



**Statement by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
Global Days of Action on Military Spending
(10 April – 9 May 2020)**

**Statement by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu
High Representative for Disarmament Affairs**



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The current COVID-19 pandemic provides a tragic reminder that our greatest collective challenges cannot be solved through military might.

Yet global military spending has continued its relentless rise, reaching \$1,8 trillion in 2018—a level not seen since the height of the cold war. Meanwhile, transfers in major conventional weapons have steadily climbed since the early 2000s.ⁱ

Now is the moment to seek options that provide for lasting peace and security in the face of daunting challenges like climate change, mass refugee flows and the ongoing global public health crisis.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains our primary tool for pursuing a more peaceful, prosperous and inclusive world for all.

Through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Agenda provides a comprehensive strategy to tackle poverty, achieve gender equality, fight climate change, reduce inequality and improve health and education.

In 2020, we start the 10-year countdown to delivering on the SDGs. An ambitious global effort is underway, but more must be done.

Reining in unconstrained military spending would go a long way in freeing up crucial human, financial and technological resources urgently needed for this “decade of action” to transform our world.

To illustrate, let’s consider climate change.

It is estimated that the true cost of addressing the devastating effects of climate change in developing countries is \$56-73 billion per year. This cost could reach \$140-300 billion per year by 2030.ⁱⁱ

Put another way, if only 10 per cent of today’s global military spending were spent towards SDG 13 on climate action, the current costs of adapting to climate change in developing countries would be covered several times over.ⁱⁱⁱ

Another timely issue is public health. A recent study confirms that higher military spending negatively impacts health spending, and therefore becomes an important risk factor for population health and individual well-being. Concretely, a 1 per cent increase in military spending results in a 0.62 per cent decrease in health spending, growing to a 0.962 per cent drop in lower-middle-income countries.^{iv}

These are just two of many examples that demonstrate the opportunity cost of diverting much-needed resources away from sustainable development and towards military hardware.

The Secretary-General, in his Agenda for Disarmament, *Securing Our Common Future*, recognizes that the global trend in military spending is going in the wrong direction.

He calls for new, concerted efforts to interrupt the self-reinforcing cycle of increasing military spending.

The Agenda commits the United Nations to supporting efforts that replace tensions, animosity and mutual suspicion with transparency, trust and confidence-building.

On the occasion of the Global Days of Action on Military Spending, I echo the recent appeal of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire in the face of the ongoing health crisis. I also renew my call for the international community to redirect the world's finite resources towards promoting the well-being of every citizen and striving for a peaceful and secure world for all. Let us put humanity at the centre of our security.

ⁱ www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/fs_2003_at_2019.pdf

ⁱⁱ Puig, D., Olhoff, A., Bee, S., Dickson, B., & Alverson, K. (Eds.), 'The Adaptation Finance Gap Report', 2016, Nairobi, Kenya: United Nations Environment Programme.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nan Tian, Diego Lopes and Alexandra Kuimova, "Military spending and achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", UNODA Occasional Papers, no. 35 (Forthcoming: 2020).

^{iv} Fan, H.; Liu, W.; & Coyte, P. C. (2018). Do military expenditures crowd-out health expenditures? Evidence from around the world, 2000–2013. *Defence and Peace Economics*, 29(7), 766-779