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## Conscience and Peace Tax International

International non-profit organization (Belgium 15.075/96) &  
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### Oral Statement of *Conscience and Peace Tax International (CPTI)* UN Commission on Human Rights, 58th session, agenda item 11 Geneva, April 2002

Dear Mr. Chairman,

My name is Dirk Panhuis and I speak on behalf of *Conscience and Peace Tax International*.

Our organization represents thousands of people around the world who feel obliged to contribute to peace, but are forced to pay for war. Their moral or religious conviction and their conscience tell them not to engage in war, neither physically with their bodies, nor fiscally through their taxes. But tax laws force them to pay for war or war preparations by governments. Because of their conviction they suffer hardship when they decline to pay taxes for war. Every year we hear of seizures of property, sequestrations of income, court cases, appeals to court cases, etc.

Of course, many people voluntarily pay for peace by giving financial support to peace movements. But in the framework of tax system of the State, it seems that, at present, people committed to peace have no way to pay for peace according to their conscience. In our view, they have their basic human right denied, viz. the right not to pay for war and their duty to pay for peace. That's why, Mr. Chairman, we turn to this Commission. In the context of life and death, of peace and war, this Commission has upheld the right to conscientious objection to military service. Could it also uphold the right to conscientious objection to being an accomplice to war by contributing to war financially? Could you help us out and provide a way to pay our full tax obligation without violating our conscience. Could you help us to pay taxes entirely for peace?

We are looking for ways to pay for nonviolent conflict resolution and civilian peace building, nationally or internationally. We believe in the creative possibilities of civilians to tackle problems before these problems turn into armed conflicts. Some governments are cautiously envisaging some forms of civil conflict resolution and peace building. We would love to heed the call of our conscience and to send our tax contribution to such agencies. Would governments accept our endeavor for peace and our abhorrence for war?

Mr. Chairman, we ask this Commission to recognize our human right not to pay for war and death and our duty to pay for peace and life. In furtherance of this right and this duty, we ask this Commission to call upon governments

- a) to list their civilian peace agencies and programs for nonmilitary peace building (both for national purposes and for intergovernmental regional or international action);
- b) to provide this commission with the yearly budgets for these agencies and programs as compared with the budgets for the military;
- c) to explore the ways in which tax contributions could be paid to these agencies and programs in fulfilment of a taxpayer's fiscal obligations.

We are anxious to work with you to find a way for persons, who seek to live up to the highest good that they know, to pay their taxes without violating deeply held beliefs about killing.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your attention.