Opening Remarks at Reception hosted by Mr. Jaakko Laajava, Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Cora Weiss, President, Hague Appeal for Peace

War talk in my country is on television and in the White House. Peace talk, calls for justice, is on the streets. Many American people are issuing calls For Justice and Against Terrorism. We thank you all for the outpouring of messages of concern and sympathy.

Let us congratulate Rubem Cesar of Viva Rio for the successful work that resulted in the new law in the State of Rio that severely restricts the sale of small arms to civilians. This is another model for us all to replicate.

Thank you people of Finland for electing a fine woman to be your president. Thank you for sending a civil society friendly man to be President of the UN General Assembly this past year, and for a wonderful woman ambassador to represent you at the UN. And thank you Foreign Ministry for hosting this generous event. Mr. Under Secretary, we look forward to future collaboration.

I would like you all to meet the Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch of the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Joao Honwana. The UN DDA has launched a new initiative with the Hague Appeal for Peace which will bring disarmament education to schools in four countries while the UN collects small arms and finds jobs in development for the gun donors. This is a creative idea which, if successful, may be replicated elsewhere in our common effort to diminish the use of guns as a means to resolve differences.

The International Physicians and the International Peace Bureau, which I have the honor of leading, have both been honored as Nobel laureates. That extraordinary recognition carries with it extraordinary responsibility. Both as health care providers and as peace and disarmament activists we must warn the world of the dangerous consequences of responding to terrorism with fear and rage. We must also offer an alternative approach to identifying and bringing to trial terrorists without restoring to unnecessary violence.

War fever is a new disease. You health workers need to prevent it and cure it.

We need to remember that the horrendous tragedy at the Pentagon and the World Trade Center did not involve guns. Yet gun sales are on the rise.

An eye for an eye leads to blindness. Fear leads to the erosion of democracy and our hard won freedoms and rage leads to violence.

The role of civil society has never been more important. It is now up to us, organized civil society, to maintain some sanity. We need to address issues of inequality that leads people to such levels of hatred and enables them to engage in holy war. Look at globalization’s contribution to poverty; look at the total lack of understanding of Muslim culture and Islam; look at the absence of women at negotiating tables; look at racism. What are the conditions of insecurity that make people feel that owning a gun will provide security.

All New Yorkers have been profoundly affected by this beyond imagination criminal act of terror.
But New Yorkers, like the noble people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not seeking revenge. Peace vigils and teach-ins are everywhere. You can join or create your own non violent demonstrations on Gandhi’s birthday, October 2nd or Oct. 7th.

We have a new samizdat. The underground e mail is overwhelmed with messages calling for restraint and justice. There are messages to counter the tide of racism. We need to move above the we from e mail to mainstream media.

We should resist the siege mentality that will shut down speech and open every building and street corner to nervous guards armed with light weapons. President Bush has called for lifting restrictions on arms sales and will punish any country that ratifies the International Criminal Court unless they agree to exempt all Americans from their jurisdiction. That is the president talking, not the American people.

There is a blank check phenomenon that also must be rejected. Health and education budgets, already hostage to the military, will face further cuts. Increasing military budgets is not a prescription for good health or for combating terrorism.

There are tools available for combating terrorism that do not include small arms or big arms. There are 12 conventions, regional or international. Finland and the US have signed many of them. That means you are not allowed to violate them. What is now needed, Mr. Under Secretary is a convention against nuclear terrorism.

We need massive research on the root causes of terrorism with prescriptions for addressing them without resort to weapons or war. That is a task for both governments and civil society.

What is always needed, and now more than ever, is peace education integrated into all curricula. The International Peace Bureau and the Hague Appeal for Peace invite you to design peace lessons on small arms and gun violence to use in our Global Campaign for Peace Education, to put into our teacher training manual for teachers of children in both elementary and secondary schools and communities.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his message to the 1995 International Citizens Assembly to Stop the Spread of Weapons called on people to, Agitate as passionately as possible for the abolition, for the banning of small arms. You know, they kill as effectively as the nuclear bomb.

How many of you know the famous American Negro spiritual, Dem Bones? It’s a good basic medical school lesson.

The foot bone’s connected to the leg bone,
The leg bone’s connected to the thigh bone,
the thigh bone’s connected to the hip bone....

And it goes on up to the head bone.
Dem bone’s gonna walk again.

Should we consider a new song, perhaps written by Brian Rawson of IPPNW.

The hand gun’s connected to the machine gun,
the machine gun’s connected to the cluster bomb
the cluster bomb’s connected to the atom bomb,
Dem bombs gonna drop again...

Our discussions must not forget that small arms are a big problem. People use guns, nations use
big guns and drop bombs. Both are based on a false sense of security.

Jihad talk is not restricted to fanatics and holy warriors. Terror has visited many people around this shrinking earth. We can not forget the people of Rwanda, Bhopal, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Israel the West Bank and Gaza, Lockerbie, Oklahoma, and elsewhere.

The terror that shocked the world, attacking the military and financial icons of the remaining superpower, is not over. The call For Justice and Against Terrorism, for both legal and social justice, must overwhelm the call for revenge.

The Under Secretary brought his daughter this evening. I could have brought my grandchildren. That’s the point. We can not ruin life for them. Keep up your fine work.