



Implementing the UN Charter Article 26 obligation on disarmament to release resources for peace, the United Nations and economic and social development (including environmental protection)

Proposal from Aotearoa Lawyers for Peace, Basel Peace Office, Move the Nuclear Weapons Money campaign, UNFOLD ZERO, Western States Legal Foundation and the World Future Council

PROPOSAL:

That the Declaration/Pact for the Future, to be adopted at the UN Summit of the Future:

Reaffirms the obligation under Article 26 of the UN Charter to establish a plan for arms control and disarmament with the least diversion of resources for economic and social development;

Calls on the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly and other relevant UN bodies to take action with respect to Article 26; and

Calls on all States to implement this obligation through ratification of bilateral and multilateral arms control agreements, coupled with progressive and systematic reductions of military budgets and commensurate increases in financing for the sustainable development goals, climate protection and other national contributions to the UN and its specialized agencies.

BACKGROUND:

The UN Charter, which entered into force on 24 October 1945, includes an obligation under Article 26 for the Security Council to formulate plans to regulate armaments “in order to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.”

The Security Council has failed to implement this obligation resulting in an astronomical increase in annual military expenditures, arms manufacture and weapons deployments since 1945. The global combined military budget in 2022 was \$2,300 billion, approximately 10 times (in equivalent value) the global military budget in 1947.¹

Contrast this with the UN Peacekeeping budget in 2022 of \$6.5 billion (1/350th of the global military budget)² and a Core UN Budget in 2022 of \$3.1 billion³ to cover most other UN work⁴ - which in comparison is \$2 billion less than the New York police budget - and it becomes glaringly apparent that the UN Security Council and UN member states are collectively acting in direct contradiction to the Article 26 obligation.

¹ Exact figures from 1947 are not available, but an assessment based on available sources at the time is made in [Military expenditure data: a 40-year overview](#), by Wuyi Omitoogun and Elisabeth Skons, SIPRI.

² See [General Assembly approves \\$6.45 billion budget for peacekeeping](#), June 2022

³ See, [Secretary-General Unveils \\$3.12 Billion Budget Proposal for 2022 to Fifth Committee, Stressing Organization Must Remain Flexible amid Recent Surges in COVID-19](#), 13 October 2021

⁴ There is also additional funding for some of the UN programs through additional voluntary contributions by member states.

This excessive allocation of resources to militaries - instead of to peacemaking, human and economic needs - is severely hindering public health (including post-COVID19 recovery), protection of the climate (including transition to green economies) and achievement of the sustainable development goals.

ACTION REQUIRED AT UN LEVEL

The **Security Council** should take action to implement Article 26 as they are required to do. Non-permanent members of the Security Council are able to call for such action, as Costa Rica did for example in November 2008, when they held the position of President of the Council.⁵

However, the reality is that such action by non-permanent members is too easily blocked by the Permanent Members of the Security Council, who collectively contribute to over 75% of the world's military expenditure and each of whom has veto power over action by the Council to address this.

In 2008, Costa Rica did not push for a vote on the issue because they knew that they could not win in the face of this veto power. However, since then, the United Nations General Assembly has adopted Resolution A/RES/76/262 entitled *Standing mandate for a General Assembly debate when a veto is cast in the Security Council*, providing greater authority for the UNGA to act on issues of peace and international security when a Permanent Member or Members of the Security Council block a decision through use of the veto.

This opens the door wider for **UNGA action to implement Article 26 of the UN Charter**. The UNGA could, for example, adopt a resolution calling for implementation of Article 26 by UN Member States ratifying existing arms control agreements and adopting additional agreements, coupled with progressive and systematic reductions of national military budgets and commensurate increases in financing for the sustainable development goals, climate protection and other national contributions to the UN and its specialized agencies.

The UNGA resolution should also mandate the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs to produce an annual publication providing publics with detailed information on global military spending and the social and environmental impacts of the diversion of resources.

ACTION AT NATIONAL LEVELS

UN member states should take action on disarmament and economic conversion, irrespective of whether or not the Security Council or UNGA adopt resolutions to implement Article 26. The UN Secretary-General and the UN Secretariat have already been encouraging this both directly⁶ and through development of the [Human Security framework](#) which reframes the Sustainable Development Goals as important for security as well as for economic and environmental need.

⁵ See [Update Report No. 1: Collective Security and Armament Regulation](#), *Security Council Report*, November 2008, and [Strengthening collective security through general regulation and reduction of armaments: the safest road to peace and development](#), the position paper of Costa Rica introducing the thematic discussion on the issue.

⁶ In [Securing our Common Future](#), for example, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres writes: *"Global military spending has more than doubled in inflation-adjusted dollars since the end of the cold war. International transfers of major weapons have steadily climbed since the early 2000s. Unrestrained military modernization, procurement and spending is creating distrust, worsening tensions and making peaceful resolutions to conflict harder to achieve. The economic costs of insecurity are enormous. A 2017 study found that 12.6 per cent of the gross world product was devoted to containing all forms of violence. More than \$1.7 trillion was spent on militaries and their equipment. This is vastly disproportionate with contemporary sources of national and human insecurity, which include climate change, terrorism, transnational crime, pandemics, involuntary migration and urban crime and violence. Not only is much of this spending economically unproductive, but excessive military spending by one nation also multiplies throughout the international system, prompting excessive spending elsewhere."*

In addition, most UN Member States are also members of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), under which they are obliged to work for 'general and complete disarmament' (Article 6).

UN member states could take national action to reduce military expenditures and reallocate resources to human, economic and environmental need - including increased contributions to the UN and its specialized agencies - and report on this to regional organizations, the UN and the NPT Review Conferences. Such actions would encourage other countries to follow suit.

An example is Costa Rica, which in 1949 abolished its army as a standing institution saving considerable resources for allocation to other areas of the economy.⁷ Costa Rica used its experience to encourage other Central American countries undertake demilitarization and funnel budgetary savings into a regional development fund.⁸

RELEVANT CIVIL SOCIETY CAMPAIGNS

There are a number of civil society initiatives/networks campaigning for cuts in national and global military budgets in order to release resources for peace, public health, poverty alleviation, climate protection and sustainable development. These include the [Global Campaign on Military Spending](#), [Move the Nuclear Weapons Money Campaign](#) and the [Poor Peoples Campaign](#).

If the UN Summit of the Future affirms the obligation of the UN and member states to implement Article 26, these and other civil society networks would be empowered to more effectively move governments to make the necessary policy and budgetary changes.

⁷ See [Costa Rica's peace dividend: How abolishing the military paid off](#), LA Times, December 15, 2013

⁸ See *The Nature of Costa Rican Demilitarization and The Transferability of the Model* in [The Competitive Effects of Political Homogeneity in International Relations: Social Identity Theory and Systemic Analysis](#), Robert B. Andersen, Bridgewater College of Virginia, Department of International Studies. March 1998