



Basel Peace Office

*Advancing international peace and security through
the abolition of nuclear weapons*

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BPO Presidents Report 2019-2020

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Activities of the Basel Peace Office in Switzerland included in January 2020 the participation at the Basel Peace Forum 2020. In particular, the roundtable event with Youth from different European countries has to be mentioned. It was dedicated to the issues of Climate, Peace and Security and had the title “From Youth voices to policy action”. Prior to this meeting a competition had been launched in late 2019 and some 20 youth groups participated and promoted their individual projects to this very theme. The winner of the “Peace and Climate Action by European Youth” PACEY Award was a group from the Northern Kosovo town of Mitrovica. They proposed the “Greening of the roof of the Municipality building by a cooperative work of an interethnic group. As tensions in Kosovo persist and particularly are frequent in Mitrovica, the youth forum participants considered this an important contribution and voted the group around Anesa Colakovic and Hysein Damatti as the winners of the 2020 PACEY Award. Due to the Pandemic, also prevalent in Kosova, unfortunately, it has not been possible to realize this project up to now, but a visit of Mitrovica by the president of the BPO at least allowed to meet those young people and learn about their activities.

The Covid-19 Pandemic provoked the need for a most innovative handling of BPO communications, surely as this was also experienced by many other international organizations. Alyn Ware, the BPO director, made an enormous effort to communicate with youth groups, parliamentarians and activists via ZOOM meetings and webinars and I must admire him for this work. Readers of this report are encouraged to read the directors extensive report on his activities mostly out of Prague, where he is presently residing. However, trips to South Korea, Amsterdam and New York have to be mentioned. Alyn was supported in part by Ms Marzhan Nurzhan from Kazakhstan, who was acting as BPO Deputy Director. Alyn and I are very grateful for her spending time and energy for this. Marzhan is studying and writing a thesis with the BPO Board member Prof. Laurent Goetschel. She also kindly represented the BPO in the Eastern Swiss town of Heiden, Appenzell at the annual Nagasaki Peace Bell celebration, in front of the Henri Dunant Museum. 75 years after the bombing of Nagasaki, this event took place for the 75th time. As native Kasach citizen she was able to talk about the damage some 450 nuclear test explosions near Kurchatov / Semipalatinsk caused to the local population. In September the BPO promoted a peace concert at the Theodors Church in Basel and Marzhan spoke there on behalf of the BPO.

As there were Elections of the Basel Govt recently, the President of the Basel Cantonal Govt. Mrs Elisabeth Ackermann decided to resign and we therefore loose our long standing “protector” of the BPO. We want to express our thanks for her interest in peace politics and for her graciously taking on the role of Basel “Mayor for Peace”. Lukas Ott, City planner of the Basel Canton and Board member of the BPO, however, will maintain our ties with the Basel Govt. even under the successor of Mrs. Ackermann, the new Basel Cantonal President Mr. Beat Jans. We are extremely happy to receive continued financial support from the Canton of Basel City.

At the time of writing this short report we are looking forward to next year’s Basel Peace Forum, which will be an entirely virtual event. This surely has its drawbacks but certainly also its advantages. You “meet” by looking at computer screens, but you avoid a lot of travels and expenses for travelling.

Andreas Nidecker
President BPO