

## Disarmament for development and security by spreading good policies

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*A policy is a temporary creed liable to be changed,  
but while it holds good it has got to be pursued with apostolic zeal.*

**–Mohandas Gandhi**

*It is part of the general pattern of misguided policy that our country is now geared  
to an arms economy which was bred in an artificially induced psychosis  
of war hysteria and nurtured upon an incessant propaganda of fear.*

**–Douglas MacArthur**

### **Introduction**

Many policies of the last two centuries have destabilized international peace and security, favoured unsustainable development, and promoted ways of living which we cannot afford. This has become exceptionally poignant with the dawn of the nuclear age, ushering in an era in which defence policies might threaten the very survival of humanity.

There are an estimated 23,360 nuclear weapons stockpiled in 14 countries, with the great majority held by Russia (13,000) and the United States (9,400). Some of the larger nuclear weapons have more explosive power than all the explosive force used during the Second World War, including the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs.

This comes at a price. Industrial countries are spending billions of dollars daily to advance their capacity to wage war, whilst hundreds of millions of people suffer in wretched destitution. Considering that a fraction of the world's military expenditure would fund the Millennium Development Goals several times over, this abuse of the world's wealth and resources is unacceptable.

Indeed, disarmament frees up resources that can be directed at economic, political, and cultural development, which in turn enhances (human) security. This disarmament for development and security thesis has long been recognized in the international legal framework. However, many states have been reluctant to acknowledge its implications, let alone act on them.

However dire the situation might seem though, good practices and policies exist as well, both unilaterally and multilaterally. The World Future Council sets high priority on these practical efforts and, by working closely together with decision- and policy-makers, aims to bolster the framework of such policies and policy initiatives. It draws special attention to policies that address the close and multi-dimensional linkages between disarmament, development and security.

### **Divestment**

On the domestic level, there are the divestment programs the Scandinavian countries, the Benelux countries, Ireland, Switzerland and New Zealand, have adopted to ensure that public

money is not invested in corporations involved in unethical practices, including the manufacture of landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons.

The WFC highlights this law because it directly targets the military-industrial complex (divesting hundreds of millions of dollars), while setting a powerful precedent for pursuing responsible state behavior through ethical investment. Furthermore, it contributes to bolstering the international legal prohibition of landmines, cluster munitions and nuclear weapons; all of which have particularly detrimental consequences on development and (human) security.

### Conversion

A noteworthy policy *initiative* is a bi-partisan bill, recently re-introduced in the United States House of Representatives. It calls for significant reductions in US and Russian nuclear arsenals with some of the savings from these reductions directed toward nuclear threat reduction plus a well-targeted international effort aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals of reducing child mortality, eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and improving education.

The WFC targets this policy initiative because it both unambiguously incorporates the disarmament for development and security linkages and aims to reduce the irrationally large nuclear arsenals still held by the US and Russia. Although this bill is yet to be adopted, it has great merit as an initiative for positive change and serves as an inspiring example for parliamentarians in other countries to follow.

The common quality of these policies lies in setting priorities. Divestment means making ethical priorities central to composing an investment portfolio, while conversion proposes reducing the military proportion of the budget in favour of development spending. These times of economic austerity, which have made both the public and policy- and decision-makers increasingly responsive to budget allocations, offer an opportunity to make important strides ahead in realizing this 'peace dividend'.

### Nuclear abolition

Because their implications span the globe, it might feel as if inauspicious nuclear practices are ubiquitous. Yet, only a relatively small number of states (9) have chosen to partake in the madness of possessing nuclear weapons. Alternatively, the great majority of countries (116) have taken a regional approach to strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms by entering into multilateral agreements establishing Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZ), which now span the entire southern hemisphere.

A NWFZ is defined by the United Nations as an agreement which a group of states has freely established by treaty or convention, that bans the use, development, or deployment of nuclear

#### PUTTING DEFENCE SPENDING INTO PERSPECTIVE

GLOBAL MILITARY EXPENDITURE STANDS AT AN ANNUAL OF OVER **\$1.46 TRILLION**

THE **15 COUNTRIES** WITH THE HIGHEST SPENDING ACCOUNT FOR OVER **81%** OF THE TOTAL

THE **USA'S SPENDING BUDGET** ACCOUNTS FOR **41.5%** OF THE WORLD TOTAL.

THE USA SPENDS OVER **\$50 BILLION** ANNUALLY ON **NUCLEAR WEAPONS** AND RELATED PROGRAMS

THE ENTIRE BUDGET OF THE **UNITED NATIONS** AMOUNTS TO APPROXIMATELY **1.8%** OF THE WORLD'S MILITARY EXPENDITURE

FOR **\$5 BILLION**, THE LIVES OF **6 MILLION** CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 5 COULD BE RESCUED EACH YEAR

**UNICEF'S ANNUAL BUDGET** IS SPENT ON MILITARY PURPOSES EVERY **15 HOURS**

weapons in a given area, that has mechanisms of verification and control to enforce its obligations, and that is recognized as such by the UN General Assembly. NWFZs have been proposed for the Middle East, Central Europe and North East Asia. New Zealand, Mongolia and Austria have gone even further by drawing up national legislation prohibiting nuclear weapons.

An effort worth mentioning here is the recent proposal for the establishment of an Arctic NWFZ. Antarctica was already effectively made a Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in 1959 through the Antarctic Treaty. With climate change depleting the ice-cap, the Arctic region is opening up, bringing with it the possibility of increased resource competition, territorial disputes and militarization. Already, there are disputes involving all of the states bordering the Arctic circle (United States, Canada, Russia, Norway and Denmark). It is therefore critical to establish soon an Arctic NWFZ, similar to the one covering the South Pole.

### **Article 26 UN Charter**

Finally, it should be noted that enshrined in the international legal framework is an irrefutable directive for achieving disarmament for development and security. Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations tasks the UN Security Council with promoting *“the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.”* It further holds the Security Council responsible for *“formulating, with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee referred to in Article 47, plans to be submitted to the Members of the United Nations for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments.”*

Unfortunately, for 65 years the Security Council has flouted its legal obligations under Article 26 (which have been reiterated and further clarified in numerous UN General Assembly Resolutions and UN Reports and Studies). Consequently, global security, a prerequisite for global development, has been elusive and achieving it hampered by the ever more dominant military-industrial complex.

### **Conclusion**

Although they are sometimes difficult to identify among what may seem a profusion of unfavorable laws and policies, exemplary policies do exist. The treaties establishing Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones and the domestic legal prohibition of nuclear weapons act as a powerful counter-force to the hostile nuclear postures of a few. In addition, certain governments and policy-makers are taking legislative steps to check the dominance of the military-industrial complex, curb unbridled military spending and re-allocate freed-up resources to meet development goals. The importance of such a shift of resources and priorities has also been consistently underscored in various multilateral fora and resolutions.