

ZISMUN

Zurich International School MUN



Dear Delegates,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we welcome you to the Economic and Social Council of ZISMUN 2026! As your chairs this year, we are looking forward to guiding you through what promises to be engaging, challenging and fruitful debate. Our committee will focus on both Promoting the Reallocation of Military Budgets to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals as well as Regulating Private Arms Production and Trade to Curb Armed Conflict in Fragile Economies. You are tasked with representing the position of the country you were assigned along with engaging in constructive debate and collaboration with other nation-states to find plausible and effective solutions.

However, as delegates your role is to not only represent your nation but to also embody the ideals of Model UN. First and foremost, that means maintaining a level of respect to all members present in this committee and conference. We encourage you to actively participate, engage in fruitful discussions while staying open minded and work towards a solution that tackles the pressing issues this committee has been tasked with solving.

In order to achieve this, you, as delegates are expected to come prepared. That entails reading this research report as well as having thoroughly researched the two topics we will be debating to ensure that you have a concrete understanding of your country's position (this may include policies, priorities, or relevant statements by country officials).

The primary goals of this committee will be to foster critical thinking, persuasive communication and problem solving through cooperation. We encourage you all, no matter their level of experience, to actively engage with your fellow delegates in both moderated and unmoderated caucus. To ask thought provoking and challenging points of information, to give passionate and informative speeches and to engage in debate where even contrasting perspectives can work towards effective solutions.

We look forward to seeing your preparation be reflected in your contributions to our community and the overall level of debate. We are confident that your efforts will ensure that this conference will be an enjoyable, memorable and impactful experience that you will have something to take away from.

Warm Regards,
Your Chairs,
Elizabeth & Abhinav

Promoting the Reallocation of Military Budgets to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals

General Overview of the Situation:

The topic of Promoting the Reallocation of Military Budgets to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) revolves around the idea of shifting from security that is military-centered, to security that is human-centered. Global military expenditure in 2024 reached 2.7 trillion USD, most SDG targets remain off track, showing that there is a lack of investment in reaching them. The UN, along with many other research institutes warn that rising defence budgets are widening the gap that prevents progress on the SDGs, currently estimated at 4 trillion USD annually. Global military expenditure has increased significantly in recent years, primarily due to factors such as but not limited to; increasing geopolitical tensions and a renewed military might competition between powerful nationstates. All this has also contributed to concerns by countries and their governments over international, regional and national security. However, all this leads to the question of whether increasing investments in building up nations, military is the most effective way to address the pressing issue of human security. Government budgets are finite & when resources are underinvested in social services such as education, healthcare and infrastructure it can weaken social resilience in a nation or even region and foster instability. This then leads us to the issue of human security. It deals with the process of reframing what is understood as “security” to ensure human security & development become as important as traditional defence.

Key Definitions:

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

169 targets encompassed in the 17 goals adopted in 2015 by the United Nations. They are part of the UN 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development.

Arms Race:

An arms race is a competitive state between two or more nations centered around the increase in military capabilities also referred to as militarization. It is often driven by a sense of distrust or threat. Arms races lead to significant military expenditure which in turn often relocates resources away from development and social welfare initiatives.

Human Security:

A people-centered, multi-stakeholder concept that focuses on enabling individuals to live free from; want, fear & indignity. It is a risk-oriented approach towards seven aspects of human security; Economic, Food, Health, Environmental, Personal, Community, and Political.

Budget Re-allocation:

The process of moving or re-designating appropriated funds from one budget; category, program, or business to another by governments and multi-lateral organizations. This is done to align spending with priorities and to maximize efficiency.

Military Expenditure:

A government's spending that is devoted to defence forces, weapons, operations as well as military equipment.

Peace Dividend:

According to Oxford Languages, the term Peace Dividend is “A sum of public money which becomes available for other purposes when spending on defense is reduced”. It refers to both the economic as well as the social benefits available in the long term to people when nationstates reduce military spending and instead reallocate the money towards fulfilling human needs. It is the belief that security cannot solely be achieved through military strength, but also relies on the investment in improving human wellbeing.

Opportunity Cost:

Opportunity Cost is the potential benefit of any factors that are forgone. In this instance it refers to the potential benefits that could have been gained (from weather increase in development infrastructure or militarization of a state) but weren't due to the fact that investment wasn't allocated towards them.

Sustainable Peace:

Sustainable peace refers to a condition in which a certain level of peace is maintained not only due to the fact that there is no armed conflict but also through aspects such as; economic opportunity, social justice and respected human rights of individuals. In short, it recognizes that long-term stability and peace arises from and is dependent on development and good governance.

Good Governance:

The idea of good governance consists of eight aspects; Rule of Law, Transparency, Consensus Oriented, Accountability, Effectiveness & Efficiency, Equality & Inclusiveness, Responsiveness, Participation. The United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (UNROHC) states that it is “...the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights”.

Historical Situation:

Much of history has revolved around conquests and disputes between groups which subsequently often lead to armed conflict. Thus, for much of history, states have spent large sums on defence. In the pre-modern and early-modern periods there was a very close tie between the military capacity of a state and its survival. When we look at history, the military wasn't simply used for the defence of a state, it was used for the conquest and capture of new lands and territories and ensuring order and political control within a state. Thus, it is no surprise that these states primarily prioritized their military when it came to budget investments, instead of social, economic, or any other welfare development.

However, the modern scale of military budgets, and what we know as military spending today emerged with industrialized warfare. Both World War I and World War II drastically expanded the state's military capacity and defence spending. The industrialization of warfare signaled a shift in the way in which nations approached allocating funds towards the military, from well known advances in technologies and new weapon innovation to the mass production of them. During these wars, weapons and military material production became embedded in nations' economies. This in turn lays the groundwork for long-term commitments by these nations towards investments in military spending.

After World War II many nations reduced their military forces and instead reallocated those funds to reconstruction and post-war development. Many country resources that were previously devoted to war efforts were now being redirected towards developmental initiatives such as reconstruction, infrastructure and social welfare. This shift in particular clearly played a prominent role in the economic recovery of nations and invested into their long-term stability. Therefore proving that investment in development by countries can in fact serve as a foundation for building a peace framework.

However, due to the increasing tensions between blocs formed in this new world order, there was a rapid escalation of military expenditure primarily driven by arms races and geopolitical rivalries in the Cold War, specifically between the United States and the Soviet Union. This led to global military spending nearly doubling between the years of 1960 and 1980 to approximately \$500 billion annually. This apparent prioritization of defense spending over development spending directly put into light the clear tradeoffs in what nations chose to spend their budget on. This, in turn set the groundwork for later debates by both the public and politicians on the relationship and importance of both security and the welfare of a nation's people.

After the end of the Cold War in the 1990s total military expenditure fell. This is primarily due to the fact that its end led to the widespread discussion around the potential of the "peace dividend" as a plausible solution towards reducing geopolitical tensions.

Since the early 2000s, all the way to the present, military expenditure has climbed again primarily due to actions, such as the "war on terror" and multiple recent conflicts. In 2024 global military spending reached its highest level in history at approximately \$2.7 trillion. This upward trajectory is only said to increase with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs predicting this number to be raised to \$6.6 trillion by 2035. This is likely

due to an increase of nontraditional security threats such as but not limited to terrorism and cyber warfare.

Approximately 10 years earlier in 2015, all of the member states of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which also includes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This marked a notably significant change in the priorities of the international community. It was the first time that all the United Nations member states had collectively committed to a framework of goals towards greater development, peace and sustainability. This once again emphasized the shift towards seeing development as a form of ensuring long-term peace and stability.

Current Situation:

Because global military spending has reached record levels while funding for SDGs remains low there have been significant compromises made between defence and investment into social aspects for human security. As of 2024, the rise and military expenditure has marked the 10th consecutive annual rise.

While defense spending continues to increase the UN estimates that the annual financial gap for the SDGs is already \$4 trillion, a number that is projected to grow \$6.4 trillion if this trend continues. Thus, this increase in military spending diverts crucial spending from sectors such as education, health care, clean water, and disaster relief, and in turn slows down as well as hinders progress towards the SDGs.

Countries that are specifically affected are ones in active conflict. In such scenarios, the majority of a nation's budget is allocated to defence and the military which in turn often leaves scarce resources for what is classified as 'human security' and thus reinforces cycles of instability and underdevelopment.

On the other hand, even today we see a multitude of developed nations spending large sums of money on their military. This has been labeled as a response to growing geopolitical tensions between world powers and perceived threats.

However, it is not just those nationstates that are redirecting their funds that are affected. Some of the least developed nations along with small island developing states are also affected, though it is indirectly. Though the majority of these developing nations spend little on their own militaries, they are highly dependent on international aid by more powerful and developed nationstates to support regional and global development initiatives. So it is when major powerful donor states shift their budget priorities towards defence, that leads to widening gaps in the funding for development programs that these developing nations rely on.

This highlights the challenge of finding the delicate balance between immediate security needs and long-term development initiatives.

The United Nations sees this connection between military spending and development funding as a major issue for global policy. And has called for a reevaluation of global priorities that align with diplomacy and sustainable investment. Last year, the UN Secretary-General

published 'The Security We Need' which emphasized the need for United Nations Member States to redistribute spending to accommodate development priorities and in turn, help achieve sustainable peace. In a remark to the press on the release of the report, United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated, "our shared promise of sustainable development is in jeopardy,".

Key Treaties/Agreements:

UN General Assembly Resolution on Reducing Military Budgets A/RES/37/95 (1984):

This Resolution by the UN General Assembly explicitly links military budget restraint with economic and social development and calls for the reduction of military expenditures by nation-states. It also emphasizes that such savings from lowering defence spending can in turn be re-allocated to economic and social development. While it is not a legally binding document, this resolution is significant primarily due to the fact that it established a consensus on the international stage that excessive military spending by nationstates and in fact undermine development and peace on a global scale.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development RES/70/1 (2015):

Even though it is not a disarmament agreement, the 2030 Agenda states peace as a prerequisite towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This agenda highlights the need for nationstates to prioritize the long-term human security of their citizens instead of just focusing on their military security.

The Pact for the Future (2024):

This political declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly interweaves sustainable development & financing for development with International peace and security. It highlights peace as a core part of sustainable development while simultaneously emphasizing the need to close the Sustainable Development Goal financing gap. It directly recognises and shines a light on how continuous conflict between members, increasing levels of militarization between nationstates and a clear underinvestment in development threatens the international communities ability to not only achieve, but work towards the Sustainable Development Goals. However it is important to note that this document is not legally binding.

Global Peace Divide Proposal:

Though not an adopted treaty but a proposal (and thus a nonbinding initiative), it carries weight in global discourse with regard to the reallocation of military budgets. It calls for a 2% annual reduction in spending by all states and redirects those freed resources towards development and climate action. It is primarily highly influential due to the fact that it is backed by Nobel Laureates, policy experts and scientists. It promotes and puts an emphasis on collective action instead of just focusing on the disarmament of individual nationstates.

UN Charter Article 26 (1945):

This article in the United Nations Charter provides the legal and standard foundation for linking the lowering of military spending with broader international peace and development. This document instructs the United Nations to create a framework or plan to ensure the regulation of armaments in order to promote peace and security while simultaneously ensuring “the least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources.” Even though, since its creation, article 26’s effects and implementation have been limited, it is important to note that it is frequently sighted in debates between military security and development.

Key Country Positions:

United States:

The U.S. is the nation-state with the world's largest military budget and a country that believes its military spending is crucial to global stability. It is seen, and in fact sees itself as a global security guarantor which is directly apparent through its alliances with other nations such as in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). While it is a strong proponent of the SDGs it generally opposes the reallocation of military budgets towards them. Instead, it encourages as well as prefers giving voluntary development aid. Overall, the United States sees the topics of defence spending and the funding of the Sustainable Development Goals as part of two separate policy initiatives.

China:

Though China supports development as a foundation for peace it has continued to increase its military budget and rejects external interference in its national spending decisions. It supports development as a foundation but believes that national sovereignty falls above budget decisions and thus opposes binding re-directing of resources. Thus it is strongly against any initiative that would lead to any form of interference by an external entity or the international community. Instead it prefers to support development through economic growth and not the direct distribution of its national budget.

Russian Federation:

Russia frames defense spending as crucial for its sovereignty and geopolitical stability. In particular, it has security concerns that are deliberately linked to current regional conflicts and the expansion of alliances such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. It views efforts to link military spending to development financing as politically motivated and biased against major world military powers. It has also long been a critic and sceptic of development frameworks and initiatives led by the west.

India:

Though India is a strong supporter of the SDGs it opposes mandatory reductions in military spending. It supports development, but it also places a strong emphasis on national

security due to regional security pressures at its borders which have at times led to regional instability. India also advocates for the demilitarization of specific regions through dialogue and international law instead.

Germany:

Germany is a leading supporter of the SDGs and is a key development donor, yet it has significantly increased defence spending due to its security concerns as well as North Atlantic Treaty Organization obligations. It supports discussions on the long-term rebalancing, transparency, and efficiency of national budgets however it is a strong opponent of outright cuts towards military investment being forced upon nations.

Costa Rica:

Costa Rica has no standing army and has long advocated for the reallocation of military budgets towards development resources in areas such as education and health. It is the proponent for demilitarization and a human-security approach.

Possible Solutions:

Increase Accountability in Military Budgets:

This would entail requiring or encouraging nation-states to report detailed military expenditure data and its impacts on publicly financed programs and sectors. Not only does this build trust among citizens, but it also allows them as well as other nations and international bodies to hold governments accountable for spending choices.

Diplomacy & Confidence Building:

Uncertainty and mistrust between nation-states are what drive arms races. Through confidence-building measures and dialogue, countries are able to reduce the perceived security threats. This in turn lowers pressure on states to continue increasing their military budgets.

Human-Centered Security:

Human security includes economic, health, and environmental security. This form of security addresses the root cause of instability which military spending alone cannot solve. Through a human-centered approach, nation-states would rebalance budgets towards investments that align with the SDGs.

Multilateral Funds:

Through the creation of multilateral funds along with global financial mechanisms between UN member states (both on the regional and international level) to finance SDG initiatives, they can reduce reliance on the reallocation of national budgets by themselves. This not only makes reallocation easier for many governments but also more effective.

Further Readings:

[The Security We Need \(2024\) - Seceretary-General Antonio Guterres](#)

[The SDGs 2025 Progress Report](#)

[The Financing for SDGs Report 2024](#)

[The Pact for the Future Official Website](#)

[The UN Human Security Handbook](#)

[The UN Development Programme \(UNDP\) People-Centered Approach to Justice and Security](#)

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