

FACT SHEET

INFORMATION SHARING ON NATIONAL MILITARY EXPENDITURES

Governments can report their annual military spending to the United Nations. This may increase confidence among States within regions and beyond.

Limiting military spending?

Over the past century, governments have sought ways to reach a global agreement on reductions in military expenditures. Various proposals were discussed in the League of Nations, and later in the UN. Early proposals in the UN focused on reducing the expenditures of States with large militaries, and on freeing up funds for development aid.

Focus on transparency

These proposals did not materialize. However, they led to the development of the UN Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures in 1981—later renamed *United Nations Report on Military Expenditures (MILEX)*—under which countries are encouraged to report on their military expenditures.

The original goal of MILEX—to facilitate reduction of military expenditures—gradually gave way to another important goal: to increase transparency and build confidence among States. If States submit reports every year, MILEX will provide insight on military spending patterns and to increased international trust and security.

Building trust

Sharing information on military expenditures is important for increasing trust between governments in all parts of the world. But



having this information available is only the first step in confidence-building. As a follow-up measure, authorities from different countries may meet and discuss their respective military expenditures, e.g. within their regional contexts. UNODA stands ready to assist regional organizations in making such confidence-building talks a reality.

Military confidence-building in post-conflict settings

Transparency in military matters is important in all parts of the world. States coming out of conflict and their neighbours and States in regions perceived to have high level of military spending are among those that may benefit particularly from using the UN Report on Military Expenditures. For countries where defence sector reform is planned, reporting current military spending by category of expenditure may provide a baseline assessment of present priorities, which can constitute a sensible and transparent start of the reform process.

Fact:

Making sure that military spending does not become excessive, is an agreed norm

The founders of the United Nations included in the UN Charter a provision for “the establishment of international peace and security through the least diversion of the world’s human and economic resources to armaments” (Art. 26).

“Global military spending [amounts to] more than \$4.6 billion a day, which alone is almost twice the UN's budget for an entire year. This level of military spending is hard to explain in a post-Cold War world and amidst a global financial crisis. Economists would call this an 'opportunity cost'. I call it: human opportunities lost.”

BAN Ki-moon
United Nations Secretary-General

How to report?

Reporting to the UN Report on Military Expenditures can only be done by governments.

States with no military expenditures may submit a “nil report”. Other states can use either a standardized reporting form or a simplified reporting form.

The appropriate forms can be found at: www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/milex/forms.

All information received from governments is made available on this website.

UNODA stands ready to assist States with their national report. We also work with regional organizations – upon request – on organising military confidence-building activities.

Contact conventionalarms-unoda@un.org.

www.un.org/disarmament