

## Photo call

*11.30am on Thursday 15 June 2006 at 10 Downing Street*

### **Mark Thomas and children from South London present peace petition and toy guns sculpture at 10 Downing Street**

Mark Thomas and pupils from a school in south London will hand in a peace petition, signed by more than 4,000 children, to Downing Street in the run-up to the UN Summit on Small Arms in New York (26 June-7 July).

The petition – run by Christian Aid’s children’s website [globalgang.org.uk](http://globalgang.org.uk) – encouraged 8-12 year olds to send a message of peace to Tony Blair and George Bush, urging them ‘to do everything they can to make the world a peaceful place to live in’.

Children from Pilgrims Way primary school, Southwark, an area of London where gun crime is of concern to local residents, will be bringing along their dove of peace sculpture, made out of toy guns, toy soldiers, war planes and coins. One child that took part in the workshop said: ‘Some of my friends’ dads have guns and they think they’re cool, but I would never get a gun.’

The children used the British Museum’s Throne of Weapons sculpture for inspiration at a workshop in the Livesey Museum for Children. The Throne is made of decommissioned guns by artists at the Christian Aid-supported Transforming Arms into Tools project in Mozambique. The project encourages ex-soldiers to hand in their weapons in exchange for ploughs and bicycles. The weapons are dismantled and turned into sculptures – symbols of peace.

Comedian Mark Thomas, who is publishing his first book next month *As used on the famous Nelson Mandela - Underground adventures in the arms and torture trade*, said: "People tend to think that arms dealing only happens abroad in places like Africa and affects people there. They forget that it's actually an issue very close to home, I doubt that you could find a place to live in London or Manchester that's further than 400 yards away from a gun crime scene. It's great to plant the seed that you can change this, and that you can have a part to play in shaping the world, which is what Globalgang have done with this peace petition and workshop."

Sophie Shirt, Editor of [globalgang.org.uk](http://globalgang.org.uk) said: ‘It’s great to see how a successful weapons amnesty project is inspiring people all over the world, including children in London. Many children play war games and see weapons as exciting and fun. Giving away their toys can be difficult! But through this workshop they were able to exchange these symbols of war for symbols of peace and understand the dangers of real guns. With our peace petition, we wanted to give children the opportunity to both share their feelings and take action to influence decision-makers.’

In developing countries, the uncontrolled arms trade can have a devastating impact. According to the Control Arms coalition, which Christian Aid is a member of, the number of deaths and injuries from war and violence will overtake the number of deaths caused by killer diseases such as malaria and measles in 2020. Worldwide, hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children are killed by armed violence every year. Christian Aid supports the Control Arms campaign in calling for an international arms trade treaty to globally regulate the spread of small arms and light weapons.

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#### **Notes to editors:**

1. [Globalgang.org.uk](http://globalgang.org.uk) has a host of online educational games to make learning fun. The site aims to encourage children to see themselves as active members of a global community and illustrates how, when it comes to poverty, there is no ‘us and them’ – we’re all part of one big global gang. The website is for children aged approximately 8-12.

2. The Livesey Museum is the only museum in the UK to specialise in exhibitions for children up to 12 years of age. Visit [www.liveseymuseum.org.uk](http://www.liveseymuseum.org.uk) for more details.
3. The British Museum has been touring the Throne of Weapons around the UK as part of its commitment to Africa and to sharing its collections across the country under the Partnership UK scheme. See [www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/partnershipuk](http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/partnershipuk)
4. Four sculptures made of decommissioned weapons at a Christian Aid-supported project in Mozambique are to be auctioned on 20 June. The sculptures, depicting a gazelle, bird, crocodile and snake, were featured in the Africa garden built in front of the British Museum last summer for the final BBC1 Ground Force programme. All four sculptures will go under the hammer as part of Bonham's Contemporary Art auction on 20 June at 2pm at 101 New Bond Street, London.