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Press Release: Military Spending in 2022 Shows the Precarity of the Shifting Geopolitical Landscape and the Flawed Logic of Militarism

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) newest military expenditure data for 2022 shows yet another year of increase in global military spending, up 3.7 percent from 2021 to another all-time high of US\$ 2240 billion. With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, increases in military spending in Europe and the Western world were certainly expected; however, with the release of this data an important question must be addressed: does the outbreak of war drive increases in military spending, or rather do the incessant, yearly increases in military spending drive conflict and war?

While there is certainly no direct or decisive answer to that question, we have to take this year's SIPRI data in the context of the geopolitical landscape of the past decades. What is crystal clear from this perspective is that constant increases in military spending have not fostered peace or peace process in ongoing wars and have not prevented the outbreak of new, larger and increasingly concerning conflicts such as the war in Ukraine. Likewise, increases in military spending are completely unable to address the various security concerns at the forefront of our societies – from the effects of climate change and environmental degradation to protection from future pandemics and growing inequality and food insecurity in many parts of the world. And of course, the threat posed by countries upgrading their nuclear arsenals combined with increased rhetoric around the threat of use of nuclear weapons and further expansion of illegal nuclear sharing to Belarus (already present in Western Europe under the US nuclear umbrella) puts our entire planet at risk.

In many other cases, from Saudi Arabia and Iran to Sudan and Burundi, and Japan and China, military expenditure increases have not helped to reduce growing tensions and violence. The United States and the NATO alliance, who together continue to account for the majority of global spending, have in particular been a source of growing global tensions. In the face of recent geopolitical developments, there needs to be an alternative to constant growths in military budgets; there needs to be a resurgence of funding for diplomatic efforts, for the reduction of global tensions, complimented by funding for peace advocacy, peace building, just resolution, and just reconstruction of conflict zones. The current global military expenditure is more than enough to fund not only peace work, but also to address the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs), including climate change, poverty, and hunger.

The world cannot continue on the path we are on. The International Peace Bureau, Global Campaign for Military Spending, and our global network of partners reject the logic of global leaders that preparing for war creates peace, we reject the role of the military-industrial complex in fuelling this continued growth, and we reject the view that there is no alternative. We urge the UN General Assembly to organize special session on disarmament. We will use the Global Days of Action on Military Spending (GDAMS) from 13 April until 9 May to make our message heard and promote peaceful alternatives to militarism and war.

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