human being, who must always be treated as an end, never as a means.

A Ministry for Peace would institutionalize these values, making them political priorities. It would give body to **alliance**, by fostering reconciliation, listening, and social cohesion. It would protect **dignity**, by promoting justice, inclusion, and the recognition of each person's worth.

What is most human in this proposal emerges in its core commitments:

- **Relationality and care:** seeing conflict not as definitive rupture, but as an opportunity for mediation, healing, and renewed bonds.
- **Nonviolence and empathy:** affirming peace as a moral strength and a political choice, rather than passive resignation.
- **Restorative justice and reconciliation:** transforming wounds into spaces of forgiveness, new beginnings, and shared responsibility.
- **Education for peace:** forming generations to live coexistence, compassion, and dialogue.
- **Inclusion and fraternity:** ensuring that the marginalized and the excluded are placed at the center, and that fraternity becomes the horizon of public life.

The Ministry for Peace would therefore not only be a political innovation, but also a profoundly **humanizing institution**: one that transforms fragility into solidarity, conflict into dialogue, and power into service. It represents a prophetic and concrete step toward a **new humanism**, where peace is not a dream but a shared duty and responsibility.

Conclusion

A Ministry for Peace would provide a **political and administrative home for peacebuilding**, transforming scattered initiatives into a coherent, long-term national policy. It would embody a new model of security, grounded in human dignity, solidarity, and justice, rather than deterrence and militarization. While nations invest billions in weapons, Italy and others countries could become a pioneer in investing in peace—organized, strategic, and institutionalized.

This is a **choice of democracy and civilization**, possible and necessary, to secure a future of justice, fraternity, and human security. *“We have always organized war; now it is time to organize peace.”* (Don Oreste Benzi).

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