



## PRESS COMMUNIQUE

### **Peace Bureau deplores general rise in military spending, urges investments in diplomacy rather than preparations for resource wars**

**Geneva, June 9, 2009.**

The International Peace Bureau expresses profound concern at the announcement yesterday by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute at the launch of its annual Yearbook ([www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org)) that world military expenditures in 2008 reached yet another new high. The figure given is \$1,464 billion. The US share of this is \$607 billion – which is the budget for its basic military operations alone (i.e. not counting the actual costs of its wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq). This represents an increase of 4% in real terms compared to 2007, and of 45% since 1999. All regions have seen substantial increases since 1999, except for Western and Central Europe.

SIPRI comments: *‘During the eight-year presidency of George W. Bush, US military expenditure increased to the highest level in real terms since World War II, mostly due to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This increase has contributed to soaring budget deficits. The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have been funded primarily through emergency supplemental appropriations outside the regular budgetary process and have been financed through borrowing. The use of supplemental appropriations has raised concerns about transparency and congressional oversight. These conflicts will continue to require major budgetary resources in the near future, even supposing early withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.’*

The year 2008 will be remembered as the beginning of the severest economic recession since 1929. It was a year in which public anger over the greed and corrupt practices of the financial sector boiled over, rocking some governments and calling into question the management of the global economy. However what has not yet been called into question is the high priority still afforded to the military. These new figures show us that weapons and preparations for warfare remain untouchable in most austerity programmes, and indeed they reveal an increasing militarisation among big powers. The news that China has become the world's second biggest military spender, and that Russia has increased its spending by 13% is scarcely reassuring for those who thought the Cold War was long over.

*“This is an alarming trend”, said IPB Secretary-General Colin Archer, “since over the past 12 months we have seen an increasing number of reports suggesting that the real driver of militarization is the threat of conflict between the big powers over diminishing resources, especially energy, water and minerals. The recent signals given by several states regarding the ‘race for the Arctic’ only add to the widely-held view that the most important armed hostilities, such as those in the Middle East, and elsewhere, are at least partially about*

*control of oil and gas. The world has to find a way to share equitably the resources we still have, without resorting to (possibly nuclear) war".* IPB argues, therefore, that the priorities must shift, from big stick to human development, from aggressive posturing to intelligent diplomacy. Who knows how much time we have left to make the transition?

The IPB, whose main programme is entitled **Sustainable Disarmament for Sustainable Development**, is working to build an international civil society alliance to bring together peace, anti-poverty and environmental organisations. The purpose is to press for an end to the over-funding of military establishments and for the creation of new funds to tackle human insecurity and common threats to the planet. IPB will hold its annual conference on these themes at **Georgetown University, Washington DC**, from **Nov. 14-18, 2009**.

*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 280 member organisations in 70 countries, and individual members, form a global network bringing together expertise and campaigning experience in a common cause.*

[www.ipb.org](http://www.ipb.org)