



# The Right Livelihood Award

*for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people*

Hans-Peter Dürr (Germany)

(1987)



*...for his profound critique of the strategic defence initiative (SDI) and his work to convert high technology to peaceful uses.*

Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

Hans-Peter Dürr, born in 1929, is Director at the Max-Planck-Institute of Physics (Werner-Heisenberg-Institute) and Professor of Physics at the Ludwig Maximilian University, both in Munich, Germany. Appointed a Scientific Member of the Max-Planck-Society in 1963, he held the chair or vice-chair of the Board of this institute through the period 1971-1995.

Dürr is a quintessential transdisciplinary. Besides his specialisms of nuclear physics, elementary particles and gravitation, epistemology and philosophy, he has been professionally active in the fields of science and responsibility as well as energy policy. Since 1979 he has spoken and demonstrated against nuclear energy and initiated study groups at various universities on 'soft' energy issues and community energy plans. More recently he has also become very concerned about economic, ecological and Third World questions. He has been a member of the Board of Greenpeace-Germany (1985-91), of the Board and Scientific Committee of the Vienna Internationale Akademie für Zukunftsfragen (since 1990), a member of the International Advisory Council on the Economic Development of Hainan in Harmony with the Natural Environment in China (1990-93) and after the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 a co-founder of David gegen Goliath protesting against the construction of a nuclear fuel reprocessing plan in Bavaria.

In the 1980s, Dürr's main campaigning work was pursued under the theme of peace. He became a Board member of the Vereinigung Deutscher Wissenschaftler and a member of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, joining the Council of the latter in 1987. He co-founded the Scientists' Initiative: Responsibility for Peace in 1983, which led to the Scientists' Peace Congress in Mainz attended by 3,300 scientists, and the 'Mainzer Appell', a declaration against further nuclear armament. In 1990 another huge scientists' convention in Göttingen warned against

the militarisation of space. Out of these conventions came a series of lectures, which Dürr gave at many German universities.

Dürr has been especially active on the issue of Non-offensive Defence and his main preoccupation, the American Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), otherwise known as Star Wars. In 1985 he wrote a long article for the magazine 'Der Spiegel' arguing cogently against the feasibility of the SDI concept. And in 1986 he proposed a World Peace Initiative (WPI), on a similar scale to SDI, to solve the problems of the environment, world poverty and economic justice, as well as problems of peace itself.

The WPI idea was later reborn as the Global Challenges Network and the monies of the Right Livelihood Award were devoted to furthering it. After the fall of the Berlin wall, Dürr was involved in setting up two organisations with the aim of transforming 24 ecologically healthy, military-restricted areas along the former 'iron curtain' into an 'ecological backbone' of Europe.

Dürr was elected a member of the Club of Rome in 1991, and in 1996 he was a member of the UN Secretary General's International Advisory Group for the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul. The main focus of his present work is on questions concerning a sustainable, equitable and liveable society, emphasising efficiency and sufficiency in energy use as a point of entry.

In 2005, he co-authored the Potsdam Manifesto and the Potsdam Denkschrift as a follow-up to the Russel-Einstein-Manifesto of 1955. It was signed by a large group of scientists from all over the world, including 20 laureates of the Right Livelihood Award.

He received the Elise and Walter Haas International Award 1993 from the University of California. As a member of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995.

In 2002, the Cambridge Biographical Centre proclaimed Dürr International Scientist of the Year and he received an honorary degree of the University of Oldenburg. In 2004 he was awarded the German Federal Cross of Merit.

### **Quotation**

*"Peace in its real sense can never be achieved by military measures or technical fixes... It is high time for us to focus our attention on the real problems which are threatening all of us - in fact, life on this planet."*

Hans-Peter Dürr

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