

KEY MESSAGES

The Secretary-General's report - ***The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*** - as requested by UN Member States in the Pact for the Future, aims to analyze the impact of rising military expenditures on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It illustrates the trade-offs and opportunity costs involved. It proposes a shift towards a people-centered and multidimensional approach to security, one that prioritizes diplomacy, cooperation, sustainable development and disarmament over military build ups.

THE CONTEXT

- Global military spending reached a record high of \$2.7 trillion in 2024, representing a decade of continuous growth, yet global security continued to deteriorate and progress on the SDGs - the world's blueprint for a fair and equal world - has fallen short.
- Global military spending is rising significantly across all regions, claiming an increasing share of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and government budgets, driven by escalating geopolitical tensions, conflicts and perceived security threats. It is directly undermining sustainable development efforts by diverting crucial financial resources at both domestic and global levels.
- However, military spending does not guarantee security; instead, it often fuels arms races, deepens mistrust among countries and further destabilizes the international political landscape.
- Diverting funds to military spending locks countries into long-term military-centered policies, prioritizing defence spending over development gains, and signaling a dangerous decline in international cooperation.
- At the current trajectory, projections indicate that global military spending could reach unprecedented levels - \$4.7 trillion to \$6.6 trillion by 2035. \$6.6 trillion is equivalent to almost five times the level at the end of the cold war.

IMPACT ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- The world is critically off-track for achieving the SDGs by 2030, with a \$4 trillion annual financing gap (which could reach \$6.4 trillion by 2030), exacerbated by rising military expenditures that crowd out investments in vital sectors like health, education and poverty reduction.
- Beyond diverting resources, military spending undermines SDGs progress, including through exacerbating health and education disparities, constraining economic growth, widening gender inequalities, significantly contributing to climate change and environmental degradation, and heightening the risks of weapons proliferation and diversion.

Please refer to Facts and Figures for a breakdown on the impact on SDGs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The world faces a critical choice between continued escalating military spending, which threatens global stability and human progress, and a new path towards shared security and prosperity for all through diplomacy, cooperation and prioritized sustainable development.
- To secure lasting peace, a fundamental recalibration of global security and development strategies is urgently needed, prioritizing diplomacy, confidence-building and international cooperation to reverse the current trend of escalating military spending.
- The international community should integrate military expenditure to the fore of disarmament discussions, strengthen the linkages between arms control and development, and promote greater transparency and accountability in military spending to build trust among states and ensure fiscal responsibility.
- Reinvigorating multilateral finance for development is crucial, alongside the adoption of a human-centered approach to security that balances military spending with sustained investments in people and the planet, recognizing inclusive and sustainable development as the primary defense against conflict.
- A fundamental reorientation of global priorities is imperative, requiring renewed commitment to multilateralism, the integration of peace disarmament and development agendas, and a recalibration of global financial strategies to foster a secure, resilient, and equitable future.