

## Policy statement on companies with military exposure

### 1. *Preamble*

- 1.1 Human life and peace are to be supported, celebrated, and affirmed. 'From the beginnings of salvation history in the Garden of Eden, to its end in the New Jerusalem, the Bible witnesses to the profound value of life and peace.' (Peacemaking – A Christian Vocation)
- 1.2 Peacemaking is a Christian vocation that all should pursue to prevent violent conflict and the suffering and death it causes.
- 1.3 Many Methodists accept that armed forces are necessary, although a pacifist tradition also resides within the Methodist Church. The use of armed force must be as a last resort and determined according to ethical, as well as strategic, criteria. The Methodist Conference 2006 endorsed the Methodist Church/United Reformed Church document, Peacemaking – A Christian Vocation, which provides a useful summary of theological issues relating to the use of armed force.
- 1.4 Armed forces can have peacemaking and peacekeeping functions. They can also be used to destroy peace and promote war, death, pain, and destruction.
- 1.5 Weapons themselves are not morally neutral. Weapons and systems that support their use are intrinsically destructive of life and producing them is justifiable only within very stringent safeguards.
- 1.6 The global arms trade has made weapons of all sorts widely available and has significantly contributed to armed conflicts around the world. Governments often do not appear to regard the ethical implications of the arms trade with the seriousness it deserves.
- 1.7 Christians face a difficult dilemma: it may be appropriate in certain circumstances to call for armed intervention but Christians may feel uneasy profiting from the arms sales necessary for governments to follow such a call.

### 2. *Areas of ethical concern*

- 2.1 The global arms trade is a matter of ethical concern because it has tended to promote armed conflict and damage the cause of peace.
- 2.2 Trade in arms is necessary if nations, including the United Kingdom, are to have armed forces. However, it is not always possible to determine the destination of a company's military sales. The regulation of trade in weapons is not sufficiently strict because it does not exclude countries with poor human rights.
- 2.3 Some products are specifically designed for military use (e.g. missiles) and some military-related services may be unique.
- 2.4 It is useful to make the distinction between military equipment designed primarily for offensive use and that designed for defensive purposes. However, equipment can be difficult to categorise. In some cases the relevant category may be determined by the theatre of military operation or the reason for a conflict. In addition, defensive equipment may enhance offensive capability.
- 2.5 The Methodist Church is opposed to proliferation of nuclear weapons. Methodist Conference in 2006 opposed the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system and urged '...the UK Government to take leadership in disarmament negotiations in order to bring about the intention of the Non-Proliferation Treaty for the elimination of all nuclear weapons.'

- 2.6 There have been successful efforts to limit the proliferation and use of biological and chemical weapons and Methodism would support these efforts continuing. While such weapons ‘...do not provide a threat on anything approaching the same scale as nuclear weapons, and so do not justify the same responses’, (Peacemaking – A Christian Vocation) a distinction from conventional weapons should be made.
- 2.7 The Methodist Church is opposed to cluster munitions (Methodist Conference 2003) and is concerned at the ease with which nations and groups can acquire small arms.
- 2.8 Some products and services have more general use or application but can be required for the military with a variety of degrees of adjustment. Some companies run military bases or non-military services within bases.
- 2.9 It is appropriate for some policing to be armed. However, police forces in some countries may use excessive force or even torture. Sales of equipment to such forces would not be considered appropriate.
- 2.10 There may be negative environmental impacts from certain products or services.
- 2.11 Concern has in the past been expressed as the proportion of total revenue or earnings from military sales approached or exceeded 20%. However, this proportion may be considered too high in the case of offensive weaponry sold to countries with poor human rights.

### **3. Policy**

- 3.1 The Methodist Church should aim to avoid benefiting financially from the provision of military and related products and services where this might increase the probability of conflict and human rights abuses.
- 3.2 The extent of a company’s exposure to military-related products and services will be assessed in terms of the proportion of revenue and, where possible, earnings. Companies with a high exposure will be avoided.
- 3.3 Consideration will be given to the type of product or service offered.
- 3.4 Exposure to products and services specifically designed for military use will raise the level of concern and close attention will be paid to the degree of exposure. Exposure to products and services primarily designed for other uses will also raise concerns but a higher exposure will be acceptable in such cases.
- 3.5 In considering the type of exposure, distinctions will be made between:
- Defensive systems and components (mainly electronics and mechanical components)
  - fighting platforms (e.g. ships) and systems (guidance and target identification)
  - weapons (including bullets, shells, and missiles)
- 3.6. Where the destination of military sales can be specifically identified, it may allay concerns if sales are to countries deemed acceptable. In other cases it will be assumed that sales may be to countries with poor human rights records.
- 3.7. The Methodist Church should aim to avoid benefiting financially from the promotion of the arms trade.
- 3.8. The environmental impact of products or services for military customers will be considered.
- 3.9. In some cases positive benefits from other activities of a company may offset concerns over military exposure.