Peace Boat observes the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) 2014

This year, Peace Boat once again participated in the 4th edition of the Global Day of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) with a series of events held in Tokyo and onboard the ship.

Symposium in the Diet building in Tokyo, Japan
On April 14, Peace Boat joined together with other organisations and individuals to hold a symposium in the Diet Members' Building in Tokyo, entitled “From Military-Centered to Human-Centered: Rethinking ‘Security’”.

The event brought together speakers from Japan and abroad to consider the "security" challenges faced by Japan, and together rethink the priority and allocation of budget necessary to ensure the security of human beings.

As the current administration is expanding its defense capabilities through increased military budget and armaments, for the said purpose of protecting the country, participants made a case that it is being done at the expenses of what most Japanese citizens consider being their immediate security and livelihoods.

Japanese panelists, including representatives of nuclear power plant workers, homeless rights advocates, NGO activists, think-tanks and lawyers, looked at the various social issues in Japan that are overlooked in the public budget and policy, such as the urgent need to deal with the ongoing disaster situation in Fukushima including the health dimensions, the poverty gaps in Japanese society, issues facing social welfare and more. The fact that the budget allocated to social welfare in next year's budget will be cut by 100 billion yen, while there will be an increase of the same amount in defence
expenditure, left a great impression on participants, showing the prioritization of the state over its citizens.

International guest speakers from the Netherlands, the Philippines and Australia contributed to the debate by placing it in the international context and introducing concrete examples of how citizens can make a difference.

Some 80 participants, including Parliamentarians, attended the event, and over 1200 people watched it online. Watch the video here and read more about the event here.

Activities onboard Peace Boat’s 83rd Global Voyage
Throughout the week leading up to GDAMS, a series of events took place were held onboard Peace Boat’s ship as it sailed through the Middle East.

Two lectures were held, including an introduction to GDAMS and presentations on the amount of money globally spent on the military in recent years, as well as on the current Japanese military budget which allocates as much as 4.885 trillion yen for 2014.

Following the presentations, a discussion was held to provoke an exchange of opinions among participants on the theme of military spending, including the amount spent annually on the military compared to how much money is needed to meet the basic needs of the world’s population in terms of healthcare, sanitation and education.

Almost everyday, English classes are held onboard to help participants communicate with the people they meet in port and on the ship. On GDAMS day, the English classes focused on related themes, looking at large numbers and encouraging group discussions on how participants would rather spend these vast amounts of money instead of for military purposes. Participants were encouraged to write a message both in Japanese and in English as part of the #move the money campaign.

A booth was set up in the main area of the ship where over 100 pictures of participants with a sign saying “If I had $1.75, I would #move the money to ___” were collected towards the GDAMS Selfie campaign, aimed at creating public awareness about
how the money spent in global military budget could be reallocated to various human needs. Answers ranged from 'Saving the oceans' to 'Education', 'Caring for the Elderly' and 'Landmine Abolition'.

When the ship passed through the Suez Canal, more than 500 people participated a group picture taken behind a banner that read in Japanese and English “Cut Military Spending for a Better Life”.

A video was produced to show some of the events held onboard. Watch the video here.

**Hibakusha Statement**
Another video was produced as part of Peace Boat's actions for GDAMS 2014, featuring a special message by Hattori Michiko, one of eight Hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) traveling onboard Peace Boat’s 83rd Global Voyage. Watch the video here.