



*International Peace Bureau*

# Time for New Priorities



## A Global Call for Action on Military and Social Spending

Launched by the International Peace Bureau

**Urgent - Please Endorse!** For information about signatories, see end of text



***As the world struggles to understand and react to the unfolding financial crisis, civil society organisations urge action on one of the most important elements in the world's economic system, which could make a huge impact on the fate of the world's poor: the military sector.***

In just a few weeks, diplomats and economists will meet to review progress in identifying 'innovative sources of development finance'. (*Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus*, 29 Nov. - 2 Dec. 2008, Doha). Many proposals will be put forward. But will they talk about the money their governments spend on the military? The following *Call for Action* makes bold proposals for bringing this issue into the debate.

Eight years ago, the UN's member states agreed on the Millennium Development Goals – a set of targets in 8 key areas of poverty reduction to be achieved by 2015. However, most analysts predict that without much greater commitments, these goals will not be met and hundreds of millions will remain in desperate poverty, the majority of them being women.

Six years ago, over 50 Heads of State and 200 Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Development and Trade met at Monterrey, Mexico, and agreed on the landmark package of measures to finance development known as the Monterrey Consensus.

During the course of all these high-level debates hardly a single voice has been raised to point out the discrepancy between the colossal sums spent by the world's governments on the military, and the needs that cry out to be met in order to end the scandal of mass poverty.

***Annual global military spending now stands at US \$1,339 billion, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute figures for 2007. This corresponds to 2.5% of world gross domestic product (GDP) and \$202 per head of population worldwide. Of this total, the USA accounts for around 45%.***

No one can learn of these numbers without imagining how this vast treasury could be used differently: to save lives, develop poor communities, protect the environment, promote renewable energy and much more. According to the UN's Millennium Project, the reallocation of around 10% of this total (i.e. \$121bn) would be sufficient to achieve the MDGs. In other words enough money would be available to ensure the access of all human beings to the fundamentals of life: drinking water, basic food, health care and relevant quality education.

The UN has a long history of drawing attention to the relationship between Disarmament and Development. As far back as 1987, the historic UN Conference on that topic declared:

*Resources released as a result of disarmament measures should be devoted to the promotion of the well-being of all peoples, the improvement of the economic conditions of the developing countries and the bridging of the economic gap between developed and developing countries.*

It added:

*The military sector also consumes a significant proportion of world energy resources and non-energy minerals, and diverts skilled human resources and industrial production which could be utilized in other sectors. Moreover, the production and stockpiling of armaments, particularly of nuclear and chemical weapons, poses a significant threat to the environment.*



However over the last decades almost nothing has been done to act on these important agreements and understandings, despite regular UNGA resolutions and many fine declarations and speeches.

In the absence of concrete treaty obligations in this area, decisions regarding public resource allocation (especially on national defence matters) remain lodged at the national level. **It is therefore at primarily at the national level that civil society pressure needs to be applied.**

At a time when the human family is confronted with a whole series of dramatic emergencies (from climate change and HIV-AIDS to hunger and a spiralling economic crisis resulting from the financial meltdown), we believe it is imperative that politicians be made to understand that our spending priorities – especially but not only in rich countries -- have to change, and that the public demands it.

How can this be done?

**We call for the following five steps to be adopted as a matter of urgency:**

1. Each government should revisit its defence doctrines and policies and adopt a more pro-active human security approach, one that places less emphasis on military force and more on tackling the threats to everyday security faced by each one of us.
2. It should examine – through the democratic process – areas of excessive military spending that can be reduced over, for example, a 5 year period.
3. It should explore ways for the monies saved to be re-allocated to a set of social and economic programmes to benefit the poorest communities both at home and abroad.
4. It should ensure that a fixed proportion of the resources removed from the military sector be channelled into a multilateral fund for the mitigation of, and adaptation to, global climate change.
5. It should explore more specific proposals such as the *10% Option*, a unilateral and multilateral initiative to convert, on a systematic basis, 10% of military spending into public investment for social development in order to combat poverty.

Many other important proposals in related areas – for example to curb arms production and trade, to ban indiscriminate weapons, to disinvest from companies that produce weapons of mass destruction, and to tackle war crimes through the international legal system – are being acted on already. What is needed is to start a new process to redirect the resources that feed an ever-hungrier military system.

How can this fundamental shift be brought about? By public education, coalition-building, persistent pressure and intelligent organisation.

Now is the time for a change in priorities. Let's get it moving.



## **HOW THIS TEXT WILL BE USED**

**IPB invites civil society organisations of all types and at all geographical levels to endorse this call. The deadline is Nov. 15, 2008, 14 days prior to the opening of the UN conference in Doha on Financing for Development.**

Our plan is to send copies of the text, with as many **organisational endorsements** as possible, to all delegations at the conference, with a plea that this issue be raised by as many countries and experts as possible.

Further on, we plan to work intensively on dialogue with states, UN bodies and international organisations. But the main focus will remain the national level, and to that end we shall also be extending our existing database of civil society contacts in each country, and facilitating the emergence of an **effective global network to share experience and offer mutual support**.

We are not accepting **individual endorsements** at this time. This is a possible development for a future edition.

We recognise that the text will not be ideal for each group. We have tried to make it sufficiently general to achieve wide appeal and to stand the test of time; and also sufficiently substantial and specific to have some impact in both political and educational terms. We hope that if you broadly support the thrust of the argument you will endorse it and **encourage others to do so too**.

At this stage we are not inviting **amendments**. However it is possible that a **second edition** will be published later in the campaign process. All comments received will be collected for future use.

### **How you can help:**

- raise it at your next Board/members meeting
- pass it on to other groups who may be interested
- translate the text (please send us a copy by email)
- post it on your website (with a link to [www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org))
- keep in touch with the IPB Secretariat with a view to coordinating future actions

### **Send your endorsement to:**

IPB, 41 rue de Zurich, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland  
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The International Peace Bureau is dedicated to the vision of a World Without War. We are a Nobel Peace Laureate (1910), and over the years 13 of our officers have been recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize. Our 300 member organisations in 70 countries, and individual members, form a global network which brings together expertise and campaigning experience in a common cause. Our main programme centres on Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development. We welcome your participation.

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