



OPENING REMARKS

By

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Side Event:

Global military expenditures

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Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the United Nations and to thank you for joining us at this Special Event on “*Military expenditures: trends and challenges*”. I also thank the Permanent Mission of Japan and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) for co-sponsoring this event with us and for making it possible.

Global military spending is—by any definition—a timely subject, especially during a global financial crisis. Almost on a weekly basis we hear news about countries increasing their military spending, or keeping their inordinately high military spending while neglecting education, health care and other basic needs of the people. The Global Day of Action on Military Spending, which is celebrated around the world today, is a worthy initiative that seeks to mobilize individuals and organizations to raise awareness of the issue of excessive military spending.

Global military spending has been increasing in the last decade and reach 1738 billion in 2011. At the same time, the *transparency* in military expenditures has declined. The number of Member States submitting reports to the United Nations Report on Military Expenditures (MILEX), has decreased from over 80 to just 51 in 2011. Under the MILEX, Member States are called upon to voluntarily provide the UN with the data on their annual military expenditures. On average, less than one third of the UN Member States have provided reports on military expenditures in any given year during the period.

Transparency in military expenditures is important not only because it will help in building confidence and trust among States, but also because it could facilitate discussion among States on ways and means to reduce military budgets and identify areas where such reduction could be sought. The detailed format for reporting to the UN Report on Military Expenditures—in which States are requested to report on their expenditures by force groups and by items such as personnel cost, operation and procurement—is intended to serve these purposes.

Due to a low reporting rate, the UN Report on Military Expenditures is not able to provide the full and accurate picture of the global military expenditures. The total of military budgets as reported by States to the UN Report in 2010 amounts to 1.22 trillion US dollars, which is significantly less than 1.63 trillion US dollars as estimated by SIPRI for the same year.

Today, I welcome the release of the new data on military expenditures by SIPRI. With more than 170 countries in its coverage, it represents one of the most comprehensive and reliable source of information on global military expenditures. I

hope that the new SIPRI database and discussions by distinguished experts today will equip us with information, knowledge and tools necessary to question and confront the perilous trend in disproportionately high global military spending, at the expense of underserved poor, children and the environment.

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said, “the world is over-armed and peace is under-funded.” I hope the new data on global military spending will help both governments and civil society in restoring a rational balance between these priorities.

I thank you.