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## **Military Spending on the Rise while Health Budgets Remain Insufficient in Confronting the COVID-19 Pandemic**

With the release of SIPRI's newest report, showing global military spending in 2019 at a new high of US\$1,917 billion, the International Peace Bureau (IPB) is calling for an end to the military spending pandemic, starting with an annual reduction of military expenditure of 10% and a complete ban on nuclear weapons.

Military expenditure has increased by 3.6% from 2018 and represents \$252 for every person on the planet. The increase is evidence that the world is in a global arms race that benefits few and raises the likelihood of a global catastrophe. It sheds light on the effectiveness of military industries' lobbying, particularly in Europe, North America, Asia, and Oceania. NATO's military budget alone totals \$1,035 billion and accounts for 54% of total global military spending.

The release of these figures comes during IPB's Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) which highlight the need to reallocate military expenditure to confront COVID-19 and the urgent social and environmental crises.

Militaries and arms cannot and will not save us from this pandemic. Nearly \$2 trillion on destructive weapons and soldiers will not save the 250 million people facing starvation or provide jobs to the hundreds of millions currently unemployed. Just \$35 billion could provide social protection to the 28 poorest countries. We must imagine how much progress could be made if we instead committed these resources to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The COVID-19 crisis has made clearer than ever the flaws in our system, one that prioritizes military spending and global instability over the well-being of our people. Indeed, global priorities are wrong; it is time for a new era of peace, a global ceasefire as called for by the UN and people around the globe. Let us demilitarize the world and invest in global peace and diplomacy.

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