



REBALANCING MILITARY SPENDING TOWARDS ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Global military spending has grown at a record rate for a decade as a response to the deteriorating global security environment.¹ Yet the premise that increased military expenditure guarantees greater security is misleading.² Such spending can fuel arms races, escalation and miscalculation which lead to instability rather than security. The upward trajectory in global military expenditure has coincided with faltering progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).³ Instead of investing more resources in development—which supports the virtuous cycle of improving human-centred security—states increasingly view security narrowly, prioritizing military strength over sustainable development. Concerned with these diverging trends, at the 2024 Summit of the Future the member states of the United Nations requested that the UN secretary-general conduct an ‘analysis on the impact of the global increase in military expenditure on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals’.⁴ The secretary-general’s report, *The Security We Need*, was issued in September 2025.⁵

This SIPRI Research Policy Paper builds on the momentum generated by that report to make a case for rebalancing resources away from military expenditure and towards the SDGs. It first sets the scene by outlining the diverging trends of rising military expenditure and faltering SDG progress, as set out in *The Security We Need*. It then offers further insights into the relationship between rising military expenditure and the slow achievement of the SDGs. This is followed by proposing a human-centred framework for security—this is, social and economic protection of people alongside the state’s legitimate security needs as a means to achieving sustainable development. It closes by presenting actionable recommendations for the UN, for

SUMMARY

● Amid a deteriorating global security environment, world military expenditure reached US\$2.7 trillion in 2024. This surge coincided with faltering progress on reaching the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. A state’s spending on the military can have substantial adverse impacts on its sustainable development—such as diverting resources from social expenditure, slowing economic growth, increasing inequality and contributing to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions.

To address these diverging trends and their consequences, the UN needs to revitalize its disarmament machinery to debate military spending’s impact on development. States should adopt a human-centred approach to security; that is, states must balance the security of the state with upholding their commitments to domestic and overseas development. In addition, civil society should mobilize public debate to advocate for a human-centred security that prioritizes sustainable development.

¹ SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Apr. 2025, <<http://sipri.org/databases/milex/>>.

² Gibler D. M., Rider T. J. and Hutchison, M. L., ‘Taking arms against a sea of troubles: Conventional arms races during periods of rivalry’, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 42, no. 2 (Mar. 2005); Collier, P. and Hoeffler, A., ‘Military expenditure: Threats, aid and arms races’, Policy Research Working Paper no. 2927, World Bank, Development Research Group, Nov. 2002; and Wulf, H., ‘When is enough, enough? The security dilemma in Europe’, Report no. 209, Toda Peace Institute, 4 Feb. 2025.

³ UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1, ‘Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, 25 Sep. 2015.

⁴ UN General Assembly Resolution 79/1, ‘The Pact for the Future’, 22 Sep. 2024, action 13.

⁵ United Nations, *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, Report of the secretary-general (United Nations: New York, Sep. 2025).

states and for civil society to help reverse the trend of increasing military spending and to reallocate resources towards sustainable development.

I. Rising global military expenditure and the lagging progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: A path to a development crisis

Driven by escalating global geopolitical tensions, military expenditure rose around the globe in 2024 to reach US\$2.7 trillion, its highest level since at least the end of the cold war and equivalent to 2.5 per cent of world gross domestic product (GDP).⁶ Although much of the increase was driven by the world's largest military and economic powers, it was visible in all five geographical regions and in most countries worldwide.

The UN estimates that global military spending could rise to between \$3.5 trillion and \$5.2 trillion by 2030.⁷ This projected further increase would be driven in part by the endorsement by the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of a 10-year target for their military-related spending to reach 5 per cent of their GDPs.⁸

Meanwhile, just five years remain until the 2030 deadline for achieving the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets, and progress remains deeply uneven. Of the 139 targets with sufficient data, only 35 per cent are on track to be achieved by 2030 or have made moderate progress since 2015.⁹ Another 31 per cent show only marginal improvement, while the remaining 34 per cent have either stagnated or fallen below their 2015 baseline levels. The lack of progress towards numerous key SDGs such as Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Life on Land (SDG 15) and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (SDG 16) can be largely attributed to a lack of funding. This underscores the urgent need for renewed investment and political commitment.

The lagging development and the rising global military expenditure point to a shifting perspective: a normalization of countries' prioritization of military expenditure or military security over a human-centred approach to their security. Military expenditure represents an opportunity cost: dedicating additional financial resources to the military is a trade-off, leaving fewer financial resources available for a country's development, which ultimately undermines the achievement of the SDGs and is a detriment to security in the long-term. Beyond this direct displacement, second-order effects from military activities—such as higher greenhouse gas emissions and widening inequality—can further erode progress across the SDGs.

⁶ Lopes da Silva, D. et al., 'Military expenditure', *SIPRI Yearbook 2025: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2025); Liang, X. et al., 'Trends in world military expenditure, 2024', SIPRI Fact Sheet, Apr. 2025; and SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (note 1).

⁷ United Nations (note 5), p. 19. Estimates are reported in current US\$ prices.

⁸ NATO, North Atlantic Council, Hague Summit Declaration, 25 June 2025; Tian, N., Scarazzato, L. and Guiberteau Ricard, J., 'NATO's new spending target: Challenges and risks associated with a political signal', SIPRI, 27 June 2025; and United Nations (note 5), pp. 19–20.

⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* (United Nations: New York, 2025), p. 4.



II. Military expenditure at the expense of sustainable development

There are numerous channels through which rising military expenditure undermines achievement of the SDGs. These can be socio-economic (e.g. crowding out social expenditure, slowing down economic growth or widening inequality), security related (e.g. amplifying perceptions of insecurity or increasing the number of weapons in circulation) or by contributing to climate change.

Socio-economic effects of military spending

Effects on economic growth and employment

Rising military spending constrains some of the main aspects of Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), such as the fiscal multiplier and employment.

In the case of the fiscal multiplier—that is, the ratio of GDP growth in response to government expenditure—while military expenditure contributes to a country's GDP through wages and operations, studies have consistently shown that stronger and broader economic development would generally be generated if that country were to direct the same money towards poverty reduction, healthcare, education or infrastructure—all of which are directly linked to SDGs.¹⁰ For example, spending on health, education and social protection (i.e. programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability such as unemployment benefits, pensions and child benefits) in member states of the European Union (EU) can return two to four times the initial investment.¹¹ In contrast, the fiscal multiplier in advanced and developing economies from military expenditure often falls below one—in other words, its return in economic growth is lower than the cost.¹²

This substantial opportunity cost of allocating significant resources to military budgets has long been recognized by researchers and by the United Nations.¹³ Specific components of military spending such as personnel have particularly large opportunity costs: for example, research on NATO countries has shown that increasing the share of total military expenditure that is spent on personnel by just 1 percentage point can reduce GDP growth by

¹⁰ Cappelen, Å., Gleditsch, N. P. and Bjerkholt, O., 'Military spending and economic growth in the OECD countries', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 21, no. 4 (Dec. 1984); Brauer, J., Dunne, J. P. and Tian, N., 'Towards demilitarisation? The military expenditure–development nexus revisited', ed. R. Matthews, *The Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2019); and Elgin, C. et al., 'Military spending and sustainable development', *Review of Development Economics*, vol. 26, no. 3 (Aug. 2022).

¹¹ Reeves, A. et al., 'Does investment in the health sector promote or inhibit economic growth?', *Globalization and Health*, vol. 9 (Sep. 2013), no. 43.

¹² Sheremirov, V. and Spirovska, S., 'Fiscal multipliers in advanced and developing countries: Evidence from military spending', *Journal of Public Economics*, vol. 208 (Apr. 2022); Rooney, B., Johnson, G. and Priebe, M., 'How does defense spending affect economic growth?', Research Report no. RR-A739-2, Rand Corp., 2021, p. 5; and Reeves et al. (note 11).

¹³ Smith, R. P., 'Military expenditure and investment in OECD countries, 1954–1973', *Journal of Comparative Economics*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Mar. 1980); Spies, M., *United Nations Efforts to Reduce Military Expenditures: A Historical Overview*, UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Occasional Papers no. 33 (United Nations: New York, Oct. 2019); and Perlo-Freeman, S., 'The opportunity cost of world military spending', WritePeace Blog, SIPRI, 5 Apr. 2016.

0.026 percentage point—a notable amount.¹⁴ The underlying intuition is that spending on military personnel diverts labour and financial resources from productive and welfare-enhancing activities such as manufacturing, health and education towards an economically inactive role with limited economic return. There are even caveats to the perceived positive impact of military expenditure on job creation. Studies on different country and country groups have consistently shown that higher military spending reduces employment in the long term.¹⁵

Effects on education and health

Several SDGs focus on social investment and human development, including Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3) and Quality Education (SDG 4). Although major progress has been made in recent years in improving health outcomes and expanding access to education, the Covid-19 pandemic revealed the fragility of these gains.¹⁶

The expected increase in military expenditure risks crowding out resources for these human-centred priorities—as recognized by several states.¹⁷ Indeed, in countries with the most need for healthcare access and quality education (i.e. low- and middle-income and developing countries), higher military expenditure correlates with lower public spending on health and education.¹⁸ An increase of 1 per cent in military spending is linked to an almost equal reduction in publicly financed health services.¹⁹

Effects on equality

Increases in military spending also have impacts on economic and gender inequality. When public funds shift from social programmes to the military, it leaves fewer resources for education, healthcare and social protection—that is, for measures that Reduce Inequalities (SDG 10), both social and economic.²⁰ Cuts to these budgets hit the poorest households hardest, weakening both

¹⁴ Becker, J. and Dunne, J. P., 'Military spending composition and economic growth', *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 34, no. 3 (2023).

¹⁵ Dunne, J. P. and Smith, R., 'Military expenditure and unemployment in the OECD', *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1990); Yıldırım, J. and Sezgin, S., 'Military expenditure and employment in Turkey', *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 14, no. 2 (Apr. 2003); and Dunne, J. P. and Watson, D., 'Military expenditure and employment in South Africa', *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 11, no. 4 (Aug. 2003). On the greater job-creating power of money spent on non-military employment in the USA see Garrett-Peltier, H., 'War spending and lost opportunities', Brown University, Watson School of International and Public Affairs, [2019].

¹⁶ UN Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2023/2024—Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World* (UNDP: New York, 2024), pp. 29–33.

¹⁷ Official submissions made by UN member states (e.g. Mexico, Pakistan, Tunisia) in response to UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), 'Call for papers on the impact of the global increase in military expenditure on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals', Feb. 2025.

¹⁸ Tian, N. et al., 'Military expenditures and development outcomes in Africa', UN Development Programme (UNDP), forthcoming 2025; and Grigorakis, N. and Galyfianakis, G., 'Warfare vs. welfare finance: Assessing the effect of military expenditure on out of pocket healthcare financing for NATO countries', *Theoretical Economics Letters*, vol. 14, no. 1 (Feb. 2024).

¹⁹ Fan, H., Liu, W. and Coyte, P. C., 'Do military expenditures crowd-out health expenditures? Evidence from around the world, 2000–2013', *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 29, no. 7 (Dec. 2017); and Ikegami, M. and Wang, Z., 'Does military expenditure crowd out health-care spending? Cross-country empirics', *Quality & Quantity*, vol. 57, no. 2 (Apr. 2023).

²⁰ Biscione, A. and Caruso, R., 'Military expenditures and income inequality evidence from a panel of transition countries (1990–2015)', *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Jan. 2021); and Ali, H. E., 'Military expenditures and inequality: Empirical evidence from global data', *Defence and Peace Economics*, vol. 18, no. 6 (Dec. 2007).



pre-distribution tools (e.g. equal access to schools and health services) and redistribution tools (e.g. cash transfers from richer to poorer households).

Lower allocation to social expenditure worsens gender inequality because women and girls disproportionately access social protection programmes.²¹ In addition, when social protection and other public services are inadequate, women and girls provide unpaid care to their families, limiting their access to education and employment. This widens gender gaps in income and opportunity and sets back progress on Gender Equality (SDG 5) and on Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8).

The risks of weapon diversion and the security paradox eroding peace and security

Rising military expenditure, especially on arms procurement, is increasing the global total volume of major arms purchased, transferred and stockpiled.²² Without strong controls on those arms, this increases the risk of weapons being diverted from their legitimate uses at every stage, from manufacture, via transfer to deployment, and subsequently via cross-border trafficking.²³ The diversion of weapons affects not only major arms but also small arms and light weapons (SALW), which particularly undermine the rule of law, fuel transnational terrorism and organized crime, and enable human rights abuses and gender-based violence.²⁴ The diversion of weapons from Libya after the 2011 civil war illustrates how initial procurement of weapons leads to second-order risks—arms that spread across the Sahel empowered insurgents, eroded state authority and hindered regional development.²⁵ These cascading effects pose a direct challenge to peace and security such as SDG Target 16.1 (reduce violence) and Target 16.4 (reduce illicit arms flows).

Peace and security is a multidimensional outcome, whereas military spending is only an input to military capability. Security through military strength draws on deterrence and signalling, yet the paradox is that security can be undone by misinterpretation of signals or by missignalling, which can lead to escalation and undermine deterrence itself.²⁶ Rising military spending can also shape how neighbours or rivals perceive threats, leading to an

²¹ Okamura, Y., Iyengar, H. T. M. M. and Andrews, C., *Wake-up Call for Social Assistance? An Unfinished Mission to Reach the Poor and Beyond*, Social Protection Discussion Paper no. 2510 (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2025).

²² E.g. SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2025, <<http://sipri.org/databases/armstransfers/>>.

²³ United Nations, 'Sobering impact of conventional weapons deserves "no less attention" than the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, speakers stress, as First Committee takes up conventional weapons', Press release GA/DIS/3724, 23 Oct. 2023; Malaret Baldo, A. et al., *Arms Trade Treaty Diversion Analysis Framework*, ATT Issue Brief no. 3 (UNIDIR: Geneva, 2021); and Maletta, G. and Héau, L., 'Arms transfer and SALW control-related assistance in the Middle East and North Africa: Identifying needs and bridging gaps', SIPRI, 6 Dec. 2022.

²⁴ Pinson, L., *Addressing the Linkages Between Illicit Arms, Organized Crime and Armed Conflict* (UNIDIR: Geneva, 2022); and United Nations, *A New Agenda for Peace, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief* no. 9 (United Nations: New York, 2023).

²⁵ Conflict Armament Research (CAR), *Investigating Cross-border Weapon Transfers in the Sahel* (CAR: London, Nov. 2016); Dreyfus, P. and McDonald, G., 'Missing missiles: The proliferation of man-portable air defence systems in North Africa', Security Assessment in North Africa (SANA) Issue Brief no. 2, Small Arms Survey, June 2015; and Baudais, V., *Military Entrenchment in Mali and Niger: Praetorianism in Retrospect* (SIPRI: Stockholm, Oct. 2024), pp. 3–11.

²⁶ Karlin, M., 'The return of total war: Understanding—and preparing for—a new era of comprehensive conflict', *Foreign Affairs*, Nov./Dec. 2024.

action–reaction dynamic that fuels military build-up and even more military spending.²⁷

Climate change and the environment

From resource extraction, via arms production to weapon use and disposal, the military sector generates significant emissions, toxic residues and hazardous waste that affect Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Life below Water (SDG 14) and Life on Land (SDG 15).²⁸ Military activities are a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, which hinder Climate Action (SDG 13) but on which there is little official reporting.²⁹ According to scientific estimates, militaries account for roughly 3.3–7.0 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.³⁰ Among the categories of military spending, operations and maintenance account for the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions.³¹

The use of conventional weapons, funded through military spending, in an active conflict devastates biodiversity with effects lasting long after the fighting ends.³² This is especially clear from the ongoing wars in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine and past wars such as in Iraq and Viet Nam.³³

Another important aspect is the crowding-out effect that military spending has on climate finance. Redirecting just 7–13 per cent of global military spending in 2024 would have covered the gap in financing of climate adaptation faced by developing countries.³⁴

III. Supporting sustainable development through a human-centred approach to security

Rising military expenditure not only draws scarce resources away from investments that advance the SDGs, but in many direct and indirect ways

²⁷ SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (note 1); and Jakobsen, J. and Halvorsen, T., ‘The durability of the security dilemma: An empirical investigation of action–reaction dynamics in states’ military spending (1988–2014)’, *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, vol. 11, no. 2 (summer 2018).

²⁸ Weir, D., ‘Conflict pollution and the toxic remnants of war: A global problem that receives too little attention’, UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Perspectives no. 24, Mar. 2017; and Cottrell, L. and Darbyshire, E., ‘The military’s contribution to climate change’, Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS), 16 June 2021.

²⁹ Harvey, C., ‘Warfare’s climate emissions are huge but uncounted’, E&E News, 30 May 2024.

³⁰ Rajaeifar, M. A. et al., ‘Decarbonize the military—Mandate emissions reporting’, *Nature*, 2 Nov. 2022.

³¹ Crawford, N. C., ‘Pentagon fuel use, climate change, and the costs of war’, Brown University, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 13 Nov. 2019.

³² Kotsis, K. T., ‘The impact of war on the environment’, *European Journal of Ecology, Biology and Agriculture*, vol. 1, no. 5 (2024).

³³ Yermak, A. and Wallström, M. (co-chairs), High Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of the War, *An Environmental Compact for Ukraine: A Green Future—Recommendations for Accountability and Recovery* (Office of the President of Ukraine: Kyiv, 9 Feb. 2024); Jaff, D., ‘Conflict, environmental destruction and climate change: A tragedy in Iraq that demands action’, *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, vol. 39, no. 2 (June 2023); Appau, S. et al., ‘The long-term impact of the Vietnam War on agricultural productivity’, *World Development*, vol. 146 (Oct. 2021); Conflict and Environment Observatory, ‘The environmental costs of the war in Sudan’, May 2025; and UN Environment Programme (UNEP), *Environmental Impact of the Conflict in Gaza: Preliminary Assessment of Environmental Impacts* (UNEP: Nairobi, 2024).

³⁴ Watkins, K. et al., *Financing the Fight Against Poverty and Hunger: Mobilising Resources for a Sustainable Development Goal Reset* (Overseas Development Institute: London, July 2024); and SIPRI Military Expenditure Database (note 1).



moves the world further from the goals. As states continue to prioritize security through military strength, one credible way to reduce the shortfall in funding for sustainable development is to rebalance security strategies around a human-centred vision. According to such a vision, true security protects people's lives, livelihoods, rights and dignity and supports social and economic foundations alongside a state's legitimate security needs.³⁵

The concept of a human-centred approach to security is not new. Since the seminal 1994 Human Development Report, this view of security has been advanced by subsequent UN reports and UN General Assembly resolutions together with contributions from researchers and organizations.³⁶ Universal recognition of a human-centred approach to security was clearly articulated in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³⁷ Adopted by consensus without a vote, this represented approval by all UN member states.³⁸ By prioritizing investment in education, healthcare, poverty reduction, gender equality, environmental sustainability and responsive governance, Agenda 2030 links security directly with long-term development goals.³⁹

In today's complex and interconnect security environment, states must strike a balance in resource allocation between military needs and investment in sustainable development that fosters conditions for lasting peace and prosperity.

IV. Looking ahead: Steps by the United Nations, states and civil society

Recommendation 1. The United Nations should revitalize its existing disarmament machinery to address rising military expenditure and its impact on development

The United Nations remains the principal forum for advancing international peace and security alongside sustainable development. As enshrined in articles 1 and 26 of the UN Charter, it has a long-standing mandate to collectively maintain peace and security with the least diversion of the world's human and economic resources for armaments.⁴⁰ However, the UN's existing mechanisms for deliberations on military spending have been underused for decades. In the context of budget constraints, the UN must revitalize these bodies instead of creating new one.

³⁵ UN Development Programme (UNDP), *The UNDP People-centred Approach to Justice and Security: A Policy Framework for Justice and Security Programming* (UNDP: New York, 2025), pp. 9–19; UN Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1994); Brzoska, M., Omitoogun, W. and Sköns, E., *The Human Security Case for Rebalancing Military Expenditure* (SIPRI: Stockholm, May 2022); UN General Assembly Resolution 66/290, 'Follow-up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit outcome', 10 Sep. 2012; and UN Development Programme, *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity*, 2022 Special Report (UNDP: New York, 2022).

³⁶ UN Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 1994* (note 35).

³⁷ UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 (note 3).

³⁸ United Nations, 'Unanimously adopting historic Sustainable Development Goals, General Assembly endorses 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', Press Release GA/11688, 25 Sep. 2015.

³⁹ United Nations (note 24), p. 20.

⁴⁰ Charter of the United Nations, signed 26 June 1945, entered into force 24 Oct. 1945.

Debates on the economic and social costs of high military expenditure were a central focus of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly in the 1970s and 1980s. Leading up to 2030, this topic must not just be a standing agenda item, but part of active discussions led by the rotating chair of the First Committee.

When the UN Disarmament Commission considers which topic to examine in the upcoming 2027–29 three-year cycle, it should prominently incorporate military expenditure and its link to disarmament and development. This would allow it to provide actionable recommendations on the impact of military expenditure on sustainable development.

The General Assembly should request the secretary-general to establish a group of governmental experts (GGE) to work with states and the UN to close knowledge gaps and advance the recommendations in *The Security We Need*. For example, it could develop a comprehensive picture of military-related greenhouse gas emissions or support confidence-building measures (e.g. information-sharing and setting up direct channels of communication) as an important tool to build conditions for security and sustainable development.

Recommendation 2. States should adopt a human-centred approach to security

In the context of a worsening security environment and evidence showing the impact of rising military expenditure on sustainable development, it is imperative that states be reminded that they unanimously adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Each should thus implement a human-centred framework to security that balances sustainable development and national security as mutually dependent.

Among short-term actions, in the lead-up to the 2030 deadline for the SDGs, states that seek to substantially increase their military expenditure should detail if additional military expenditure will be at the expense of funding for the SDGs. In addition, any state that plans to increase its military spending should conduct an SDG impact assessment. This would evaluate the opportunity costs of proposed military expenditure, detailing how diverting resources will affect progress towards national Agenda 2030 targets.

In the longer term, states should uphold their commitments to official development assistance (ODA). ODA is not only a moral imperative but also a pragmatic investment in global stability—it helps recipient countries to address vital development challenges while freeing up domestic resources for essential security activities that are not eligible for ODA. In a show of global solidarity, member states of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) must recommit to fulfilling ODA targets, particularly the long-standing goal of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) to ODA. This requires a reversal in the recent trend of cutting development aid.

Recommendation 3. Civil society organizations should mobilize the public to advocate for a human-centred approach to security

As states continue to increase military expenditure while investment in sustainable development dwindles, civil society must take a leading role in



shaping public debate on what makes societies truly safe. While states justify military budgets based on threat perceptions, a majority of citizens identify education, healthcare, decent work and environmental sustainability as their primary needs for safety and dignity. Town hall meetings and other forms of community dialogue provide forums for people to reshape the security narrative. Such a reshaped narrative makes clear the need for a balanced approach to security.

Civil society should build on the momentum of *The Security We Need* by amplifying public voices and promoting human-centred security. Civil society organizations and advocacy groups can host inclusive dialogues worldwide. By asking communities ‘What makes you feel secure?’, they can bring diverse human-centred perspectives into the debate. Presenting these findings to parliaments, governments and the UN will show that citizens prioritize investment in sustainable development over arms.

To broaden outreach, civil society organizations should partner with grassroots networks (e.g. peace, women and youth groups, indigenous organizations and local movements) to integrate the issue into ongoing activism. Coordinated national campaigns, including media initiatives and public petitions, can maintain pressure on governments to honour their commitments to the 2030 Agenda, to reverse the trend of increasing military expenditure and to reallocate spending towards sustainable development priorities.



Abbreviations

GDP	Gross domestic product
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ODA	Official development assistance
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations



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SIPRI RESEARCH POLICY PAPER

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CONTENTS

I. Rising global military expenditure and the lagging progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: A path to a development crisis	2
II. Military expenditure at the expense of sustainable development	3
Socio-economic effects of military spending	3
The risks of weapon diversion and the security paradox eroding peace and security	5
Climate change and the environment	6
III. Supporting sustainable development through a human-centred approach to security	6
IV. Looking ahead: Steps by the United Nations, states and civil society	7
Recommendation 1. The United Nations should revitalize its existing disarmament machinery to address rising military expenditure and its impact on development	7
Recommendation 2. States should adopt a human-centred approach to security	8
Recommendation 3. Civil society organizations should mobilize the public to advocate for a human-centred approach to security	8
Abbreviations	10

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