



On the occasion of the Global Day of Action on Military Spending

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On this Global Day of Action on Military Spending, we are challenged to ask why the world remains over-armed, social and economic programmes continue to be underfunded and conflict continues to rage in many parts of the world.

A flood of weapons cannot stop this violence – only inflame it further. Huge military spending cannot foster economic development – it can only spread fear and limit our progress.

This reality bears out in the numbers, which are staggering.

Military spending reached a staggering 1.9 trillion US dollars in 2019 – around 249 dollars for every person on the planet, and twice that year's spending on bilateral aid.

Arms flows to certain areas have also surged, fueling violence and instability in some of the world's most volatile regions.

It is time to rethink the logic of militarism, which is too often taken for granted. States pour enormous sums into their weapons and militaries, but does this actually make us safer?

Too many people face violence or the risk of violence on a daily basis, whether from armed conflict or smaller-scale threats to their safety, livelihood and dignity.

Instead of using human-centered approaches to tackle the real dangers of our time – dangers that cannot be vanquished through bombing or shelling – we continue to measure our security by the strength of our armies.

Together, we have to reimagine security in a way that places people at its core – particularly vulnerable or underrepresented groups, including women and youth. Only then can we respond effectively to our most pressing challenges, like poverty, inequality, climate change and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our primary roadmap to address these challenges is the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Goals.

And while achieving these Sustainable Development Goals is costly, militarism is even costlier. When our societies overspend on weapons and war, they have fewer resources for

making our daily security into a sustainable reality.

Just one-tenth of the world's 2019 military spending would be enough to alleviate extreme poverty in 46 low-income countries, according to one estimate.

Restraining military expenditure for the benefit of sustainable development is in the DNA of the United Nations and a universal commitment made by all its Member States. A commitment to the least diversion of the world's human and socioeconomic resources to armaments is enshrined in the UN Charter.

Now is the time to reconsider our world's seemingly endless increases in military spending.

We must reimagine security to focus on humanity and people's daily needs. We must develop a common vision to free our world of its weapons addiction.

We must act now!