

The General Secretary of the International Peace Bureau (IPB), which is based in Geneva, and has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, **Colin Archer**, has talked to us on all the important international developments in an interview he has given to **indicator.gr**

Regarding the handling of the refugee crisis, mr **Archer** pointed out the Need for Europe to present the image of a civilized continent, in contrast to the policies applied by certain states.

He criticized, among other things, the resolutions of some European governments to increase offensive action in Syria, pointing out that this will only achieve the strengthening of the “monster” that is the Islamic State.

Finally, he stressed the necessity for real action, following the reaching of an agreement during the Paris Climate Conference, so that future generations don't have to live in a bleak future, ravaged by wars.

1)First of all, we'd like you to tell us exactly what is the International Peace Bureau and what is its purpose. We know it was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910. What was the reason for the award?

The truth is that the reason for this award was never recorded, despite the fact that, in such cases, there is always a speech.

Regarding the International Peace Bureau, which was founded in 1892, historically at that time it coordinated the different movements that had peace as their main demand. Specifically, every year the Bureau organised a World Conference for the purpose of coordinating the national peace committees working all over Europe at the time. We know that a great problem of that era were the wars between nations. For example, earlier, in 1870, there was the Franco-Prussian war, and also, memories of the Crimean war were still recent. Conditions had changed from that time.

The International Peace Bureau was then putting forward two main ideas:

The first was disarmament, since there were too many weapons, and the second was arbitration by bringing conflicts to Court.

The goal of the Peace Bureau during those early stages was the creation of an international court in The Hague for the purpose of dealing with differences between nations. That effort met with some success.

On the issue of disarmament though, it hasn't been very successful, since as we can understand there is a great concentration of weapons even today, while new ones are being manufactured constantly. On this issue there is still a lot of work to be done. So our job is not over yet.

2)Recently,in October, the International Peace Bureau awarded the Sean Mac Bride peace award to the inhabitants of two islands. Lampedusa, Italy and Jeju, S. Korea, for their commitment to peace and social justice.

We understand that your decision to give this award to the people of Lampedusa is in recognition of the solidarity they showed to the people reaching their island. We would like you to tell us more about this award.

To begin with, this award was for the people of Lampedusa who were there to save the arriving refugees and migrants, and did not tell them: "Get out of here."

We should make it clear, though, that this is not a humanitarian award. The idea for a peace award is for the prevention of war and conflict, and not for those working to relieve suffering.

On the other hand, solidarity to the people suffering because of war, especially in Syria, is the basis for a commitment to Peace. For us the main goal is not humanitarian work. The goal is to change the conditions that create the refugee problem.

When the International Peace Bureau was created, the Red Cross already existed, but the people of the Bureau said that the Red Cross was not enough, what we need is an organization for the prevention of war.

That was the difference. This is the difference today, and this is the reason for giving the award to the people of S.Korea, who are fighting against a big navy base which is being built on that particular Korean island. The creation of the base will cause destruction of the environment. This base is a monster construction on this very beautiful island, that is part of a heritage protected by UNESCO, due to the presence of wildlife, on the sea surface and under it. It is terrific that people there show such great courage, as they have been demonstrating and being arrested for eight years, and then demonstrate again and are arrested again, bringing forward an international struggle for peace.

Because the creation of that base is one step further in the direction of war in Asia. Now we have the great powers, which are not fighting yet, but are competing in the area and threatening each other, Japan, Russia, USA, and of course Korea, who is on the side of the USA and Japan.

So these two islands are entitled to the peace award.

3)What is your position in regards to the refugee and migrant issues particularly where Europe is concerned, since at this time it receives a huge refugee influx?

If you look at a map, you will see in which parts there is warfare on the part of the west. Some examples are Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan. We therefore have a responsibility to deal with the consequences of our own actions here in Europe.

Of course, Greece isn't a main factor in these wars, America was. Nevertheless, we have a responsibility as human beings to receive these people. We even have a legal responsibility according to the laws protecting refugees. Many people forget this responsibility exists and concerns people coming from war zones.

Of course, some maintain that we don't know where these people come from, because there are at the same time regular migrants simply seeking a better life.

In that case, let's simply examine them, in order to verify where they come from.

European countries implement their policies, and I don't think that in this stage it is the right policy to simply open their doors to anyone arriving and to say that everybody is welcome. It is true that Europe is facing some problems. There must be some restrictions.

The top priority is that those who are true refugees from war zones are accepted. Moreover, it is not enough to grant them entry and to place them in temporary accommodation. It is necessary to find for them a permanent home and work. Europe must give, because Europe profits from these people.

These people come here with professional experience and skills and even bring money sometimes. This way, these people can help by bringing new energy to Europe and its economy.

The European population is ageing. There aren't enough people to do all the work. Therefore we must find a way to assimilate as many refugees as possible.

For most countries, the problem is political volition. I am not referring to Greece, because Greece has done a wonderful job, and of course SYRIZA has proven to be excellent in its position.

Many other countries though, my own country, Britain, included, do not allow entry to many refugees. The numbers that are being admitted are very limited. So we must do much more as Europeans if we want to be considered a civilized continent.

4)After the tragic events in Paris, some European governments, France, Britain and Germany for example, have decided on air raids, with the purpose of increasing their influence in the region of Syria. Do you think this practice could have positive results against the jihadists' terrorism?

Not at all. The problem will only become worse.

You know, there is the ancient Greek myth of the Hydra, the monster with several heads, where the hero chops off one of the heads and three more grow in its place. This is a story that must be mentioned more often, because it is very relevant to the growth of jihadism.

What jihadists want is war. They want a conflict with the West. Well, we mustn't give them what they want. Let's prove we are cleverer and find another way to deal with them. Of course, we all realize this is a very difficult problem and no one really has an answer for it.

Of course, if we want to find possible ways for dealing with it, we might say that the answer lies on the one hand in the level of education, which means an effort to educate and train these populations, and another means of action is giving work to these people. These two fields of action will take time, but in the long run they will help in solving the problem.

But this is not the only answer. There is another way of thinking.

This concerns the interruption of vital supplies to the Islamic State regime. And you know that this is already much more than a state or a regime. We are already talking of an empire.

Therefore, we must cease all financial support, as there is still a flow of capital and weapons from the Gulf states, which must stop.

At the same time, the recruitment of so many people reaching the Islamic State through Turkey must stop. The monster must be isolated and that can't be done just through bombing.

5) We know you'll be visiting Cyprus. What is the purpose of your visit? There is currently a peace process taking place for the resolution of the Cyprus issue. What is your position on these efforts?

As far as the Cyprus issue is concerned, the purpose of my visit is to investigate the possibility of support by the International Peace Bureau of the peace process currently taking place there.

If peace is achieved in Cyprus, this will send a very strong message not only to your neighbours in Israel and Palestine, who are dealing with the problem of co-existence, it will also send a message that will reach farther, to Pyongyang (North Korea), because there we have a divided country with co-existence problems. This would be a wonderful message to the whole world, if it is finally achieved.

6) Finally, looking at world developments in all fields, we'd like to hear your views on the future.

The future of our world seems bleak at this time.

The issue of climate change is now a major problem. See what happened in Paris during the last weekend. A great agreement was achieved which is already being criticized. In my opinion, it wasn't a bad agreement, it could have been much worse. But now we need real action.

If there is no real action, with substantial reduction of emissions of carbon dioxide, then your generation and the generations to follow, will live in a planet with many conflicts.

Because climate change brings war, famine, disease and death. All of the above present a picture of the four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Climate change is number five and this is the reality we must face.

This the reason I am so happy I saw so many young people demonstrating in Paris.

As I said, the future is dark, but there are many candles shedding light in the darkness.